

Stalinism for All Seasons

SOCIETIES AND CULTURE IN EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE

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Stalinism for All Seasons

A Political History of
Romanian Communism

Vladimir Tismaneanu

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For my son, Adam Volo, in the hope that one day this book will help him understand the grandeur and misery of twentieth-century revolutionary romanticism; and in memory of three people: my mother, Hermina Tismăneanu, and Ghiță Ionescu and Alvin Z. Rubinstein, whose writings and generous mentoring helped me in my efforts to chronicle the communist utopia.

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Contents

List of Illustrations	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
Abbreviations and Acronyms	xv
Introduction: Why a History of Romanian Communism?	i
1. Understanding National Stalinism: Legacies of Ceaușescu's Socialism	18
2. A Messianic Sect: The Underground Romanian Communist Party, 1921–1944	37
3. The Road to Absolute Power: From Quasi-Monarchy to People's Democracy, 1944–1948	85
4. Stalinism Unbound, 1948–1956	107
5. Aftershocks of the CPSU's Twentieth Congress, 1957–1960	136
6. Opposing Khrushchevism: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Emergence of National Communism, 1960–1965	168
7. Ceaușescu's Dynastic Communism, 1965–1989	187
Epilogue: The RCP's Afterlife	233
Appendix: The Romanian Communist Party's Leadership: A Biographical Roster	255

Notes 271

Select Bibliography 331

Index 357

Plates follow page 106

Illustrations

1. The Bulgarian leader Georgi Dimitrov in Bucharest, January 1948.
2. The veteran communist leader Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, executed in April 1954.
3. Nikita S. Khrushchev on an official visit to Romania, July 1961.
4. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and the Yugoslav leader Marshal Josip Broz Tito, 1964.
5. Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid I. Brezhnev, November 1976.
6. Ceaușescu's first official visit to the USSR as the newly elected leader of the Romanian Communist Party, September 1965.
7. Nicolae Ceaușescu and President Charles de Gaulle, Bucharest, 1968.
8. Nicolae Ceaușescu and Mao Zedong, Beijing, June 1971.
9. Ceaușescu holding the heraldic scepter at his official swearing as president of the Socialist Republic of Romania in 1974.
10. Nicolae Ceaușescu and Tito, Bucharest, 1974.
11. Nicolae Ceaușescu and Constantin Pîrvulescu at the Neptun Black Sea resort in the late 1960s.
12. Mikhail Gorbachev's official visit to Romania, May 1987.
13. Ceaușescu and his lieutenants, Snagov resort area on the outskirts of Bucharest, May 1969.
14. Meeting between delegations of the Romanian and Spanish communist parties, Bucharest, 1975.
15. President Richard Nixon's official visit to Romania, August 1969. Meeting between Nixon and Ceaușescu.
16. Elena Ceaușescu on a trip to Greece in the early 1970s.

17. A Romanian delegation visits China in spring 1971.
18. Nicolae Ceaușescu and the North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung, Pyongyang, April 1982.
19. Meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and the Khmer Rouge dictator Pol Pot, Pnom Penh, May 1978.
20. July 1985, Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu at a mass gathering in Bucharest celebrating the twentieth anniversary of Ceaușescu's election as RCP general secretary.
21. Nostalgic gathering around Ceaușescu's grave, Ghencea cemetery, Bucharest, January 26, 1993.

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In some cases, the assistance I received is part of the history itself, and as such acknowledged in the book itself in detail. A number of members of the elite, including some former members of the Romanian Communist Party's executive committee, agreed to be interviewed, among them Ștefan Andrei, once foreign minister; Dumitru Popescu, former central committee secretary and chief ideologue; and Ion Iliescu, former minister of youth, central committee secretary, and the country's first post-communist president. I was also helped in 1994 in Romania by Ioan Scurtu (director of the State Archives), Virgil Măgureanu (director of the Romanian Service of Information [SRI]), Ioan Mircea Pașcu (secretary of state in the Ministry of Defense), Mihai Bujor Sion (minister counselor at Romania's embassy in Washington), and General Dumitru Cioflină (the Romanian Army's chief of staff). It is to their credit that, our political disagreements notwithstanding, they made it possible for me to have access to restricted party archives. As a result, this book is not only the first to use the historical comparative approach to the history of communism in Romania but draws on the cultural and political biographies of those involved, giving it comprehensive scope.

Throughout both the informal and formal writing of this book (1974–2001), many people shared their knowledge of Romanian and international communist history with me and supplied unique details about events, personalities, factions, friendships, and conflicts—in short, the human dimension of this story as it was experienced by those who fought for and supported communism and by those who, at different stages, opposed it. Although some of them have passed away, others are still alive. They belonged to different generations and had diverse, often opposite backgrounds and political visions. I am indebted to all of them for their willingness to trust me, and I hope this book is what I promised to deliver: an objective, albeit not dispassionate, analysis of Romanian communism as emblematic of the global ideological hubris called Leninism.

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I am one of the few scholars to have had direct access (beginning in 1994) to the archives of the RCP's politburo and secretariat, and I have in fact shared much of the material I photocopied with other scholars in Romania and the United States. Several of the transcripts of politburo meetings were published in the Bucharest monthly *Sfera politică*, and I gave Robert Levy, then a graduate student in the History Department, UCLA, complete access to the documents relating to the Pauker-Luca affair, which were worthwhile sources for his excellent thesis and subsequent book, published by University of California Press.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

Note: Familiar common acronyms (e.g., NGO) and acronyms that appear only once in the book and of which the expansions are given *ad loc* (e.g., ICECHIM) have been omitted from the following list.

ASRI	Archive of the Romanian Service of Information
BMT	Workers' and Peasants' Bloc
CC	central committee
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDR	Democratic Convention of Romania
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon)
Cominform	Information Bureau of Communist and Workers' Parties
Comintern	Communist (Third) International (1919–43)
CP	Communist Party
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)
DNSF	Democratic National Salvation Front
GDR	German Democratic Republic
IKKI	Executive Committee of the Communist International
NKVD	Soviet secret police
NLP	National Liberal Party
NPP	National Peasant Party
NSF	National Salvation Front

PD	Democratic Party
PDSR	Party of Romanian Social Democracy
PNL	National Liberal Party
PNȚCD	National Peasant Christian and Democratic Party
PRM	România Mare Party
PSM	Socialist Party of Labor
PUNR	Romanian National Unity Party
RCP	Romanian Communist Party (prior to 1945, the Communist Party of Romania; called the Romanian Workers' Party between February 1948 and July 1965)
RCPP	Romanian Communist Party Program
RSDP	Romanian Social Democratic Party
RWP	Romanian Workers' Party (1945–July 1965; thereafter called the Romanian Communist Party)
SRI	Romanian Service of Information
SSI	Secret Service of Information
UASR	Union of Romanian Students' Associations
UDMR	Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania
UTC	Communist Youth Union

INTRODUCTION

Why a History of Romanian Communism?

There are in the world no fortresses the working people, the Bolsheviks, cannot storm.

Joseph Stalin, April 1928

Faith organizes and equips man's soul for action. To be in possession of the one and only truth and never doubt one's righteousness; to feel that one is backed by a mysterious power whether it be God, destiny, or the law of history; to be convinced that one's opponents are the incarnation of evil and must be crushed; to exult in self-denial and devotion to duty—these are admirable qualifications for resolute and ruthless action in any field.

Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer*

I have been working on this book for at least a quarter of a century—indeed, half of my life. While still in Romania, I was initially obsessed in the 1970s with the mysterious episodes of communist history and fascinated by the arcane, murky rivalries among the Romanian communist elite, deliberately obscured and distorted in the self-congratulatory, ever-changing, and unpredictable party line. On various occasions, I engaged in long conversations with my relatives (many of them underground party survivors) and their friends about the history of domestic and international communism.

I grew up in a family for whom the Spanish Civil War, the saga of world communism, the rise of Nazism, the Moscow show trials and purges, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the Comintern, the Cominform,

the excommunication of the Yugoslav Communist Party leader Tito, Stalin's death in March 1953, Khrushchev's denunciation of the "cult of personality" in 1956, the Hungarian Revolution, and many other chapters in the history of the twentieth century and Leninist internationalism were personal memories. I engaged in research without realizing it and collected information as a naïve hobby rather than as a deliberate and, in the circumstances, seditious project. Later, after arriving in the West, I decided that writing a political history of Romanian communism was both a scholarly and a personal need: I happened to be one of the few people who had heard the personal confessions of veterans of the old guard of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP), and I had long focused my intellectual interest on the political adventure captured by Arthur Koestler's phrase "the God that failed."

In the fall of 1982, when I met the New School political philosopher Andrew Arato in New York and told him that I would like to publish a chapter of my Romanian Ph.D. thesis on the Frankfurt School, he said: "Why not something on the nature of Romanian communism?" Suddenly, I understood that my personal interest in the dynamics of Romania's Leninist movement could become a genuine scholarly agenda. Following Arato's advice, I wrote an essay that appeared in the quarterly *Telos* in 1984 under the title "The Ambiguity of Romanian National Communism." I continued to collect information on this topic, engaging in a furious correspondence with former RCP militants who had immigrated to the United States, France, Canada, West Germany, Israel, and other places. I published a longer analysis of Ceaușescu's socialism in *Problems of Communism* in 1985, and after 1986, I was able to extend my documentation thanks to several trips to Munich, where I benefited from the exceptional archives of the Radio Free Europe Research Department. My friends Michael Shafir and Vladimir Socor, both of them astute analysts, shared their insights and many fascinating documents from their personal archives with me, notably those dealing with protest and dissidence in Ceaușescu's Romania.

Had the revolutions of 1989 not occurred or, rather, had Romanian communism remained in power longer, I would have published my book in the early 1990s. But the wheel of history turned, and what had seemed impossible suddenly became a historic and academic opportunity: a political history of Romanian communism could now be written based on primary documents, interviews with the main actors, memoirs, and other essential sources. Following a conversation with my friend Matei Călinescu, professor of comparative literature at Indiana

University, Bloomington, with whom I had co-authored a study of Romania's December 1989 revolution, I decided to postpone the publication of what I had prepared and to rewrite it based on the newly accessible sources. In the meantime, I continued to work on the cultural and political dilemmas of transitions from Leninism to democracy in East-Central Europe, publishing several books that referred to, but were not focused on, Romania. Ironically, although I am often described as a "Romania expert," this is my first book in English to deal specifically and primarily with a Romanian topic. (I have published several collections of political-historical essays in Romanian exploring the nature of the terror under Stalinist regimes in Romania and other East-Central European countries, including a political biography of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Romania's first Stalinist ruler, and writings on the nature of Ceaușescuism as a political and ideological experiment and the Leninist legacies in post-1989 Romania.)

As the saying goes, there is a time for everything. I feel that I have sufficiently plumbed the material essential for a critical and, it is to be hoped, illuminating interpretation of Romanian communist political culture, and that the time has come for me to conclude this project. Obviously, I do not think that my analysis is exhaustive; rather, the new information (and it is plentiful) broadens, but does not challenge, the central theses I advance in this book. My main objective is to present a comprehensive political history of Romanian communism by exploring its origins, evolution, decay, and breakdown. An additional goal, no less important, is to examine communism's afterlife in Romania—the main trends in the country's post-Ceaușescu political culture and the obstacles to its full democratization.

The Romanian communist experiment is assessed here within the broader framework of European and world Stalinism and post-Stalinism. Indeed, one cannot write about Romanian communism without taking into consideration (among many other things) the Communist International, or Comintern, with its sectarian views on national questions and antifascist "popular front" strategy; the Spanish Civil War; the activities of the Cominform ("Information Bureau of Communist and Workers' Parties"), created in 1947 to succeed the officially abolished Comintern; the Titoist schism; de-Stalinization under Khrushchev; the Sino-Soviet split; the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia; the "stagnation" of the USSR under Brezhnev; the rise of Eurocommunism; and Gorbachev's attempt to reconcile socialism with democracy.

Romanian communist leaders were directly involved in several of the major crises of world communism. When Stalin decided to excommunicate the Yugoslav leader Marshal Josip Broz Tito as a traitor and renegade in 1949, for example, he selected the RCP's general secretary, Gheorghiu-Dej, to deliver the major indictment at a Budapest Cominform conclave. In March 1956, the same Gheorghiu-Dej participated in the stormy plenum of the Greek Communist Party's central committee in exile that decided to oust that party's general secretary, the arch-Stalinist Nikos Zahariadis. Following the crushing of the Hungarian revolution in November 1956, Prime Minister Imre Nagy and his comrades were deported to Romania, along with their families, under the guise of an offer of political asylum. However, the Hungarians were, in fact, kept under surveillance by Hungarian-speaking Romanian party apparatchiks acting on behalf of the KGB, and Nagy was subsequently returned to Hungary and murdered. It was also from Romania that the clandestine Spanish and Greek Communist parties broadcast to their countries in the 1960s. Finally, Romanian communists were also deeply involved in the resistance to Moscow's attempts to restore its supremacy within world communism in the late 1960s and the 1970s, as well as in the birth of Eurocommunism.¹

By examining pre-1989 trends and dynamics, I believe, we can better explain Romania's post-1989 "exceptionalism," including the violence of the initial revolutionary spasm; the resurrection of the secret police; the lack of transparency in public life; the climate of rampant suspiciousness and corruption; the emergence of "red-brown" Stalinist-fascist ultranationalist coalitions; the paternalistic style characteristic of both government and opposition; the absence of reform-oriented groups in the ruling bureaucracy; and the weakness of liberal, pluralistic efforts to strengthen civil society. Knowledge of these legacies and traditions is critical for making sense of the results of the Romanian elections in November–December 2001, when the successor party to the RCP came back to power and a party led by Ceaușescu's former sycophant Corneliu Vadim Tudor became the main parliamentary opposition on a radical chauvinistic platform.² My book is thus primarily addressed to students of communism and postcommunism who want to understand the role of political, cultural, and moral traditions, values, and symbols in the functioning and decay of Leninist regimes in East-Central Europe. Since there are numerous useful studies by Romanian historians and political scientists of specific details of the issues that I examine, I have deliberately chosen to avoid overwhelming references to archival docu-

ments and other sources relatively inaccessible to the Western reader. Simply put, my target audience includes anyone who wants to understand Romania and the peculiar nature of its Leninist tyranny, including the causes of its violent, bloody end and its legacy.

Whenever scholars refer to the collapse of communism and the revolutions of 1989, they emphasize the nonviolent, peaceful, “velvet” nature of these epoch-making events, but hasten to add: “with the exception of Romania.” In the same vein, whenever the good news about transitions from communism is spread around, experts never tire of mentioning Romania as a case of dismal failure. Why this special status as the odd man out of both communism and postcommunism? If I succeed in answering this question, then my book will be of genuine interest to Romanian and other East-Central European and post-Soviet students of Leninism.

I should note that I am not a historian and did not seek to become one in writing this book, which offers a *political* interpretation of the main trends, choices, strategies, and tactics that gave Romanian communism its unique features and highlights the interaction between Romanian communists and their peers in the “socialist camp” and the world communist movement as a whole. The RCP was never an isolated unit in the world communist movement. Moreover, after 1960, its leaders saw themselves as playing a prominent role in the dispute between the leading Marxist-Leninist parties (the CPSU and the CCP).

This is not a book about Leninism as a modernizing political technique but, rather, a study of the functioning of a political culture based on fear, suspicion, problematic legitimacy, spurious internationalism, populist manipulation of national symbols, unabashed personalization of power, and persecution mania. I tell the story of a group of people who came to power essentially as agents of a foreign power and succeeded in turning themselves into champions of autonomy from that imperial center. I focus on the relation of submission and subordination between Bucharest and Moscow and on the Romanian repudiation of the Kremlin’s diktat in the 1960s and the strange dialectics of de-Sovietization and de-Stalinization. Especially because of the vampirelike image of Ceaușescu’s last years in power, it is often forgotten nowadays that at least between 1965 and 1971, Romania experienced a relative liberalization and that for several decades, its leaders conducted a foreign policy of which Western diplomats and leaders to a great extent approved. Indeed, surprising as it may seem, Romania was the first Leninist state to host an official state visit by an American president, Richard Nixon, in 1969.

A few details about the difficulties of completing this book may interest the reader. Sensitive archives in Romania are hard to consult. Many of the post-1989 political actors (or close members of their families) played important roles in the communist bureaucracy. The Romanian Communist Party is officially defunct, but several political parties have unmistakable links to its legacy. In many respects, the ruling Party of Social Democracy (the presidential party, renamed the Social Democratic Party in June 2001) is itself a successor party to the vanished RCP. Romania's exit from communism and the difficulties of the transition to a state of law, political pluralism, and a market economy cannot be understood without analysis of its Leninist legacies. Compared to most East and Central European countries, Romania has experienced the least radical forms of "decommunization" and the swiftest "restoration." Unlike Poland, Bulgaria, or Hungary, the communists (reformed or unreformed) never left center stage in Romania. The only politicians who disappeared from the limelight were the two Ceaușescus (executed in December 1989) and their most loyal supporters (some of whom, including their son Nicu, once heir-apparent, who died in late 1990s, served short prison terms).

I consider the history of Soviet communism to be extremely important, not only for the understanding of the state socialist experiment in Romania and its heritage, but also for a better comprehension of communist and postcommunist phenomena in East-Central Europe in general. In examining the history of Romanian communism, I focus on significant moments in the final four decades or so of history of world communism, namely, the Comintern; Stalin and the Bolshevization of the East European communist parties; the strategies for communist takeover; the nature and possibility of various roads to socialism; the dialectics of de-Stalinization; and the nature of the Soviet–East European relations. The part of the book dealing with Nicolae Ceaușescu's time in power (1965–89) examines important developments in the field of international affairs, paying attention to Romania's role in the Sino-Soviet conflict; the Middle East; the rise and dynamics of Eurocommunism; and European security. Embracing a long and complex period (the RCP was founded in May 1921, vanished in December 1989, and was resurrected in different forms thereafter), my book will be of special interest to readers of twentieth-century history and students of communism and postcommunism.

Although I have continuously and systematically researched this topic for the past twelve years, the new resources made available in postcom-

unist Romania opened up tremendous new opportunities. Memoirs, documents, and interviews have come out in Romanian media that shed new light on the history of the RCP. For the first time, it is possible to take a scholarly approach to the subject based on both open sources and archival materials. My book treats both the main trends within Romanian communism and the role of significant personalities in the party's history. Special focus is placed on such figures as Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, Ana Pauker, Iosif Chișinevschi, Miron Constantinescu, Leonte Răutu, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, and Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu. It is my conviction that such a political history can offer fascinating insights into the RCP's interwar history and the elimination of the party's old guard in the Soviet Union; the Moscow émigré group and its conflict with the "home communists"; the rivalry between different factions in the RCP elite; the main components of the RCP's political culture and the amalgamation of Leninist rhetoric and nationalist values, even under Gheorghiu-Dej; the ideological underpinnings of Ceaușescuism; the transformation of Gheorghiu-Dej's oligarchic Leninist regime into Ceaușescu's personalist authoritarianism; the decline of the RCP under Ceaușescu and the rise of the "Securitate state"; and the decay of the Ceaușescu regime and the causes of the 1989 revolutionary uprising.

Methodology

This book combines comparative historical analysis, cultural and political biographies, and personal interviews (oral or by correspondence). Information has been checked against several sources in order to minimize the distorting effect of the self-serving memories of witnesses to or participants in the events examined. I used the collections of party publications now available in Bucharest at the Academy Library, as well as my personal collections of newspapers and party documents (*Scînteia*, party congresses and national conferences, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's and Nicolae Ceaușescu's political works, etc.). I have collected hundreds of pages of letters from people associated with the drama presented in this book. Obviously, many writers are self-serving, but underneath the explicit text, I have often been able to identify information important to my own effort to comprehend the personalities of the RCP leaders such as Gheorghiu-Dej, Ana Pauker, and Ion Gheorghe Maurer. One illustration of this method: following the broadcast by Radio Free Europe's Romanian service of my essay on Iosif Chișinevschi ("Duplicity and

Revolution”) in the mid 1980s, I received a very long, truly moving letter from his son Gheorghe, who was at that time living in Israel (he died a few years later, while still in his forties). His letter was a true *cri de coeur* and provided me with insightful information about his father’s political biography, including a reasonably credible refutation of the prevailing view that Chişinevschi had been Lavrenti Beria’s (i.e., the KGB’s) man in Romania. In my further research, including archival investigations and interviews with former apparatchiks, I have continued to check this information. Obviously, there is no ultimate, definitive answer, but I was able to come to certain conclusions, which go beyond subjective, long-held stereotypes and made me change some of my early stances regarding the RCP’s membership.

Not unlike Chişinevschi’s son in writing his letter, I decided to write this book for at least two reasons: first, I wanted to understand the world I grew up in, the constellation of illusions, dreams, hopes, disappointments, anguish, and nightmares that made up Romanian communism. Second, the more familiar I became with the literature on the subject available in America and Europe, the more I understood the need for an updated, truly comparative approach to the political drama of the Leninist experiment in Romania. The title of one of my articles, “The Tragicomedy of Romanian Communism,” sought to convey the ambivalence of Romanian communism: a combination of singular radicalism and intense dogmatism with other components that belong rather to the realm of the grotesque and the pathetic.

In the 1980s, my main contributions on the subject of the history of the RCP appeared in *Telos*, *Orbis*, *Problems of Communism*, *East European Politics and Societies*, *Government and Opposition*, and other such periodicals. In 1991, however, I signed a contract with the University of California Press based on a book proposal and my previous record of publications. Optimistically, I thought I would finish my manuscript in a year. But the deeper I got involved in this project, the more I understood that any serious, in-depth analysis of the Romanian communist experience had to take into account memoirs published after 1989, new books printed in Romania and other former communist countries, and, most important, archival material deposited in different (and utterly scattered) archives in Romania. I therefore postponed the writing of my book until I had access to this material. Eventually, in 1994, by virtue of personal connections (including some in the immediate entourage of President Ion Iliescu) and the support of various Romanian scholars, I became the first scholar to penetrate the RCP’s secret party archives.

The Search for Lost Archives

Unlike other East European countries, even after the collapse of communism, Romania retains a very secretive attitude toward the archives of the former regime. I have personally confronted the enormous obstacles placed in the way of researchers, whether Romanian or foreign, trying to penetrate the well-protected and often unknown storage areas where these archives are preserved. Every conceivable argument has been used: that the documents are still in the process of being sorted; that they were moved from the army to the state archives; that nobody really knows what happened to certain sensitive documents from the archives of the party's control commission. After several letters exchanged with Dr. Ioan Scurtu, the general director of the state archives, and a number of personal interventions by several of President Ion Iliescu's advisers, I was informed in December 1993 that I would be allowed to study the Communist Party archives during a research trip to Romania. In June 1994, I was permitted to enter the Pitești branch of the Romanian State Archives, but I came to the conclusion that the most important documents were not there. What I could see in Pitești (without any possibility of copying or microfilming) were files belonging to "Fondul 1" of the "historical" archive, but not a single transcript of the "inner circle" (politburo, secretariat) proceedings.

Complicating matters further is that fact that Romanian law permits access only to documents thirty years old or older. So in 1994, for example, I could not "officially" access documents from 1965 or later. Overcoming this problem called for luck, stubbornness, and above all personal connections. Fortunately, my former instructor at the University of Bucharest, Virgil Măgureanu, had become the head of the Romanian Service of Information, and I took advantage my personal contact with him to obtain important documents microfilmed from the SRI archive (documents primarily linked to the Pătrășcanu and Luca affairs.) Eventually, the late Major Mircea Chirișoiu, himself an archivist for the General Staff of the Romanian Army, took it upon himself to "check out" documents relating to the late 1970s and early 1980s that would otherwise not have been available to researchers until 2010 or later, and while I was engaged in officially sanctioned archival work, my wife, Mary Sladek, photocopied the "closed" archive "checked out" by Major Chirișoiu. In 1994, copying machines were still scarce in Romania (like many other things), so the three hundred pages of documents that Ma-

lor Chirițoiu had “borrowed” were photocopied courtesy of my late friend RaduȚeposu, editor of the monthly *Cuvintul*.

While in Bucharest in June 1994, I approached influential persons at the Ministry of Defense and Secretary of State Ioan Mircea Pașcu, whom I had known for many years (and who in 2001 became minister of defense), and was put in touch with representatives of the Army General Staff. What I found was spectacular: during the first days after the December 1989 revolution, all the party archives were transported by the army to special places outside the central committee headquarters. The Pitești archives, now managed by the State Archives Directorate (itself a part of the Ministry of the Interior), contain only the central committee’s “historical archive,” that is, the semi-declassified collections. The archive of the former Institute of Party History is accessible at the Library of the Romanian Academy (the documents are still kept in the building of the former institute and include a number of other important documents, such as memoirs, fragments of proposed party history textbooks, and letters from Ana Pauker’s personal archive).

Unfortunately, my search determined that the army controlled the most important archival resource, “the operative archive” that was key to my research. Before the 1989 revolution, it was kept in sealed rooms in the Central Committee Building, and access was permitted only on the basis of authorization signed by Nicolae Ceaușescu himself. Here I hoped to find Gheorghiu-Dej’s personal notes, documents, and letters, as well important documents relating to other prominent personalities (e.g., Ana Pauker, Emil Bodnăraș, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, and Iosif Chișinevski). Also part of this archive were the “personnel files” (or “party files”) for prominent party figures over the past forty-five years (including Nicolae Ceaușescu’s and Ion Iliescu’s). I wrote a letter to General Dumitru Cioflină, then chief of staff of the Romanian Army and was informed that I needed to specify exactly which documents I wanted to consult. I responded that as a student of the whole history of RCP, I needed to see as much as possible, and I listed several clearly delineated topics. Following countless telephone calls to different members of President Iliescu’s entourage, I eventually received permission to start my readings at the Army Hotel in the Drumul Taberei neighborhood in Bucharest (inside the Ministry of Defense compound). Throughout the three weeks I spent there in September 1994, an officer was assigned to keep me under surveillance, but I nonetheless succeeded in consulting fundamental documents apparently not seen before by any other scholar, whether Western or Romanian. I was thus able to consult thousands of politburo and secretariat meeting

transcripts, the volumes linked to Ana Pauker's arrest (February–March 1953), her interrogations and further party investigations (with General Secretary Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's personal notes on the transcripts), the proceedings of the politburo meetings during the crucial year 1956, and the transcripts of four key plenums: the May 1952 plenum at which the so-called Pauker–Luca group was purged; the June 1958 plenum that launched the second wave of intraparty purges; the November–December 1961 pseudo-de-Stalinization plenum (in fact, a major settling of accounts and exercise in rewriting party history to suit Gheorghiu-Dej's personality cult); and the April 1964 plenum that produced the watershed Romanian Workers' Party Declaration regarding the problems of world communist movement and the open challenge to Khrushchev's attempts to limit Romania's economic independence.

In short, once I had gotten into the various archives, I came to the conclusion that no valid history of the RCP could be written without serious scrutiny of these hidden documents. The new information found in the archives had a bearing on every single chapter of my book: it confirmed the conspiratorial nature and revolutionary militantism of the Stalinist elite in Romania; the struggle for power; the brutal, manipulative treatment of the intelligentsia; the distrust of any heretical or liberal strategy; and the use of nationalism as a legitimizing ideology, especially after 1963. The continuity of the Stalinist methodology of intimidation, coercion, corruption, and regimentation during the first ten years of Dej's absolute rule (1948–58) was made only too clear. Before I had access to the archives, most of my assessments (and I was not alone in this respect) were based on intuition, speculation, and reading between the lines of the party documents and the leaders' speeches. Now, the records revealed the arcane and convoluted episodes in the struggle for power, the painstaking discussions among top leaders about political choices; the origins of the Romanian-Soviet split; and the growing self-confidence of the party elite, especially after 1960.

The archives fully and credibly document the nature of the political crisis within the RCP in 1952; the implications of the Pătrășcanu Affair; Gheorghiu-Dej's personal role in the elimination of different potential rivals and obstinate rejection of Khrushchevism; and the search for a Romanian way of escaping de-Stalinization, to cite only a few examples. No less important, they provide extraordinary information about the RCP's role in the 1956 Hungarian crisis, the Sino-Soviet split, Romania's relations with Yugoslavia, and other previously obscure matters. Certain

episodes from the past appear in a different light: sometimes it is a matter of nuances; sometimes the information from the archives challenges long-held assumptions. It turns out, for example, that in the summer of 1956, the politburo addressed a letter to the Soviet presidium suggesting the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania. Moreover, when Gheorghiu-Dej and his associates discussed this issue, they displayed a marked degree of self-confidence. In other words, in less than ten years after the proclamation of the Romanian People's Republic, the communist elite had changed from a marginal group into an increasingly self-assertive and autonomous one. Furthermore, even during the October–November revolution in Hungary, Gheorghiu-Dej and his team did not regard their position as fundamentally threatened from inside the country. The wave of repression in Romania in 1958 was simply the method Gheorghiu-Dej always used to reshuffle the elite.

Why a Study of Romanian Communism?

There are, of course, numerous outstanding books on most East European communist parties, and even detailed studies of their elites, but scholars have paid relatively little attention to the Romanian communist experience. A lot has been written on the Romanian revolution and its aftermath, but there is no systematic, well-structured, persuasive study of the rise and fall of Romanian communism. The reasons are several: first, the country's isolation during the last ten years of the Ceaușescu regime did not allow either Romanian or Western scholars to do the necessary research: as noted, the archives were (and are, for that matter) jealously guarded, and very few people were (or are) allowed to consult them. Even since the 1989 revolution, the archival materials have been administered in such a way that access to them has been difficult and extremely selective. Moreover, especially after 1974, the Ceaușescu regime encouraged the deliberate falsification of the RCP's history to accommodate the political mythology aimed at legitimizing the cult of the "Conducător" ("Leader"—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say "Führer"?), as Ceaușescu chose to style himself. It is symptomatic that during the four decades of the RCP's political hegemony, an official history could not be published.

Still, the topic is fascinating and well worth pursuing, in spite of the obstacles that remain. The RCP is a particularly interesting case: from a marginal underground Leninist sect, made up of no more than 1,000

members, it developed into a mass party and eventually became the vehicle for the establishment of a personalistic dictatorship based on nationalist ideology, combined with some residual, even perfunctory, elements of Marxism. Romanian communism developed a peculiar political culture with characteristics deriving both from the national character and the international Leninist tradition: suspiciousness, a deep inferiority complex, a sense of illegitimacy, political narcissism, sectarianism, anti-intellectualism, and an obsession with political and social “transformism” (a term coined by Robert C. Tucker).³ Although Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceaușescu were very different in terms of personality and psychological makeup, they shared both a deep commitment to the Stalinist cult of discipline and a striking knack for eliminating any potential adversaries or sources of heresy. What is particularly notable in the history of the RCP is the absence of any well-structured reform-oriented group at the top. There were some “liberal” members of the elite, but they never seriously tried to defy the monolithic power enjoyed by the party leader, let alone to engage in an overall critique of the system. Ideological heterodoxy never developed in Romania as it did in Hungary or Poland: no Władysław Gomułka or Imre Nagy emerged as an alternative to the leadership. No significant attempt was made to formulate a revisionist version of Romanian Marxism. This book highlights the reasons for this by exploring the political traditions of Romanian communism, the debility of the intellectual Left, and the resurgence of nationalist themes and voices after 1956 that basically preempted and neutralized the precarious neo-Marxist or proto-liberal discourses. Compared to other East European situations, the marginality and weakness of dissent in the Romanian case are striking. This is not to say that there was no resistance and opposition in Romania, especially in the 1940s and 1950s. As a matter of fact, new documents and memoirs emphasize the scope of the anti-Stalinist unrest and subsequent repression among students in Bucharest, Timișoara, and other university centers in 1956. But especially after 1963, when the regime adopted anti-Soviet and implicitly anti-Russian rhetoric, the intelligentsia became increasingly willing to endorse the presumably patriotic leadership. It was precisely the anti-Soviet, anti-hegemonic line initiated by Gheorghiu-Dej and enhanced under Ceaușescu that made possible the national Stalinist “contract” between the party leaders and national intelligentsia. Dissent in Romania, at least until Gorbachev’s rise to power in the Soviet Union after March 1985, was immediately accused of “bringing grist to the mill” of Soviet

imperialist designs. As a matter of fact, in August 1968, when Ceaușescu vehemently condemned the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, many intellectuals, including former political prisoners, joined the Communist Party. By posturing as the “dissident” party within Moscow-controlled world communism, and indeed really playing that role to some extent, the RCP limited the appeal of any domestic opposition in Romania. In this respect, the Romanian regime resembled Enver Hoxha’s staunchly anti-Soviet despotism in Albania.⁴

Overview

In the English language, Ghiță Ionescu and Robert King’s works have preceded this book and are significant contributions in terms of the overall history of the RCP. There are also a number of excellent studies dealing with strategic aspects of the RCP experience and its ideological transmogrification in the 1970s and 1980s from a traditional Leninist party into a populist movement espousing nationalist ideology and symbols.⁵ Michael Shafir has provided a valuable monograph with important insights into the socialist experience in Romania, but it was not his aim to write a political history of the RCP.⁶ Dennis Deletant’s writings on the secret police and the mechanisms of terror under Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceaușescu have substantially improved our knowledge of the regime’s survival and consolidation techniques. For many years, the biographies of the most important figures in Romanian communism were relatively unknown to Western (and even Romanian) scholars, and Mary Ellen Fischer’s book on the Conducător contributes greatly to our understanding of Ceaușescu’s personality.⁷

No study has appeared, however, that examines the historical and structural correlations between Romanian communism and postcommunist developments in that country. Although the emphasis of this book is on pre-1989 communist history, that history had a direct and palpable impact on Romania’s post-1989 evolution. This book therefore examines both the nature and dynamics of Romanian communism and the political uncertainties of the transition from state socialism to a hesitant democracy.

Chapter 2 focuses on the clandestine RCP and the competition between various centers of authority; the factional struggles of the 1920s; the RCP’s relations with the Comintern and status as a “pariah party” (to use Ken Jowitt’s term); and the elimination of the party’s old guard

during the Moscow purges (new documents on which from Comintern archives are now available both in Moscow and in Bucharest). The “tri-centric” model proposed explains much of this factious, internecine struggle: vying for control of a handful of militants were the so-called prison nucleus; the clandestine politburo (often split between a faction in Romania and a faction in exile in Vienna or Prague); and the Moscow émigré group. After the party’s first leader, the worker Gheorghe Cristescu, no general secretary was of ethnic Romanian origin until Gheorghiu-Dej.⁸ The elimination of General Secretary Stefan Foriș in April 1944 and the rise of the “prison nucleus” headed by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej are also covered in chapter 2.

Chapter 3 examines the communist takeover and the establishment of the “people’s democracy”; the relationship between the “Muscovites” and the “home communists”; the simultaneous “right-” and “left-wing deviation” of Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, and Teohari Georgescu; and the “ethnicization” of the party elite. The elimination of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu and the problem of “national communism” are also discussed.

Chapter 4 covers the crucial year 1956: the shock of de-Stalinization and the emergence of Romanian “national Stalinism” (a concept elaborated in chapter 1). Fascinating archival materials are used to highlight the role of the RCP in the world communist debates, the configuration of an anti-Khrushchev platform, and the role of Gheorghiu-Dej and his group during the Hungarian revolution. Also discussed are the resulting panic, preemptive strikes, and repression, especially the quelling of student unrest in Timișoara and Bucharest; the impact of the Hungarian revolution on Romania’s Hungarian intelligentsia; and unrest in Transylvania.

Chapter 5 and part of chapter 6 focus on “national Stalinism”; Romanian-style Titoism; the split between Bucharest and Moscow; and Gheorghiu-Dej’s political style and search for autonomy. Romania’s peculiar position in 1962–64; the “declaration” of 1964; Romanian efforts to mediate in the Sino-Soviet split; contacts with Mao and Khrushchev; and Gheorghiu-Dej’s political legacy are all examined.⁹

Chapter 6 looks at Ceaușescu’s rise to power and liberalization “from the top,” involving moderate reforms and a growing opening to the West. The 1968 Czechoslovak crisis; Ceaușescu’s “de-Sovietization” and simulated de-Stalinization of Romania; and the beginnings of the personality cult identifying party, nation, and leader are all discussed here, followed by an examination of the political, economic, and ideological reasons for the re-Stalinization subsequently embarked on.

Chapter 7 focuses on Ceaușescu's late neo-Stalinist phase and experiment in "dynastic communism" (or "socialism in one family," as it has been called). Ceaușescu's personality, leadership methods, and conflicts with Gheorghiu-Dej's "barons" (Emil Bodnăraș, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Gheorghe Apostol, Alexandru Drăghici, and Chivu Stoica) are discussed. The *Cartea Albă a Securității* (White Book of the Securitate), five published volumes of extremely significant documents, is used to interpret the Ceaușescu regime.¹⁰ Recently published interviews with former leaders such as Alexandru Bârlădeanu, Cornel Burtică, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, and Corneliu Mănescu are also important here, as are my personal interviews in June 1994 and my voluminous correspondence with former members of the party elite.

Chapter 7 also delineates the decline, decay, crisis, and final explosion: the RCP's loss of authority, Ceaușescu's renunciation of the principle of "collective leadership," the humiliation of party apparatus, the growing role of the Securitate as the leader's Praetorian Guard, and the mounting discontent among the intelligentsia and party elite (including veterans like Silviu Brucan and Corneliu Mănescu, but also former Ceaușescu protégés like Ion Iliescu and Vasile Patilineț).¹¹ The Epilogue looks at the RCP's afterlife, its problematic disappearance, and the difficult birth of Romania's new democracy.

Although passionately involved with my book, I have tried my utmost to apply what Friedrich Nietzsche once called the *pathos of distance* to the writing of it. My goal is to understand why certain people espoused communism in the 1920s and later, what they believed in, what explains their actions and passions. At least one thing is clear: joining the RCP during the interwar period was an existential choice that was bound to result in persecution and endless deprivations and hardships. In the 1930s, no lucid person could have anticipated that communists would one day rule Romania.

During and after the Great Depression, opposition to fascism merged with worship of Soviet Russia and Stalin in motivating strong allegiances and unswerving partisanship. For radicalized members of ethnic minorities, the internationalist promises of Leninism were particularly seductive.¹² Romanian communism involved deep emotions, profound faith, a frantic sense of a historical mission, and no less intense forms of disillusionment and frustration. Whole social groups were wiped out in the name of the Leninist ideological chimera. In Romania, as elsewhere, the communists promised universal emancipation: liberty, equality, fraternity, and solidarity. What happened in reality was utterly

different. My book seeks to tell the story of this tragedy, with its dashed hopes and missed opportunities, delineating its crucial aspects and the reasons for communism's failure.

As I have indicated, I grew up in a communist revolutionary family, and some of my relatives, including both of my parents, who joined the RCP in the early 1930s, convinced that they were participating in a heroic struggle to save humanity from fascist barbarism, also figure in this book. My mother and father fought with the International Brigades in Spain during the Civil War, and at the age of twenty-four, my father lost his right arm. They then spent World War II as political refugees in USSR, working for Radio Moscow's Balkan Department. The head of the Romanian Service was Leonte Răutu, later the Romanian cultural dictator; the head of the Central European Department was Rudolf Slánský (found guilty of "Zionist espionage and sabotage," he would be hanged in Prague in 1952); and one of the editors working for the Hungarian service was Imre Nagy, later prime minister of Hungary (deported to Romania after the Hungarian revolution, then shipped back to Hungary and executed in June 1958). All these names figured in family conversations during my childhood. During the purges of the 1950s, my parents and many of their friends were suspected of "pro-Western cosmopolitanism," and in 1960, my father was expelled from the party he had joined as a naïve and enthusiastic zealot in 1933. Their lives and their beliefs were symptomatic of the tragic adventure of communism in the twentieth century. This book tries to offer a description and an explanation of this experience in Romania, highlighting some of the actors, architects, and victims of the communist vision of "a better world."

CHAPTER I

Understanding National Stalinism

Legacies of Ceaușescu's Socialism

My personal hobby is the building of socialism in Romania.

Nicolae Ceaușescu, August 1989

Of all the revolutions that took place during the *annus mirabilis* 1989, only the Romanian one was violent. Furthermore, despite its ostensible radicalism and the strong-worded, overblown antitotalitarian rhetoric of its paragons, the Leninist heritage has turned out to be more persistent and resilient in Romania than in the other countries. While the self-described “postcommunists” are still peripheral in Romania, the party that ruled Romania until the November 1996 elections, and returned to power in 2000, Ion Iliescu’s Partidul Democrației Sociale (Social Democratic Party), is dominated by personalities belonging to the “second and third echelon” of the deposed regime. Although the ideological fervor has long since been exhausted, what remains is a widespread network of vested interests, connections, protections, and, more often than not, fear of change.

This chapter explores the sources of the Romanian “exception” among the former communist countries of Eastern Europe, the extraordinary vitality of authoritarian mentalities and practices in that country, and the commingling of Leninist and Byzantine traditions in a uniquely cynical and manipulative political formation. In his memoirs, Ion Iliescu, president of Romania between 1990 and 1996, and then reelected in 2000, who was for many years a member of the top party elite under Nicolae Ceaușescu, admits that by the end of the dictatorship, the Ro-

manian Communist Party had ceased to perform any of its traditional roles in a Leninist regime, whether mobilizational, orientative, or promotional. Instead, the Gargantuan RCP was nothing but a propaganda fiction, a tool for satisfying Ceaușescu's endless hubris: "Political obtuseness, ignorance, and even stupidity, overgrown vanity, arbitrariness, and despotism that for a period of time coexisted with an aggressive and arrogant narcissism, together with the dogmas and the practices of a system that had already shown its limits, transformed [Ceaușescu's] monopersonal leadership into an immense parody and the source of monumental errors."¹

Iliescu's self-serving critique of his predecessor sounds like a neo-Khrushchevite (or rather Gorbachevite) attempt to attribute the main errors committed over the years by the Conducător to the vagaries of a vainglorious individual rather than to the system that permitted Ceaușescu's erratic policies. But how, after all, could Iliescu undertake an overall demystification of the political ideology and system whose existence once underwrote his political career? In short, Iliescu's claims to a personal dissident past notwithstanding, there was no liberal, reform-oriented faction within the RCP, no group whose belief system and aspirations had been informed by the logic of Marxist revisionism.² At best, there were private conversations in which individuals deplored certain "exaggerations" and "distortions." This is not to say that every member of the party elite, especially in the 1970s, fully supported Ceaușescu's obsessions. In the late 1970s, certain important figures did consider different options (including political murder) for getting rid of the increasingly obnoxious tyrant. Among them, the most significant was Vasile Patilineț, a former central committee secretary in charge of the Securitate and the army (between 1965 and 1970), who died in a strange car accident in the early 1980s while ambassador to Turkey.³ But neither Patilineț nor, later on, the authors of the "Letter of the Six" (March 1989) ever favored completely overturning the existing communist system. They despaired over Ceaușescu's *folie des grandeurs*, not over the system's inherent and insurmountable irrationality. Although bitter critics of Ceaușescu's personal dictatorship, they never questioned the legitimacy of the party's monopoly on power.

Nevertheless, the RCP, which had almost four million members and was perhaps the largest communist party, in proportional terms, in the world, disappeared almost overnight on December 22, 1989. The chants of "Ole, Ole, Ceaușescu nu mai e!" (Olé, Olé, Ceaușescu is no more!) marked not only the end of the bicephalous dictatorship of Nicolae and

Elena Ceaușescu, but also the irresistible and irrevocable demise of the seventy-eight-year-old RCP. When the ruling couple fled the Central Committee Building by helicopter and the enraged masses stormed the party headquarters, it seemed that a whole chapter of history was over and Romanians were finally free of the asphyxiating totalitarian order they had been living in for more than four decades.

The decision-making process in Leninist organizations is secretive, cliquish, and programmatically deceptive—the very opposite, in fact, of the transparent, consensual, impersonal procedure aimed at in democratic polities. For instance, if one does not grasp the role of political thugs such as the Soviet spies Pîntilie Bodnarenko (Pantiușa) and Alexandru Nikolski in the exercise of terror in Romania during the most horrible Stalinist period, and their personal connections with Gheorghiu-Dej and members of his entourage, it is difficult to understand the origins and role of the Securitate, which is essential in any political analysis of Romanian communism.⁴ Furthermore, as a general rule, given the “informality” (i.e., paucity of records) that was a prominent characteristic of the system, there was very little institutional memory, and what there was practically inaccessible. Instead, there were a range of conflicting personal views of what the past had been about.

The leaders brought to the top during Ceaușescu’s last decade in power knew almost nothing about Gheorghiu-Dej, Ana Pauker, Petre Borilă, Gheorghe Apostol, Iosif Chișinevschi, Alexandru Moghioroș, and other leading RCP personalities in the 1950s and 1960s. Even Dumitru Popescu, the chief ideologue during the 1970s, is extremely vague in his memoirs in trying to define the nature of interpersonal relations in Gheorghiu-Dej’s politburo.⁵ As A. James McAdams has poignantly noted about the interviews with potentates of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR): “One of the most interesting findings is how little most policymakers, including many members of the SED’s [Socialist Unity Party’s] highest circles, actually knew about the most important events and controversies of the East German past. Politically significant information was restricted to very few people. At Politburo meetings leaders discussed very little of substance. Two or three individuals walking in the woods on a weekend frequently made important decisions, and expertise rarely played a major role.”⁶

Messianic Pretense and Pariah Communism

The sudden and violent collapse of the Ceaușescu regime—and with it the whole communist institutional infrastructure—could actually have

been anticipated. Some authors detected the increased chasm between the ruling clique and the party rank and file. There were signs of discontent within the elite that indicated anxiety and panic rather than the coalescence of potential successor groups. A Bulgarian-style intraparty coup resulting in the nonviolent ouster of the *lidero maximo* was thus unthinkable in Romania. The reasons for this situation were threefold: first, the uniqueness of Ceaușescu's monopolization of political authority and power. Second, the absence of minimally credible reform-oriented groups and/or individuals among the top elite (the prime minister, Constantin Dăscălescu, his predecessor Ilie Verdeț, and even the former foreign minister Ștefan Andrei were hardly the equivalent of a Petar Mladenov, Todor Zhivkov's successor as the Bulgarian Communist Party leader); they had all participated in the cultic pageants, praised Ceaușescu to the sky, and endorsed his vagaries. Third, the impact of the Soviet changes during the perestroika period had been less powerfully experienced in increasingly isolated Romania than in traditionally Soviet-echoing Bulgaria. Whereas the Bulgarian communist elite had always derived its legitimacy from its unflinching solidarity with Moscow, the Romanians (especially after the 1964 "divorce" from the Kremlin) based their domestic and international prestige on being different from and even challenging the Russians. Moreover, applied even to the RCP's highest-ranking apparatchiks, the members of its central committee's executive committee, the term "elite" scarcely describes these scared, humiliated, and slavishly obsequious bureaucrats, who were unable to envision, let alone undertake, any action against the ruling clan.⁷

Economic and social conditions were catastrophic in Romania toward the end of the Ceaușescus' reign. The country was imbued with hopelessness, corruption, and universal fear, and there was a sense that the end must surely be near. Discontent was rampant, but the Securitate managed in general, it seems, to nip any form of dissent or resistance in the bud. The pharaonic cult of personality underpinning the Ceaușescus' experiment in dynastic socialism was both absurd and shallow. The Conducător and his wife had long surrounded themselves with sycophants, many of them recruited from their extended family, and this "familialization of socialism," to use Ken Jowitt's term, speeded up during the 1980s.⁸ Belu Zilber, an extremely controversial survivor of the Pătrășcanu show trial, called the Ceaușescu regime a "monarchy of dialectical right."⁹ The interplay of Leninist and Byzantine symbols, values, and styles was crucial in the making of Romania's communist power elite, and key nomenclatura biographies highlight the main sources of tension in the RCP: the clash between "home" communists

and “Muscovites”; the enduring persecution of intellectuals; the repression of any Marxist revisionism; and the combination of crypto-fascist and Stalinist beliefs, especially during the last stage of Ceaușescuism.¹⁰

At a time when other Soviet-style regimes had embarked on more or less radical reforms, when the politics of glasnost proclaimed by Mikhail Gorbachev threatened to contaminate and destabilize the long-slumbering East European elites, the Romanian regime eccentrically stuck with a strange, baroque vision of socialism that blended Stalinist tenets with ethnocentric, romantic nativist nostalgia for a fantasized past. On the one hand, Ceaușescu emphasized the party’s monopoly on power, the need to preserve collective ownership of the means of production, and the historical competition with the capitalist West. On the other, his rhetoric was unabashedly chauvinistic, anti-Hungarian, and obsessed with the need to establish a perfectly “homogenous” ethnic community. Programmatically self-enclosed and suspicious of domestic liberalization, Ceaușescu’s system displayed enormous contempt for its own citizens. The Conducător and his underlings had erected a “socialism” whose repressive features made many Romania-watchers highly pessimistic about the country’s future. It seemed that in the heart of Europe, an attempt was being made to establish a sui generis form of Asiatic despotism, a system in which, as Karl Marx noted, the state is “nothing but the personal caprice of a single individual.”¹¹

The plight of the Romanians under Ceaușescu’s dictatorship was acknowledged and deplored by many people in both East and West. For instance, on February 1, 1988, independent activists from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and the GDR demonstrated in solidarity with the victims of Ceaușescu’s tyranny in response to an appeal a month earlier by the Czechoslovak human rights group Charter 77, which declared: “Just as peace and freedom in Europe are the common and indivisible cause of all Europeans, . . . what goes on in Romania [is] the common concern of us all. Just as he who is indifferent to the lack of freedom of his neighbor and fellow citizen can only enjoy doubtful freedom himself, . . . his feeling of warmth and his sense of light remain doubtful if he combines them with indifference to the cold and darkness in which his less fortunate neighbors are consigned to live.”¹²

Several months later, the usually restrained *Economist* published an editorial urging the West to treat Ceaușescu as a pariah of the international community: “Romania’s dictator does have one exploitable weakness: huge vanity. He longs for flattery in the big wide world. Insult this vanity—by vocal condemnation and ridicule at the United Na-

tions and other international gatherings—and Western countries might just prevent a lot of senseless destruction in Romania. Noisy protests could slow down systematization [such as the razing of half of Romania's 15,000 villages] until, with a bit of luck, the death of Romania's seventy-year-old sick despot made the whole idea a dismal and surreal memory."¹³

In a similar vein, commenting on Ceaușescu's mania for grandiose buildings, Daniel Chirot predicted that the huge edifices being erected to gratify the Conducător's Mussolini-like architectural taste would be a lasting "monument to the catastrophe that one unconstrained madman can inflict on society, a living reminder of 'The Epoch of Gold, The Epoch of Ceaușescu.'"¹⁴

There was a growing tendency to dismiss the Romanian experiment in autocracy as a historical anomaly, irrelevant to the general development of Soviet-style regimes. The truth, however, is that Ceaușescu exacerbated and carried to the utmost extremes certain characteristics of the Stalinist political culture within the peculiar Romanian conditions. It is important therefore to go beyond the mere blaming of the late leader and to try to fathom the inner logic of Romanian communist history. After all, Nicolae Ceaușescu was part and parcel of a political family with its own memories, settlements of accounts, frustrations, and romantic dreams, hopes, and expectations.¹⁵ Before his accession to the office of general secretary in March 1965, he had carved out a successful career in the communist bureaucracy, and he was skillful enough to succeed Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, one of Eastern Europe's most adroit communist maneuverers. A number of books have come out in Romania in which Ceaușescu's former politburo colleagues and rivals admit his unique capacity for dissembling, simulated modesty, and initially unthreatening behavior.¹⁶ It is important to note, however, that these interviews and memoirs are impregnated with nostalgia for Gheorghiu-Dej's times and rarely reveal any repentance or remorse (this is also true of Silviu Brucan's memoirs).¹⁷ When he succeeded Gheorghiu-Dej in 1965, Ceaușescu was no greenhorn in the communist world of merciless intrigue and backstabbing: in the late 1940s, he had studied in Moscow, and later he heard Khrushchev's virulent anti-Stalin speeches at the Twenty-second Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1961 and frequently visited China, North Korea, and Yugoslavia. While it is true that Gheorghiu-Dej did not anticipate his own sudden demise, it is also true that among all his politburo subordinates, Ceaușescu had the most palpably Leninist credentials to aspire to inherit

Gheorghiu-Dej's mantle. Ceaușescu was disciplined, obedient, cautious, and self-effacing. His prospects were presciently noted by Ghiță Ionescu, who in 1964 (a year before Gheorghiu-Dej's death) identified the youngest politburo member and secretary in charge of cadres as the dictator's most likely successor. Like Stalin in 1923–24, Ceaușescu was the figurehead of the apparatus and guarantor of its younger members' chances of moving up in the hierarchy by getting rid of the old-timers.¹⁸

Ceaușescu and his cult were in fact less of an aberration than they appeared to external observers. However, as Ken Jowitt has shown, Romanian communism could never fully overcome its pariah genealogy: during its years underground, the party elite had been made up primarily of allogenic elements (such as Bulgarian, Hungarian, Jewish, or Ukrainian Romanians) with little understanding of the country's national values and its people's aspirations. The party championed ideas and slogans with minimal appeal to the class it claimed to represent, portraying Romania as a "multinational imperialist country" and advocating the dismemberment of the Romanian nation-state brought into being by the Versailles and Trianon treaties of 1919–20. Its endorsement of Russian territorial claims on Bessarabia and northern Bukovina failed to stir a responsive chord in either Romania's urban proletariat or its radical intelligentsia (who were, in any case, overwhelmingly attracted by the extreme right).¹⁹ Lacking a mass base, dominated by foreigners, fractured, and pathetically impotent, the RCP was, moreover, treated contemptuously by the Comintern, further enhancing its pariah psychology—indeed, an excruciating inferiority complex on the part of its cadres. The anti-Soviet outbursts of Gheorghiu-Dej's last years and of Ceaușescu's twenty-four-year rule thus have to be seen in the context of the overall history of Romanian communism. In any other East-Central European communist party, it would have been much more difficult for a Ceaușescu to amass so much power.

Anti-Soviet Stalinists

Ceaușescu's success in the Romanian communist elite and victory over potent rivals in the struggles that followed Gheorghiu-Dej's death in March 1965 were foreshadowed, predetermined, and facilitated by the party's history of unmitigated commitment to the exclusive logic of Stalinism. Generations of Romanian communists had treated their nation as a pawn to be maneuvered. With the exception of Enver Hoxha's Alba-

nia, Romania was the only communist state in Eastern Europe to resist the shock waves of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's cult.²⁰ This is particularly significant given that between 1948 and 1956, Romania had hosted the Cominform and its weekly *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy*, Khrushchev had tested the trustworthiness of the Romanians in the turbulent fall of 1956, when, unlike Hungary or Poland, Romania produced no significant mass movement toward liberalization (which is not to gloss over the student unrest in Bucharest, Cluj, and Timișoara). Moreover, Gheorghiu-Dej had persuaded the Soviet leaders that Romania was immune to any "bourgeois" or "revisionist virus": in June 1958, based on complex arrangements between the Romanians, the Russians, and the Yugoslavs, the occupying Soviet Army units left Romania.²¹ In Khrushchev's mind, this was a gesture of goodwill to the West, meant to appease those outraged by the news from Budapest of the execution of Imre Nagy and other leaders of Hungary's revolutionary government.

Khrushchev miscalculated, however: far from emulating the Soviet Union's limited relaxation, the leadership of the RCP further tightened its grip on Romanian society. The only point at which the Romanian communists were 100 percent on the Soviet side was when Moscow reverted to Stalinist methods. Not only did Gheorghiu-Dej and his politburo warmly endorse and offer logistical support for the crushing of the Budapest uprising in 1956, they used the specter of the "revisionist" danger in order to wage a massive witch-hunt within their own party in 1957–58 and indulge in new purges of the intelligentsia.²²

The reprehensible features of the last stages of Ceaușescu's rule should thus not be permitted to obscure his regime's structural underpinnings in the totalitarian traditions of a party beset by an overwhelming inferiority complex. The "paranoid style" in Romanian Leninist politics was rooted in an underdog mentality, problematic national credentials, long subservience to Moscow as the mecca of proletarian internationalism, and deep distrust of anything smacking of democratization or liberalization. This complex manifested itself not only in the RCP's inordinate concern with authenticity and genealogy, but also, on a more general level, in the endless fixation on national identity and historical predestination among the Romanian intelligentsia, communist, noncommunist, and anticommunist alike. (All the characteristics of a political culture obsessed with its own questionable heredity are observable first in the personality of Gheorghiu-Dej, then in that of Ceaușescu, different though the two men certainly were.) This pariah syndrome is

perhaps the main explanation for Ceaușescu's grotesque behavior during the last decade of his reign.²³

Unlike the Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish, and Yugoslav Leninist parties, the underground RCP was, in fact, a dramatically peripheral formation, entirely dominated by the Comintern apparatus. It managed to achieve national prominence and impose its hegemony only with the help of the Soviet Army after the country's occupation in August 1944. This subservience to the Kremlin obliterated the critical faculties of both the Romanian communist elite and the party's rank and file. There were individual exceptions, but they were swiftly marginalized and silenced.²⁴ The party's claim to legitimacy was therefore always a moot issue, even after General Secretary Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej came up with born-again Romanianism in 1963–64. The émigré historian Georges Haupt, one of many Western observers interested in Romania's "special path," suggested that the best interpretation of the RCP's break with Khrushchev was as an inventive and generally successful exercise in authority building by an elite traditionally bereft of any political legitimacy.²⁵ Combined with limited domestic liberalization from above, this distancing from Moscow offered the increasingly self-confident new wave of party bureaucracy an ideological underpinning: Ceaușescu's supporters and protégés during the late 1960s were middle-aged apparatchiks who took themselves seriously as exponents of a national managerial class on the way up. The elimination of the Stalinist old guard provided them with long-expected opportunities to rise. Many of these party and government bureaucrats identified with the autonomist promises of the first stage of Ceaușescuism and participated eagerly in the consolidation of the new general secretary's personal power, among them Maxim Berghianu, János Fazekás, Ion Iliescu, Ion Ioniță, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Cornel Onescu, Gheorghe Pană, Vasile Patilineț, Ion Stănescu, and Ilie Verdeț, who had worked in the 1950s and early 1960s under Ceaușescu's guidance and thought that his pledge to enhance collective leadership was more than just a temporary device to get rid of the veteran Stalinists. Later, as Ceaușescu realized that under his shield, this party apparatus group envisaged semi-reformist, potentially destabilizing strategies, he backed down and restored a superannuated, extremely rigid, ideologically dominated leadership pattern. Whatever resembled competence, modernity, rational analysis, or intellectual dignity had to be attacked and humiliated. Provocations were organized to manufacture ideological heresies, sometimes under the most bizarre pretexts, as in the case of the notori-

ous scandal trumped up in 1982 against members of an alleged “Transcendental Meditation Sect.” Hence, both in theory and in practice, Ceaușescuism was a desperate attempt by a beleaguered elite to win domestic authority and international recognition by emphasizing precisely the quality it had most conspicuously lacked for most of its history: national prestige and influence.²⁶

Ceaușescu was not, indeed, always unanimously hated or despised. Far from it: during the 1960s and early 1970s, many Romanians found themselves stirred and exhilarated by the Conducător’s defiance of Moscow, the rapprochement with Yugoslavia and the West, and their country’s imagined future grandeur. How this political capital was squandered and the political elite were emasculated by their commander in chief is a fascinating topic, explored later in this book. Suffice it to compare the RCP’s international status at the time of the Ninth Congress in July 1965 (the first to confirm Ceaușescu’s supremacy at the top) with the abysmal international isolation of both party and leader when the Fourteenth Congress convened in November 1989. Boycotted by Romania’s “brotherly” Warsaw Pact countries and an embarrassment to Western Marxist parties, the RCP could by then count on the solidarity only of North Korea and a few Third World radical movements.²⁷

Decrepit Tyranny

The Conducător’s xenophobic outbursts, romanticization of Romania’s archaic past, identification with mythological Thracian-Dacian chieftains and despotic feudal princes, fascination with organic corporatism, and rehabilitation of militaristic and ethnic symbols had deeper sources than Ceaușescu’s personal psychology—they originated in the RCP’s problematic relationship with Romanian cultural traditions and patterns. A look through party documents that have been released, relating both to its clandestine period and to the years of outspoken Stalinism, shows a complete rejection of Romanian national values, a deep distrust of the intelligentsia, and even an ignorance of the fundamentals of the country’s history. A vulgar materialist interpretation of history was used to justify the rigid schemes demonstrating that Romanians were eager to espouse world proletarian revolution. It mattered little to the communist doctrinaires that the real problems of the country involved coming to terms with modernization and the adoption of Western institutional models. They had their universal recipes, borrowed from the

Comintern's arsenal, and did not hesitate to impose them on the Romanians. Later, when the RCP rewrote its own history, and the leaders posed as champions of national values, the patriotic travesty ensured a gigantic manipulation: the same people who had unswervingly served Soviet interests were the ones to deplore the loss of national identity. Under Gheorghiu-Dej, and even more so under Ceaușescu, Romanian communists donned national dress, swore by the country's tricolor flag, and sang patriotic anthems to show their commitment to "sovereignty and independence."²⁸

With his spasmodic gestures and flaming harangues, Ceaușescu became the embodiment of this changed party persona. He tried to combine a residual attachment to Leninist faith with a newly discovered sense of the usefulness of nationalist symbols and demagoguery. Whether he indeed became a true Romanian nationalist or was merely a pragmatic opportunist is debatable. As in the case of Serbia's Slobodan Milošević, there are persuasive arguments for both hypotheses. The true value for him, however, was personal power, and he was ready to sacrifice principles and loyalties without any reticence in order to preserve it. By the end of his life, Ceaușescu had nothing to offer but his hollow rhetoric and hysterical calls for more repression. *A stringe rîndurile*, closing ranks around the Conducător: this became the leitmotif of the propaganda warfare against the Romanian population.

By the end of the 1980s, the RCP was for all practical purposes already extinct. All that remained of it were a series of ill-concocted legends and huge gatherings of robotlike individuals mechanically applauding the dictator. During the Fourteenth RCP Congress in November 1989—after the Berlin Wall had been torn down; after Bulgaria's Todor Zhivkov had been eliminated by the Petar Mladenov-Dobri Dzhurov conspiracy; and after the Soviet puppet general secretary Milos Jakes and his henchmen had been ousted by the "Velvet Revolution" in Czechoslovakia—Ceaușescu single-mindedly acted out the pageants engineered by his devoted cheerleaders. Or at least they *seemed* devoted. In fact, among the delegates to the congress and the elected members of the last central committee was the man who a month later would be one of the main architects of the Ceaușescus' trial by kangaroo court and execution: General Victor Atanasie Stănculescu, first deputy minister of the armed forces and one of Elena Ceaușescu's protégés. What was Stănculescu really thinking, one wonders, during the long minutes of thunderous applause and rhythmic chanting of "Ceaușescu și poporul!" (Ceaușescu and the people!)?

Perhaps Stănculescu and other party and government bureaucrats (including the Securitate chief, Lieutenant General Iulian Vlad) already realized that time had run out for Ceaușescu and his clan. They may have understood that unless something radical was done, a popular uprising would soon annihilate the much-acclaimed “multilaterally developed socialist society.” But they did nothing.

A spontaneous revolt came like a lightning strike in Timișoara in mid December 1989. The Romanian Communist Party, which had made possible Ceaușescu’s ascent to absolute power, was challenged by a non-violent plebeian rebellion that quickly became contagious and spread to other cities, including Bucharest. Ceaușescu and the party were identical, the propaganda proclaimed—perhaps the only scrap of truth in the ocean of mendacity flooding the everyday lives of the Romanians—and indeed, once Ceaușescu had been shot, his party, already a political ghost, disappeared. Later, some died-in-the-wool ex-cadres and sycophants would try to resurrect it and promoted the legend of Ceaușescu’s heroism, but these were pathetic attempts to revive a political corpse.²⁹

The RCP was finished, both as an ideological movement and as a mobilizational bureaucracy. This was understood by unrepentant but lucid Leninists like Ion Iliescu and Silviu Brucan, who would form a successor party pretending to break with all totalitarian traditions: the National Salvation Front (NSF). In this, they enjoyed the help and know-how of a group of younger Marxist political scientists and sociologists, most of who had been active in the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party Academy and the Center for Military History under the Ministry of Defense (for many years headed by Lieutenant General Ilie Ceaușescu, the Conducător’s brother). The most influential among them, an old acquaintance of Iliescu’s, according to the latter’s memoirs, was Virgil Măgureanu, who became a powerful figure as head of the Romanian Service of Information (SRI). It was only after the Democratic Convention’s electoral victory in 1996 that Măgureanu was finally demoted (in the spring of 1997). Others—Vasile Ionel, Ioan Talpeș, Iosif Boda, Paul Dobrescu, Victor Opaschi, and Ioan Mircea Pașcu—served in significant executive advisory positions at various stages of the post-Ceaușescu era. This shows that underneath the apparent cleavage, the ostentatious hiatus that separated the demise of the RCP and the rise of the NSF regime, there was a relative continuity in terms of the political elite.

The Conducător and his execrated wife having conveniently been executed, the most compromised figures of his regime—two former prime ministers, Manea Mănescu and Constantin Dăscălescu; the CC secre-

taries Emil Bobu and Ion Coman; the former Securitate head Iulian Vlad; the former deputy prime minister Ion Dincă; the former vice chairman of the state council Gheorghe Rădulescu; two former foreign ministers, Ștefan Andrei and Ion Totu; and Ceaușescu's youngest son and would-be successor Nicu—were given prison terms. But the new power elite did not emerge out of nowhere. Neither was it all that new. It preserved memories and loyalties that allowed it to stick together in the ensuing confrontations. As for certain relative newcomers, like Petre Roman, he was to discover the dangers of political caudillismo in the absence of an institutional base.³⁰

Both Gheorghiu-Dej's and Ceaușescu's regimes amounted to persistent efforts to circumvent the evolution of the Romanian communist political culture into a post-totalitarian, more permissive configuration in which the party's monopolistic hold on power (the constitutionally enshrined "leading role") would be significantly limited by the rise of semi-official and unofficial groups and associations and the principles of expertise would supplant the increasingly obsolete—"heroic-militant"—mobilizational ethos.³¹

I agree with those authors who portray "Ceaușescuism" as more than just an excessive variant of personal dictatorship in the mold of Idi Amin Dada, Rafael Trujillo, or Jean Bedel Bokassa. There were common elements, such as imperial pageants, hunting parties, collections of jewels, and other elements of megalomania hardly reconcilable with the ascetic tenets of Leninism. But these did not exhaust the nature of the Ceaușescu regime. The truth is that, following Gheorghiu-Dej's obstinate anti-Khrushchevism, Ceaușescu pursued a policy of constant rejection of any genuine reforms, a line of neo-Stalinist, autarchic retrenchment that included elements of nepotism, kleptocracy, and corruption characteristic of Brezhnevite "neotraditionalism": "It [Ceaușescuism] was, rather, an expression of a complex of political, social, and economic policies which, taken together, comprised a coherent alternative to the development strategies pursued by other state-socialist regimes in Eastern Europe."³² Starting in the late 1950s, and evolving in a convoluted and sometimes perplexing way, which made it increasingly self-centered and self-enclosed, Romanian domesticism turned out to be a "conservative" (almost "reactionary") political strategy devised to preserve and enhance precisely those values, symbols, and institutions questioned by the proponents of "socialism with a human face" from Imre Nagy and Alexander Dubček to Mikhail Gorbachev. Paradoxically, for about fifteen years, between 1964 and 1980, Romania enjoyed the sympathy of

both Western governments and democratic socialist and Eurocommunist circles.

In the second half of the 1980s, Ceaușescu emerged as one of the most vocal critics of Gorbachevism and the champion of an updated version of militant Stalinism. He seemed bizarrely and single-mindedly intent on resurrecting the Bolshevik catechism of Stalin's *Problems of Leninism*, notwithstanding his own earlier condemnation of Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia and apparent encouragement of "creative Marxism" in 1968–69, when translations into Romanian of alternative Marxist theorists such as Antonio Gramsci, Roger Garaudy, György Lukács, Herbert Marcuse, and Louis Althusser were authorized. After 1971, however, and even more after the Jiu Valley coal miners' strikes in the summer of 1977, Ceaușescu renounced this orientation and embarked on a radical re-Stalinization.³³

In the late 1980s, with the Soviet Union launching dramatic reforms, Ceaușescu excoriated Gorbachevism as a most dangerous "right-wing deviation" in world communism and proclaimed the vital need to reassert uniformity. He questioned Moscow's supremacy but was viscerally opposed to any doubts about the ultimate infallibility of Marxist-Leninist dogma. To an even greater extent than Erich Honecker, Milos Jakes, or Todor Zhivkov, Ceaușescu lamented the very impulse to rethink the Marxist-Leninist credo. The same man who in 1974 had admitted the obsolescence of the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat and seemed inclined to favor the Eurocommunist search for an alternative Marxism now called for the reinforcement of repressive institutions and denounced the transition to pluralism as a restoration of capitalism.³⁴ Indeed, in his opposition to Gorbachev's semi-Menshevik, revisionist offensive, Ceaușescu carried to an extreme the logic of what might be called national Stalinism. This deep hostility was reciprocated by Gorbachev, who treated the Romanian leader's vainglorious ambitions with scorn. "The West tried to use Ceaușescu as an irritant against Moscow, a sort of 'Trojan horse' within the socialist camp," Anatoly Chernyaev, Gorbachev's senior foreign policy aide, recalled. "But, as I already knew then, these efforts were in vain. Gorbachev treated the maneuvers of the 'Romanian fuhrer' (as he sometimes called Ceaușescu) with irony and contempt and did not consider him a factor in real politics."³⁵

In fact, of all the Warsaw Pact leaders, Ceaușescu engaged in the most virulent attack on Gorbachev's reformist program. Speaking in April 1988, he emphasized Romania's alleged priority to the USSR in terms of "developing socialist democracy." At the same time, he lambasted at-

tempts to revise the Marxist-Leninist tenets that he regarded as clearly defined by the classics of what Czesław Miłosz has called “the New Faith.”³⁶ That his Marxism was primitive and amazingly anachronistic is beyond any doubt, but it was precisely his rudimentary and archaic, almost mythicized, beliefs that made him basically immune to self-doubt and openness to other views. He urged like-minded leaders of international communist parties to close ranks with him and oppose Gorbachev’s dangerous attempts at de-Stalinization and democratization: “We must bear in mind that there are a number of theoretical and practical deviations, both on the right and on the left. Of course, both of them are equally dangerous. . . . However, it is my opinion that the main danger today comes from the rightist deviations, which can seriously harm socialist construction and the struggle for disarmament, peace, and mankind’s overall progress.”³⁷

National Communism and National Stalinism

A significant distinction has to be made between national communism and national Stalinism. The former was a critical reaction to Soviet imperialism, hegemonic designs, and rigid ideological orthodoxy. It was relatively innovative, flexible, and tolerant of political relaxation. National communism encouraged intellectual creativity and theoretical heresies. Rejecting Soviet tutelage, national communists generally favored revisionist (both moderate and radical) alternatives to the enshrined Stalinist model. The most important exponents of national communism were Josip Broz Tito and his close associate Edvard Kardelj, the Hungarian communist reformer Imre Nagy, Czechoslovakia’s Alexander Dubček, the Italian communist leaders Palmiro Togliatti and Enrico Berlinguer, and the Spanish Communist Party’s general secretary and main theorist of Eurocommunism, Santiago Carrillo. For some time after his return to power in 1956, the Polish communist leader Władysław Gomułka also appeared to be a proponent of this direction.

By repudiating universal recipes and theoretical ossification, by maintaining the right of each party to pursue its own strategy regardless of Soviet interests, national communism included a relatively open-minded and progressive component. It questioned the dogma of the dictatorship of the proletariat and asserted that reform, including party reform, was inevitable. In its most advanced forms, it broke with the monotheistic vision of the party’s predestined historical role and ac-

cepted the principles of political pluralism, including the idea of a genuine multiparty system. For instance, national communism was the starting point for the Hungarian revolution of 1956, which completely tore down the Stalinist institutional system.³⁸

In contrast, national Stalinism systematically opposed any form of liberalization, let alone democratization. Reactionary and self-centered, it valued autarky and exclusiveness. It adhered to a militaristic vision both domestically and internationally. National Stalinism clung to a number of presumably universal laws of socialist revolution and treated any “deviation” from these as a betrayal of class principles. It voiced political anguish and played on sentiments of national isolation, humiliation, and panic. It frequently tempted Leninist elites in countries where the pre-Stalinist radical left had been weak or totally nonexistent, or where the regime’s legitimacy derived from an external source: Romania, Albania, North Korea, Czechoslovakia after 1968, and the GDR.

In brief, national communism was the opposite of national Stalinism. While national communism promised regeneration, national Stalinism was a symptom of degeneration. National communism valued diversity and was potentially pluralistic. National Stalinism was narcissistic and anachronistic; it valued uniformity and exploited tribalistic resentment and allegiances. An illustrative comparison is the case of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, where the Serbian strongman Slobodan Milošević adopted an unequivocally national Stalinist platform reminiscent in more than one respect of Ceaușescu’s nationalist frenzy: militaristic, tribalistic, collectivistic, and intolerant. Like Ceaușescu, Milošević was more than a gray apparatchik, albeit, of course, that he knew how to simulate one as long as he was in a subordinate position. He was possessed by the myth of his own predestined mission as a national redeemer. To attain his goals, he needed a totally dedicated following, made up of people unreservedly loyal to him. In the words of Aleksa Djilas: “While undoubtedly a product of the Yugoslav communist political machine, he lacks the docility and devotion to routine that a true man of the apparatus should possess. He resembles, rather, a leader of some revolutionary conspiracy who works in secret, surrounded by mystery, and is permanently busy appointing and dismissing members of the central committee.”³⁹ At the opposite pole, the Slovene national communists were able to lead their country toward a pluralist polity.

National communism and national Stalinism can, of course, “dialectically” coexist, and one and the same leader may at some times be a national communist and at others move toward national Stalinism,

whether because of personal preferences or international and domestic constraints and challenges. The denouement of national communism would be a postcommunist order. The goal of national Stalinism was the achievement of the Leninist utopia, even at the cost of generalized poverty. These are descriptions of two theoretical archetypes, however, and mixed situations have occurred more often than not, Castroism and Maoism being the most significant cases.

In introducing this dichotomy, I am aware of the risks of idealizing national communism as a “benign” alternative to the Stalinist model. And yet, historically, the transition to pluralism in communist societies was stimulated by reformist initiatives from within the ruling elites. Think of the factional struggles between the ultra-Stalinist, antisemitic Natolinian and the open-minded, more liberal and anti-Stalinist Pulawska groups after Polish communist orthodoxy fragmented in 1956, or of the role Imre Nagy and his associates played in catalyzing the Hungarian revolt. National communist options, although half-hearted and often inconsistent, can be considered “progressive” in the context of one-party regimes. Within the same political paradigm, national Stalinism appears as “reactionary.” Once this paradigm is abolished and the free competition of political forces gathers momentum, the distinction between “socialism with a human face” and national Stalinism presents nothing more than historical interest. This explains the pathetic irrelevance of Dubček’s originally heretical position once the Czechs and Slovaks had the chance to exit from the straitjacket of self-limited reforms.

Nicolae Ceaușescu was a man of immense will and ambition, and he certainly put his stamp on the Romanian communist tradition, modifying it in crucial ways. However, what is most important is that the principal features of Romania’s Stalinist political culture were not decisively changed by Ceaușescu. The apparent uniqueness and outrageous eccentricity of the Romanian experiment up until its violent demise in December 1989, together with its striking contrast to other communist regimes, should not obscure the preservation of the values, attitudes, and options adopted at the party’s founding congress in May 1921: political voluntarism, sectarianism, radicalism, cult of hierarchy and authority, scorn for parliamentary democracy and constitutionalism. To be sure, numerous additional attributes developed and expanded over the years, and there were cleavages in the party’s identity and self-definition, fractures, and turning points. But it is the leading assumption of my approach that in Romania, whether under Gheorghiu-Dej or Ceaușescu, the legacy of radical Stalinism was never thoroughly questioned—and

could therefore not be abandoned.⁴⁰ It is symptomatic that although Romania's intelligentsia was one of the most sophisticated in Eastern Europe, and definitely one of the most intimately influenced by French literary and academic standards, it remained untouched by the French passion for leftist values. In the absence of a social group attached to the socialist egalitarian creed, and without a powerful tradition of working-class activism, there was little source of autonomous revisionist initiatives. Even the student movement that developed in 1956 was primarily committed to the slogans of national awakening rather than to those of a free and democratic polity.

The student and intellectual unrest in Romania in the summer and fall of 1956 was different from the humanistic-socialist onslaught on Stalinism in Hungary and Poland. In fact, in many respects, its goals coincided with the emerging nationalist line. For example, the elimination of mandatory Russian in schools, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania, renunciation of some of the most egregious industrial investments, rehabilitation of major Romanian cultural figures, and reconsideration of the status of the Hungarian minority and the adoption of a strong "homogenizing" strategy were all goals.⁴¹ But the Romanian leaders were not merely nationalists. They were first and foremost Stalinists, as shown by their peculiarly Stalinist hostility to any form of private property and the decision to complete the collectivization of agriculture against all odds. In this latter action, Ceaușescu distinguished himself by cruelty, intransigence, and lack of scruples.

Can the History of Communism Be Written?

Hegel once wrote that the problem of history is the history of the problem. Intellectual history cannot be separated from sociological and psychological approaches. Especially in the field of communist studies, biographies, interviews, and memoirs matter as much as official documents, whether published or unpublished. But obviously no memory is infallible, and this is especially true of people whose whole lives have been plagued by a denial of their most human sentiments. Survival and success in the communist elites were not the result of dedication to truth and honesty. Even those who now repent are still interested in presenting their pasts as less despicable than those of their former accomplices. A political history of Romanian communism has therefore to go beyond the mere description of the stages in the rise and fall of this party-

movement and grasp the whys of phenomena such as Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu's trial and execution in 1954; the power-sharing arrangements between Gheorghiu-Dej's "prison nucleus" and the "Muscovites" Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca; Stalin's role in Gheorghiu-Dej's accession and, no less significant, in breaking Pauker's hold on the party elite; Ceaușescu's rise to power, his attempts at de-Stalinization; and later the erratic (and ultimately suicidal) choices that led to the fatal experiment in dynastic socialism.

Romanian communism is no less representative of twentieth-century left-wing Leninist radicalism than the Yugoslav, Czech, or Hungarian varieties, and it is important to grant it the thorough, unbiased analysis it deserves. How can anyone understand Ion Iliescu's attachment to the communist ideals of his youth without knowing of what those ideals consisted and why so many people found them so appealing? Nor can a political history be oblivious of the price paid by Romanians for the communist utopian experiment. The Romanian gulag was a vast, terrifying reality, in which Danube-Black Sea Canal project, initiated by Gheorghiu-Dej, functioned as a huge concentration camp to destroy the political and cultural elites and immortalize the triumph of the working class over the detested bourgeoisie. Interrupted after Stalin's death, the canal project was resumed and completed under Ceaușescu, a symbol of his unquenchable thirst for glory and a proof of the continuity of the Romanian Stalinist obsessions. Another frightening example is the appalling Pitești experiment in the destruction of human dignity. In Pitești, imprisoned students were forced to engage in diabolical forms of "mutual reeducation," serving simultaneously as victims and tormentors, and those who refused to engage in the monstrous sadistic rituals supposed to create the "New Man" lost their minds and were eventually killed.⁴² In short, in order to fulfill their Leninist blueprints, Romanian communists acted ruthlessly: prisons such as Sighet, Jilava, Gherla, Aiud, and Poarta Albă testify to the extent of the terror. These horrors were, however, merely structural dimensions of the Stalinist experiment in Romania. Ideology, terror, resentful cynicism, and bureaucratic conformity were the main pillars that guaranteed the establishment and consolidation of Leninist regimes in East-Central Europe.

CHAPTER 2

A Messianic Sect

The Underground Romanian Communist Party, 1921–1944

Stalinism means the killing of the inner man. And no matter what the sophists say, no matter what lies the communist intellectuals tell, that's what it all comes down to. The inner man must be killed for the communist Decalogue to be lodged in the soul.

Aleksander Wat, *My Century*

The Left had always been relatively marginal and underdeveloped in Romania, primarily because of the country's laggard modernization and the late development there of a politically active urban industrial proletariat. The absence of a robust and dynamic social base did not, however, fatally paralyze or forever inhibit leftist movements. Among Romania's radicals, the will to change social reality was as passionate, all-consuming, and overarching as among Bulgarian or Hungarian leftists. When Leon Trotsky visited Romania in 1912–13 to cover the Balkan wars, he felt himself to be surrounded by brotherly comrades.

The political culture of the Romanian Left included a tension between Westernizers and the advocates of a special Romanian road to modernity that avoided capitalism. In this context, the Bessarabian role in the constitution and development of Romanian leftist radicalism cannot be stressed enough. Bessarabia, the easternmost part of Moldova, had been seized by Russia in 1812 and was held by it until 1918. When the Bolshevik revolution allowed the subjugated nations of the czarist empire to pursue their self-determination, the province became part of the Romanian kingdom. Bessarabian radicals absorbed the mythology of total revolution that was the hallmark of the Bolshevik break with the

status quo. In this respect, they introduced a social-utopian dimension into Romanian national political culture, which was traditionally less tempted by experiments. Slavophile, *narodnik* components imported from Russia directly influenced the idea of a predestined missionary role for the national intelligentsia in Constantin Stere's rising Romanian populism, or *poporanism*, a term derived from the Romanian word *popor* (people). The most important tribune of populist (poporanist) ideals and ideas was the cultural journal *Viața Românească*, in which leftists contrasted the supposed purity of Romanian agrarianism to corrupt, Western-originated capitalist civilization. In a backward agrarian society like Romania, suffering the shock of modernization, most intellectuals were more interested in speaking for nationalism than for class struggle.

The Romanian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDWP) was formed in 1893. In 1899, however, a large faction of the RSDWP joined the strong Liberal Party, an event known as the "Treason of the Generous," which undermined the socialist movement until the rebirth of the party in February 1910 as the Romanian Social Democratic Party (RSDP).¹ The early Romanian socialist movement was, however, more an intellectual club than an organic upsurge from below, and its weakness reflected the social composition of the nation. According to Michael Shafir, it was determined by three main factors: (1) the socio-economic structure (i.e., the country's "eminently agrarian" character); (2) the "non-Romanian ethnic origin" of many socialist and communist leaders; and (3) the "disregard displayed by the Romanian Communist Party towards traditional national aspirations."² But the most important factor was that the Romanian socialists were campaigning for a virtually nonexistent class, as the left-wing populist author Constantin Stere argued.³

In short, early Romanian socialism was mostly an exotic import. Indeed, the word "socialism" had not even been known in Romania when he arrived in the country as a refugee, the brilliant Marxist thinker and former Russian revolutionary Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea (1855–1920; born Solomon Katz in Slavinka, a village in the Ekaterinoslav region of Ukraine), wrote to the great German socialist Karl Kautsky in 1894.⁴ Dobrogeanu-Gherea would himself, in fact, become a founding father of Romanian socialism.

Under Nicolae Ceaușescu, there would later be a dogged attempt to demonstrate the continuities between Romania's socialist tradition and the communist movement. In reality, however, socialism, as developed under Dobrogeanu-Gherea's theoretical influence, involved recognition

of the need to pursue legal means of achieving the political and economic goal of working-class emancipation. The socialists' ambition was, not to overthrow the system, but rather to develop a strong working-class political party that would participate in the country's political life. In the long run, of course, the purpose was to build a socialist society, but this remained a very nebulous objective. The socialist initiatives were related first to the improvement of proletarian conditions, education, women's emancipation, and minority rights, and only then to a complete systemic break.

As previously mentioned, the national political culture was still dominated by the tension between formal institutions, including constitutional arrangements modeled along Western lines, and traditionalist-archaic forms of social communication and cooperation. There was a chasm between the democratic procedural claims of the political actors (including the political parties) and their failure to unite elite and masses into a modern class society. In terms of development, from about 120,000 in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Romanian working class grew to almost 250,000 in 1910 and to approximately 400,000 in 1920, Nicolae Jurcă asserts.⁵ According to Mircea Mușat and Ion Ardeleanu, there were 819,422 people employed in the industrial sector in 1930, and the Romanian working class numbered less than 1,000,000 in 1939.⁶ However, Mușat and Ardeleanu were official historians of the Ceaușescu regime, and their figures may have been inflated in order to serve its purposes. Michael Shafir estimates that "the modern industrial proletariat... had reached the unimpressive figure of some 400,000 out of a population of nearly 20 million" by 1938, which seems more reasonable.⁷

Social constellations in prewar Romania were patriarchal-communitarian rather than impersonal-institutional. Status rather than class society was preeminent, with peasant values and habits leaving their imprint on political conduct, mentalities, and symbols.⁸ The absence in the Romanian Orthodox Church of a supranational authority like the papacy; the belatedness of the country's adoption of the "rites of modernity"; and the need to take over foreign models hastily, without adjusting for existing conditions, all contributed to making Romanian political culture peculiarly syncretic and potentially explosive. Shafir captures the nature of this conglomerate well: "Patronage and nepotism, both known to have been characteristic of political life, may be explained by such traditional peasant attitudes, though only partially so. The historical legacy of an oriental mentality—not unknown to cor-

rupt by offering material privileges in exchange for acquiescence and deference—as well as influences stemming from a dominant religion, in which the accent is on externalization rather than internalization of values, must have played an equal part in molding inter-war political culture and behavior.”⁹

Individualism, civil society, separation of power and guarantees for civic rights were often derided by a political elite more interested in rapid self-enrichment, privileges, and social climbing than in turning Romania into a Western-style modern society. In this respect, the socialist movement was proclaiming values definitely linked to modernity, with a positive definition of class ideologies and values.

As a result of the victory of the Entente and defeat of the Central Powers, Romania emerged from World War I significantly larger than it had previously been: Transylvania (formerly a province of Austria-Hungary administered from Budapest), Bessarabia, and Bukovina all became parts of the greater Romanian state. In 1919–20, the new borders were internationally sanctioned and guaranteed by the Versailles, Neuilly, and Trianon treaties. This was both a geographic shift and a demographic sea change: from a population of about 7,700,000 million in 1914, post-Trianon Romania more than doubled to approximately 16,500,000 million in 1922, of which ethnic minorities made up a quarter.¹⁰ Moreover, with the incorporation of Transylvania, which was relatively more industrialized, Romania’s working class, and hence socialist activities, increased significantly, especially in the coal-mining Jiu Valley and cities such as Cluj, Braşov, Reşiţa, and Timişoara. For the first time in its history, the country had areas with consistent, powerful traditions of mass working-class activism. So whereas at the beginning of the twentieth century, the vision of a socialist revolution had simply been an intellectual pipedream, with few real workers to espouse it, after World War I, under the impact of the Bolshevik revolution and the Hungarian Soviet experiment of 1919, the revolutionary ferment in Romania was genuine, not only in the western part of the country, but also in the eastern provinces, especially Moldova, Bessarabia, and Bukovina.

The revolutionary unrest associated with the pro-Soviet radical Left in turn generated a radicalization of rightist nationalist movements.¹¹ Furthermore, the complexity of the educational policies of the new Romanian state and the growth of the student population aided recruitment on the Left among the ethnic minorities, especially Jews. Communism and fascism came into being simultaneously in Romania, the former as an estranged scion of the pre-1918 socialist movement, the lat-

ter as the offspring of the country's nationalistic ethnocentric Right. In spite of their mutual recriminations and frequent clashes, both extremes were from the beginning viscerally hostile to the existing constitutional democratic arrangements and roundly detested modern pluralist democracy. Both the radical Left and the extreme Right saw bourgeois institutions as alien to Romania's true interests: the communists saw them as capitalist devices to co-opt the workers into an unjust social, economic, and political system; and the fascists were convinced that market values and parliamentarianism were ill-suited to genuine Romanian aspirations. The birth of Romanian fascism occurred under the sign of rabid anticommunism, antisemitism, and xenophobia, combined, in a self-styled blend, with mystical Orthodox spirituality, the passionate cultivation of the rural traditions, and the rejection of liberal institutions and democratic politics. For A. C. Cuza, one of Romanian proto-fascism's chief ideologues, and his disciple Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, capitalism amounted to an assault on national soul, and Jews were primarily responsible for it. Bolshevism, with its exalted internationalism, was denounced as another Jewish ploy aimed at destroying Romanian values and promoting the interests of a mysterious group of conspirators.¹² As was also the case with the Right in Poland, the Romanian Right was obsessed with the role of Jews in both capitalism and communism and saw liberalism and Bolshevism as two different faces of the same assault on the nation's primordial virtues.

The Bolshevik Revolution and Romanian Socialism

The October Revolution and the birth of the Soviet state immediately and strongly affected Romania. Among the political elite, there was fear that Bolshevik ideas would infect Romania's workers and poor peasants. In 1918, there were large demonstrations in Bucharest and other industrial centers, some of which, such as the December 1918 printing workers' strike in Bucharest, resulted in serious clashes between leftist activists and the police. A major land reform was implemented in 1921 as a way of easing social tensions and reducing the shocking disparities between classes.

The first Romanian Communist Party elite was rooted in the Romanian socialist movement, which explains the intensity and stubbornness of the "Bolshevization" purges that plagued party life during the 1920s and early 1930s. There was genuine enthusiasm among Ro-

manian socialists for the generous promises of the Bolsheviks after the collapse of the Russian empire, but from the very beginning, as in other social democratic movements, there was a dramatic split between those who were ready to endorse the radical measures of the Bolsheviks and those who decried the terrorist methods of Lenin, Trotsky, and their comrades. Between 1917 and 1920, the Romanian Left therefore split, and in May 1921, the Congress of Dealul Spirii (named for a Bucharest neighborhood) sealed the divorce of the “traditionalists” (moderates) from the radicals (maximalists) chiefly responsible for the emergence and development of the Romanian socialist movement after 1880.

The moderates, who maintained their social democratic identity and refused to adhere to the twenty-one conditions imposed by Lenin for admittance into the Communist Third International (founded in 1919), were true disciples and followers of the Ukrainian-born Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, who had fled to Romania in 1875 as a result of his involvement in the Russian social democratic movement. Most of the other founding fathers of Romanian social democracy were refugees from the Russian empire too, including Nicolai Petrovici Zubcu-Codreanu, Eugen Lupu, and Zamfir Arbore. Ironically, Dobrogeanu-Gherea’s son Alexandru and Arbore’s daughter Ecaterina became ardent communists, sought refuge in the Soviet Union, and were executed during the Great Terror.

When the Romanian Social Democratic Party reemerged in 1910, it was under the influence of the Bulgarian-born Christian Rakovsky, who was close to Dobrogeanu-Gherea and later one of Trotsky’s closest friends and supporters. Rakovsky was abroad at the time of the RSDP’s founding, having been expelled from the country because of his subversive activities, but he returned in 1912 and engaged in furious opposition to Romania’s involvement first in the Balkan wars and later in World War I on the side of the Entente powers. After August 1916, when Romania joined the Entente and the police retaliated harshly against the socialists for their opposition to the war, the RSDP almost disintegrated.

From Rakovsky, a true proto-Bolshevik, Romania socialists acquired an almost mystical sense of supranationality and contempt for old-fashioned national loyalties. When the Bolshevik revolution took place, Rakovsky (who along with Dobrogeanu-Gherea had been Trotsky’s host in Bucharest in 1913) sent an enthusiastic telegram from Stockholm, where he was attending an international conference. Earlier that year,

together with Mihai Gheorghiu-Bujor, Rakovsky had established a Romanian Committee of Social Democratic Action in Odessa, which became the embryo of a revived Social Democratic Party.

Through his domestic and international connections, Rakovsky contributed significantly not only to the revival of the socialist movement in Romania but to its radicalization. He was the organizer in 1905 of demonstrations in support of the mutinous Russian sailors of the battleship *Potemkin* (who were granted asylum in Romania, souring relations with the czarist empire) and a perpetual driving force behind antimilitarist propaganda. During World War I, Rakovsky shared Lenin's belief that the imperialist war had to be transformed into civil war and a worldwide revolutionary socialist upheaval. He made a crucial contribution in organizing pro-Bolshevik action among Romanian troops in Russia. By the end of 1917, a Romanian Military Revolutionary Committee had been formed in Odessa in response to Rakovsky's inflammatory call to turn the troops' weapons against the national bourgeoisie in solidarity with the Bolshevik revolution.

Later Rakovsky went to Moscow, founded the Romanian desk at the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, and played a significant role in preventing de jure Soviet recognition of Romanian sovereignty over Bessarabia. In January 1919, he became the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars in Ukraine, where he planned to join forces with Béla Kun's Hungarian communist republic and invade Romania (against Lenin's specific orders to the contrary).¹³ Rakovsky's vision of self-determination was closer to Rosa Luxemburg's utopian internationalism than to the traditional socialist principle of national self-determination. Furthermore, he considered expanding the revolution to be a duty of the highest kind, which should not be encumbered by "petit bourgeois" national attachments and nostalgias. This vision of the Soviet Union as the "motherland of all workers" remained the psycho-emotional foundation of the ardent commitment of the Romanian communists.

As for Dobrogeanu-Gherea, his very name became anathema to these communists. His theory of new serfdom (*neoiobăgie*) contradicted Leninism's claim to be able to "storm heaven at a bound" and bring socialism into being through sheer power of will, in that it insisted on the need to develop modern economic and social institutions as a necessary precondition for any socialist transformation. As a stalwart of the Second International, Dobrogeanu-Gherea believed that the revolution must logically begin in the industrialized West and would only later

spread to the less-developed countries of the East. Having started out as a Russian revolutionary and endured Russia's notorious jails and exile on the shore of the White Sea, Dobrogeanu-Gherea passionately hated imperialist, reactionary czarism, but he was only too aware of the lack of any democratic tradition in his native country. He had abandoned his youthful anarchist (Bakuninist) vision and had essentially become a Plekhanovite, suspicious of Lenin's Blanquist attempt to force the gates of history. Shortly before his death in 1920, Dobrogeanu-Gherea wrote prophetically that should a communist takeover occur before economic conditions were ripe, society might "develop regressively, toward medieval society, towards primitive communism."¹⁴

With regard to the national question, a burning issue for Romanians concerned about the fate of Bessarabia and Transylvania, Dobrogeanu-Gherea's position was dictated by his internationalist philosophy. He supported Rakovsky's plan for a Balkan federation and had opposed Romania's entry into the Second Balkan War. But had he lived to see the subsequent Soviet claims on Bessarabia, he might well have agreed with his disciples, the leaders of Romania's Social Democratic Party, in unequivocally rejecting them as merely Great Russian chauvinism disguised as proletarian internationalism. In Shafir's words, "he would in all probability have refused to endorse Soviet territorial irredentism, if only because in his eyes the 'first workers' motherland' was simply not a socialist country, and her message, consequently, could not be one of liberation."¹⁵ Dobrogeanu-Gherea's theories would become the principal target of the Romanian communists during the painful process of the "Bolshevization" of the RCP.

The main ideological conflict at the Congress of Dealul Spirii in May 1921 was provoked by Moscow's desire to dictate the RSDP's internal decisions. The traditionalists did not see any reason (and they had said this to Lenin and Trotsky) for the Kremlin to control them. The party's sovereignty, in their view, belonged to nobody but the party's domestic elite. To this, the maximalists retorted that the Second International was nothing but a "stinking corpse," in Rosa Luxemburg's vitriolic phrase. Its unique, treacherous purpose, Lenin incessantly proclaimed, was to disarm and emasculate the proletariat. Breaking with the moderates, purging the lukewarm, and enhancing revolutionary fervor seemed a noble, urgent duty to the maximalists.

Almost half a century later, on May 7, 1966, a little more than a year after his election as party general secretary, Nicolae Ceaușescu was to deliver a significant speech on the occasion of the forty-fifth anniversary

of the foundation of the RCP. The young and, at that point, reformist (and almost iconoclastic) general secretary would directly question many of the party's previously sacrosanct dogmas, drawing on party archives to document the initial reservations of the six delegates of the Romanian radicals who had gone to Moscow for talks about the structure and goals of their movement and about the party's need to eliminate the moderates (called renegades) and join the Third, Communist International.¹⁶

The six delegates in question were Gheorghe Cristescu (Plăpumaru), a worker in the mattress industry, who a few months later, in May 1921, was elected general secretary of the RCP; Constantin Popovici; Eugen Rozvan (Jenő Rozvanyi), representing the Socialist Party of Transylvania; Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea (Constantin's son); David Finkelstein (alias David Fabian); and Ioan Fluieraș, a well-known Transylvanian union leader of rather reformist persuasion. On their way to Moscow, they stopped in Kharkov, Ukraine, for consultations with Rakovsky, who tried to impose a list of the new party's leadership on his ex-comrades and friends. Cristescu and his colleagues bluntly rejected Rakovsky's patronizing attitude, and the talks were broken off. Then the delegates went on to Moscow, where negotiations took place with Comintern Chairman Grigory Zinoviev; Nikolai Bukharin, the editor of *Pravda*; and a representative of the Balkan Communist Federation named Sablin. Among the delegates, Cristescu, Popovici, and Rozvan expressed reservations about the Soviet assessment of the political and economic situation in Romania. Popovici, Cristescu, and Fabian had long been active in the Romanian socialist movement and had been charged with subversion for their leading role in the Bucharest mass demonstration on December 13, 1918. In other words, they all had impeccable pedigrees as socialist militants and union activists. Later, Popovici refused to join the new RCP, while Cristescu and Rozvan played important roles as top leaders. As for Fluieraș, the Russians obtained his elimination from the Romanian delegation on the pretext that he had participated in the great national assembly in Alba Iulia in December 1918 when the unification of Transylvania with Romania was announced and had served as a member of the Transylvanian ruling council chaired by Iuliu Maniu.

Informed about the quarrels in Kharkov, Zinoviev and Bukharin asked for a new meeting with the Romanians, at which Bukharin called upon the Romanian delegates to positively answer the following six questions:

1. Do you affirm in the name of your central committee that you accept the twenty-one conditions [for admittance into the Comintern]?
2. [Do you agree] [t]hat these theses and conditions should be adopted without reservations by your next congress?
3. Do you affirm that immediately after your return to Romania, Fluieraş [and other socialist leaders disliked by the Comintern] will be expelled from the party?
4. Do you affirm that you will obey all the decisions of the Balkan Communist Federation and that you will provide this federation with your warmest participation and understanding?
5. Are you ready in cooperation with the communist part of the delegation [i.e., David Fabian and Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea] and with the participation of the executive committee of the Communist International to elaborate a new list of the central committee made up of trustworthy communists?
6. Can you guarantee that immediately after your return to Romania, the party's central press organ will change its position and will start writing in a communist style?¹⁷

These were typically Leninist demands: the complete subordination of national parties to the international center in Moscow; the right of the Comintern to appoint local leaders; and the imposition of the Comintern's slogans on the local communist media. No deviation from the strongly centralized line was to be tolerated. To their credit, Cristescu, Popovici, and Rozvan objected to what they rightly perceived as humiliating foreign expropriation of the inalienable right of their party to elect its own leadership. Later, Cristescu's enduring opposition to Soviet interference and to the party's self-destructive strategy led to his expulsion and, after 1944, to his political persecution. The twenty-one conditions were intended to give world communism a strictly hierarchical, militaristic structure, completely subordinating local (national) organizations to Moscow; to institutionalize the Leninist assault on the legacy of the Second International (accused of treason for its behavior during World War I); and, last but not least, to create an international army of revolutionaries unqualifiedly loyal to the Soviet cause. As the Italian ex-communist militant and writer Ignazio Silone noted, the Bolshevik leaders consciously exploited the mystical commitment to the cause of world revolutions symbolized by the USSR as the homeland of the world proletariat.

The Comintern activists became de facto carriers of the Soviet orders. Woe to those who dared to question the official line as formulated by the Kremlin. Silone later wrote:

Between 1921 and 1927, I had repeated occasion to go to Moscow and take part, as member of the Italian Communist delegations, in a number of congresses and meetings of the Executive. What struck me most about the Russian Communists, even in such really exceptional personalities as Lenin and Trotsky, was their utter incapacity to be fair in discussing opinions that conflicted with their own. The adversary, simply for daring to contradict, at once became a traitor, an opportunist, a hireling. An adversary in good faith is inconceivable to the Russian Communists. What an aberration of conscience this is, for so-called materialists and rationalists absolutely in their polemics to uphold the primacy of morals over intelligence. To find a comparable infatuation one has to go back to the Inquisition.¹⁸

The maximalists returned to Romania convinced that the break with the reformists was mandatory. Abdicating completely to Soviet pressure, they agreed that the list of the party's next executive committee be drawn up in Moscow. On December 2, 1920, the delegation signed a pledge to recognize the theses of the Comintern's Second Congress, as well as the twenty-one conditions of adherence. Cristescu and his comrades promised the Russians that they would fight wholeheartedly for the forthcoming party congress to admit and adopt these conditions. The pledge carried the signatures of Cristescu, Popovici, Rozvan, and Saşa Gherea. Fabian was traveling through Russia and did not sign this document. On December 10, 1920, the Romanian representatives (Gherea and Popovici, with Cristescu coming at the end) finally met Lenin, but their discussion was limited to abstract generalities about the transition from capitalism to socialism in Russia and the need for the world proletariat to pursue a revolutionary path.

At the party congress in May 1921, the majority of the delegates voted for the transformation of the Socialist Party into the Communist Party of Romania: 428 delegates voted for unconditional affiliation with the Third International, and 111 approved of this affiliation but with reservations.¹⁹ One day after this historical decision, police invaded the congress hall and arrested the delegates on the charge of "conspiracy against state order."

Ceauşescu's official historians, Mircea Muşat and Ion Ardeleanu, would have a difficult task dealing with the political orientations of the new party. On the one hand, they flirted with the national-communist ideology and deplored the "internationalist"—in reality, strictly pro-Soviet—line of the new party. On the other, to pander to Ceauşescu's pretense that no real cleavage had taken place in the party's history, they reiterated the hoary dogma about the "formation of a qualitatively new

party.” To reconcile these two positions, they resorted to hollow sacramental formulas: “The Communist Party, the direct continuator of the revolutionary, socialist movement, of the working-class party created in 1893, was the most vigorous offspring of Romania’s contemporary era, which further completed and raised to a higher level the struggle for the social liberation of the Romanian nation.”²⁰

Among the two hundred militants arrested were fifty-one delegates to the congress, including five members of parliament. In December 1921, in Bucharest, a group of militants formed the executive provisional committee of the Romanian Socialist-Communist Party. Among those involved were the young student Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu and Marcel Pauker, a scion of one of Romania’s most affluent families, who was married to Ana Pauker, later a prominent communist figure. The Third Congress of the Comintern took place in Moscow between June 22 and July 12. The fourteen Romanian delegates did not take the floor. They were mostly militants of Bessarabian and Bukovinean extraction (Alexandru Buican-Arnoldi, G. Moscovici [alias Bădulescu], N. Gorniski, Asea Tinkelman, Saul Ozias, and Alexandru Lichtblau); Alexandru (Alec) Constantinescu represented the socialist old guard. The Romanian writer Victor Frunză, author of an anecdotally rich history of the RCP, considers that this was the beginning of a pattern of the parallel (and often conflictual) development of two communist parties, internal and external.²¹ For him, people like Buican and Moscovici (the latter often referred to by the aliases Bădulescu and Ghiță Moscu) did not in any way represent the local organizations in Romania. It is true that these were not prominent figures in the group of former socialists turned communists, but the distinction was eventually irrelevant. As with all the other European communist parties, Moscow’s domination was unquestionable, and there is no reason to posit the existence of two parties when in reality the distinction was simply between factions equally loyal to the Comintern’s behests.

In his report, the Bolshevik ideologue Karl Radek said that as long as the party leaders were in prison, there was no point in the Comintern recognizing another leadership. Gelber Moscovici was elected to the executive committee of the Comintern under the pseudonym Alexandru Bădulescu. Under pressure from democratic movements and parties, the state of siege in Romania was lifted in early 1922, allowing Romanian communists to voice their views more assertively. Simultaneously, in January 1922, the Dealul Spirii trial of the communist activists began. It was more than just a judicial proceeding: what was at stake was the na-

ture of the party established in May 1921, its relationship to national aspirations and values, and the tactics it was ready to use in order to destroy Romania's nascent democratic system and, in accordance with Leninist tenets, impose a "dictatorship of the proletariat." The masterminds of the trial decided to bring together the political activists arrested in May 1921 and a terrorist group headed by Max Goldstein, who on December 8, 1920, had organized a bomb attack on the Senate. Needless to say, at the time, *Socialismul*, the official organ of the Marxist Left, had expressed strong opposition to such terrorism.²² Among the defendants were people who later held important positions in the party, including five general secretaries: Gheorghe Cristescu, Elena Filipovici, Elek Köblös, Vitali Holostenko, and Boris Ștefanov. The communists' line of defense was to disassociate themselves from any terrorist sedition. As Gherea emphasized, the communists were tried for political disagreements, not for having been involved in undermining the existing order. This was of course disingenuous, part of the famous distinction between communist esoteric and explicit languages so well captured by the historian and political philosopher Franz Borkenau.²³ Asked to respond to the military tribunal, Basil Spiru (Erich Hutschneker) insisted that as a student, he considered that he had the right to think differently from members of other social groups without being penalized for this "offense."²⁴

From the very beginning, the communists used the rhetoric of freedom and rights, protesting charges of unconstitutional behavior. Needless to say, in reality, the party included an underground, secret component, linked to propaganda operations. What many of the altruistic intellectuals who took the side of the communists and defended them before the tribunal did not realize was that a radically new type of party had appeared on the Romanian political scene: one that did not see any reason to abide by the traditional rules of the game, and whose political radicalism made it a sworn enemy of all established institutions and values. This was not just a splinter group of the old, traditional socialist movement made up of idealistic teenagers and disabused intellectuals.

The new party was part and parcel of a global movement for the destruction of the liberal order and its replacement by a supposedly superior, substantive, not simply formal, type of democracy. Those involved in it believed, like Nikolai Rubashov, the main character in Arthur Koestler's novel *Darkness at Noon*, that the salvation of the Bolshevik revolution was the highest law.²⁵ Years later, before their summary executions in Stalin's jails during the Great Terror, Alexandru Gherea, Elena

Filipovici, and Marcel Pauker (alias Luximin) were caught in the type of ethical and psychological dilemmas described by Koestler. But in that early season of Bolshevism in power, when all hopes seemed justified and defending the homeland of the revolution was a categorical imperative, who could have predicted that fifteen years later not only Rakovsky but Zinoviev, Radek, Bukharin, Béla Kun, and their Romanian protégés would be exterminated during the Stalinist Great Purge as “venomous serpents,” “filthy vermin” that had infiltrated the glorious army of the world proletariat? Who could have believed that these heroic comrades eventually would denounce one another and participate in the self-destruction of the Comintern’s old guard?

Under mounting pressure from democratic circles, Romania’s liberal government proposed a partial amnesty for political offenses, and a decree to that effect was signed by King Ferdinand in June 1922. The RCP thus enjoyed implicit recognition of its legal right to exist. In August 1922, its executive committee included, among others, Gheorghe Cristescu, Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Fabian, Luximin, Eugen Rozvan, Boris Ștefanov, and Haim Sternberg, all of whom were to play crucial roles in the party’s factious struggles and murderous settlements of accounts.

Following Moscow’s line, the communists approached the social democrats with the idea of establishing a “united front,” but their proposal was rejected because of the socialists’ apprehensions about the communists’ undemocratic propensities. The bitterness between the former comrades continued throughout the interwar years, when communists referred to social democrats as “social fascists” and the social democrats reciprocated by depicting communists as a Soviet Trojan horse in Romania. The conflict between them subsided somewhat after the Seventh Comintern Congress adopted the Popular Front strategy in 1935.

Toward Clandestinity

The Second Congress of the RCP, held secretly in the industrial city of Ploiești, not far from Bucharest, on October 3–4, 1922, completed the organizational and ideological work initiated during the First Congress, adopted Bolshevik-style bylaws, and affirmed full affiliation to the Comintern. All those who had expressed reservations about the split in the socialist movement (the so-called “unitary socialists”) were purged, and

a decision was taken to break with the dominant trade union movement and create communist unions that would join the Profintern (International of "Red" Trade Unions).²⁶ The general report regarding the activity of the party since its formation was presented by Marcel Pauker, who belonged to both the secretariat and the executive committee, and whose sparkling, indomitable, and overly ambitious personality led in following months and years to many crises in the party leadership. Echoing some of the Comintern's obsessions regarding the "Balkan colonial nature" of Romania's society and economy, Pauker maintained that revolutionary problems in the region could be solved only at the Balkan level.²⁷ In turn, Boris Ștefanov presented a resolution on the agrarian question in which he arrogantly discarded the meaning of the agrarian reform initiated by the Averescu government in 1921. Obsessed with their rigid dogmas, Romanian communists failed to see the long-term consequences of this reform, which abolished the great estates and made Romania a nation of small landowners. Ștefanov's hostility toward private property was countered by Eugen Rozvan, who argued that no peasant would agree that becoming a small landowner was wrong. As for the national question, the Second RCP Congress paved the way for the follies of the next decade by proclaiming the imminence of the world revolution and the need to establish a "Soviet and Federal Republic of the Balkan and Danubian States." Ana Pauker, another mounting star of Romanian communism, presented a report on the women's revolutionary movement, while her husband Marcel delivered one on the new bylaws. Article 1 of the RCP's statutes identified the party as the "Partidul Comunist din România" (Communist Party of Romania), a section of the Communist International, whose "goals are identical to those of the International it belongs to."

The Second Congress elected a central committee whose composition reflected a balance of forces between the former socialist militants and the newly regimented, often feverish activists: Gheorghe Cristescu was elected general secretary and Marcel Pauker, David Fabian, Boris Ștefanov, and Elek Köblös were elected members of the central committee. Eugen Rozvan figured among the candidate members, Alexandru Dobrogeanu Gherea was elected to the central control commission, and Ana Pauker, Jacques Konitz, and Boris Ștefanov became members of the general council. (I give only the most significant names that appear again in the pages that follow.) Shortly thereafter, in November–December 1922, the Comintern held its Fourth Congress in Moscow. Pătrășcanu, Köblös, and Marcel Pauker represented the RCP. The role

of the Balkan Communist Federation was further enhanced, and the Bulgarian communist Vasil Kolarov insisted on the need to strengthen the federation's grip on local communist parties. In the meantime, the RCP devoted itself chiefly to organizing factory cells and fostering propaganda networks. Communist cells were formed at key factories in Bucharest, Iași, Timișoara, and Cluj. A party school was founded to promote communist education in Bucharest, and most important texts of Marxism and Leninism, such as *The Communist Manifesto*, fragments of *Das Kapital*, and Lenin's "Tasks of Youth Unions" and on "Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," were widely distributed. By that time, the RCP's central daily newspaper had a print run of about 20,000 copies. So had the party not been outlawed in 1924, it might have had a much larger impact and membership in the years between the wars than was actually the case.

The struggle intensified between the hyperactivist, ultrarevolutionary communist Marcel Pauker and the majority of the top elite, whom he accused of opportunistic passivity. Cristescu particularly resented Pauker's factiousness. In June 1923, the party's politburo (made up of Cristescu, Pauker, and Köblös) was dissolved and a provisional general secretary was appointed in the person of the obscure N. Marian (probably an alias), with Sașa Dobrogeanu-Gherea as a main political adviser. To resolve the crisis, a representative of the Balkan Communist Federation arrived in Bucharest, and a new secretariat was appointed, including Cristescu and Luximin, with Sándor Korosi-Krizsan (often using the alias Alexandru Georgescu) as collaborator.

Because of intensified police harassment, the RCP leadership decided to postpone the Third Congress, scheduled to be held in February 1924. Several months earlier, RCP representatives had accepted the Comintern's dictates on the so-called national question in Romania. The main issue was the definition of the nature of the post-1918 Romanian state: was it, as the Romanian establishment proclaimed, a national unitary state whose formation expressed the will of the overwhelming Romanian demographic majority? Or had Romania, as the Comintern maintained, been a main beneficiary of the imperialist politics of division and exploitation of the defeated powers after World War I? At the Sixth Conference of the Balkan Communist Federation, held in Moscow in September 1923, the Romanian delegation (including Marcel Pauker, Gheorghe Cristescu, Sașa Gherea, Ecaterina Arbore, and Haim Sternberg) accepted the Comintern-authored resolution on the national question in Romania. This was a calamitous decision, because

henceforth, regardless of its members' private views, the party could accurately be called antinational by its opponents. Under any circumstances, the Romanian establishment would have opposed this radical, strongly egalitarian, pro-Soviet group, whose propaganda fomented social unrest and political turmoil. But by underwriting the absurdly anti-Romanian Comintern theses, the RCP renounced any hope of achieving a genuine mass base. According to Comintern dogma, Romania was an imperialist multinational state and the RCP's task, proof of its genuine internationalist commitment, was to fight for "the self-determination of some provinces, up to the point of separation from the existing state."²⁸

Years later, in his major speech on party history in May 1966, Nicolae Ceaușescu lambasted his predecessors for having accepted the Comintern's disastrous interference in the RCP's internal affairs:

The introduction in party documents of the slogan regarding self-determination, to the point of separation from the existing unitary state, [and] the directives given to the party to fight for the breaking away from Romania of territories inhabited in overwhelming majority by Romanians disregarded the actual state of affairs in Romania—a unitary state. Completely erroneous, these directives were actually calling for the dismemberment of the national state and the dissolution of the Romanian nation. Marxist-Leninist teaching sustains the right of nations to self-determination, not in order to disband constituted national states, but, on the contrary, in order to emancipate exploited nations and allow them to constitute themselves into sovereign nation-states in accordance with the will of the broad masses.²⁹

Ceaușescu's indictment of the Comintern's treatment of Romania's national claims reflected the search for a new principle of legitimacy through the consolidation of a national ideology proclaiming the unity, continuity, and homogeneity of the Romanians. Manipulative to a certain extent, this rhetoric was also an expression of wounded pride in the sense luminously discussed by Isaiah Berlin in his classic essay "Bent Twig."³⁰

With characteristic nervousness and impatience, Luximin (well known for his loyalty to Zinoviev, for which he would pay in Moscow twelve years later) voiced the chaotic expectations of the most radical wing of the party. In an article published in *Socialismul*, he insisted that "Europe had ushered in a new revolutionary stage," thus justifying government charges that the RCP was preparing for a violent clash with the establishment. RCP propaganda came across overall as sectarian, feverish, and impervious to the realities of Romania's everyday life. As a result of the involvement of communist militants in the disorders in

southern Bessarabia, including Soviet-backed peasant riots and the proclamation in October 1924 of a “Moldavian” Soviet Autonomous Republic, the RCP seemed more and more of a political anomaly, an alien group dedicated to implementing the Kremlin’s expansionist designs in the Balkans. Things got worse as a result of the Fifth Comintern Congress, held in Moscow between June 17 and July 8, 1924. This was the first congress after Lenin’s demise in January 1924, and it reflected the deepening of the schism between the rival epigones. The resolutions reflected Stalin’s conviction that the expectation of an imminent general revolutionary crisis was groundless.

The duty of the Comintern’s national sections was, however, unconditionally to defend the interests of the Soviet Union. Stalin argued in his polemic with Trotsky that the USSR was bound to remain encircled for a very long period of time. The Bolshevization of the national sections—meaning unconditional loyalty to Moscow and setting aside of any doubts—was thus imperative. According to the logic of “socialism in one country,” there was no more important duty for a communist than to promote the interests of the workers’ fatherland. The RCP had six representatives at this Congress: Moscovici-Bădulescu, David Fabian, Boris Ștefanov, Alexandru Krizsan, H. Gherstein, and Ecaterina Arbore. Unofficially, the delegation included Ioan Dic-Dicescu, Timotei Marin, Alexandru Nicolau, Ana Bădulescu (who was probably married to Gilbert Moscovici), and Ida Georgescu (probably married to Krizsan). Frunză argues that it was because former revolutionary socialists steeped in the Romanian working-class tradition were either very much in the minority (Fabian) or nonvoting members (Ecaterina Arbore) that the RCP’s representatives submitted so ingloriously to what amounted to an official Comintern call for the dissolution of Romania. In any event, the Comintern’s disastrous policy (also imposed on communist parties in other post-Versailles new states, including Poland and Yugoslavia) was enshrined in the documents of the RCP’s Third Congress.³¹

Starting with the Third Congress, which took place in Vienna in August 1924, all major party events were held outside Romania prior to World War II. These events were not massive gatherings that represented the views of different groups, but rather small, conspiratorial conclaves, marked by a deep sense of solidarity and, in Leninist style, by mutual suspicions of treason, factionalism, and sabotage of the party’s revolutionary work. Fraternity there was, the Polish writer Aleksander Wat noted, but also extreme intolerance, shown in the comrades’ readiness to suspect any critical opinion of a sinister hidden agenda.³² Al-

though the Fifth Comintern Congress had elected Cristescu as a member of the IKKI (the Russian abbreviation for Executive Committee of the Communist International), the Third RCP Congress removed him from the party's top position. Instead, Elek Köblös presented the main political report. In complete ignorance of the social and economic situation in Romania, the majority of the participants at the Third Congress maintained that "the social base for the existing power had become narrow and insufficient," and that the "problem of the takeover is that the slogan of the workers and peasants' government should become the mainstay of the party's attitude." Furthermore, this astounding detachment from the country's realities informed the resolution on the national question: "As a result of the imperialist world war, capitalist Romania, pretending to 'unite all Romanians,' subjugated significant parts of politically, economically, and culturally developed nations, and thereby, from a national state, it turned into a state of nationalities. The creation of Great Romania, thanks to the peace treaties of Versailles, Trianon, and Neuilly was at the same time obtained at the price of the renunciation by the ruling clique of the last vestige of the country's national independence."³³

The dogmatic, abstract sloganeering imposed by the Comintern became a true shirt of Nessus for the Romanian communists. The Congress reorganized the party leadership by criticizing both a left-wing "intellectualist deviation" (Luximin and Gherea) and an opportunist rightist faction headed by Ștefanov and Cristescu (who were however reelected to the central committee). Elek Köblös, a Hungarian militant (a carpenter by profession), became general secretary. Korosi-Krizsan was elected to the party's secretariat under his alias Alexandru Georgescu.³⁴

In the meantime, reform-oriented socialists continued their struggle within the existing political and economic framework. Among the leaders of the Socialist Party of Romania, formed in 1922, were well-known militants and theoreticians such as Ilie Moscovici and Constantin Titel-Petrescu. Later, in 1927, in an effort to unite all democratic socialist groups and parties, the Social Democratic Party of Romania was formed. The differences between the communists and the socialists were both strategic and tactic: the socialists believed in evolutionary, democratic transition to an order based on collective forms of property, while the communists fully embraced the Leninist vision of the need to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat.

The resolution on nationalities adopted at the Third RCP Congress, proclaiming the notorious viewpoints on "self-determination" and the

“right to secession,” gave the political forces in Romania that had been mounting a vehement campaign to ban the party all year the final ammunition they needed. For all practical purposes, the RCP was already illegal. Finally, in December 1924, the so-called Mîrzescu Law definitively banned it, precisely on grounds of its disloyal support for the trumped-up Russian claims on Romanian territory and unpatriotic stance (which since 1989 has indeed been irrefutably documented). Approximately 600 communists were arrested, including a number of top leaders.

A few years later, the RCP's first general secretary, Gheorghe Cristescu, one of the few to have anticipated this denouement by questioning Comintern policy, would be stigmatized as a traitor to the working class. He was able to survive physically, at least until 1944, because he understood the mortal danger of going to the USSR. This down-to-earth Romanian worker was more astute and better able to take the measure of the Comintern than many of his better-educated, more sophisticated comrades. Indeed, very few others dared to disassociate themselves from the aberrant Comintern line espoused by the fervent Romanian communists. Their biographies, set amid the dramatic events that led to the end of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy, the Bolshevik revolution, the rise of the Comintern, and the great clash between communism and fascism in World War II, mirror stories told by writers like Danilo Kis, Arthur Koestler, George Konrád, and Manès Sperber.

One of the militants was Eugen Rozvan (the Magyarized spelling of his name is Rozvany), a distinguished lawyer, born in 1878, educated in Budapest and Berlin, and a scion of one of Transylvania's most distinguished Romanian families. Rozvan had been courted intensely by representatives of the Romanian National Party in Transylvania, who invited him to join them and accept an important job in Cluj after 1918. His brother Ștefan became a major figure in the National Peasant Party and, as prefect of Hunedoara, organized the repression of the coal miners' strike in Lupeni in 1929. Eugen, a committed socialist, turned down these offers and, for better or worse, espoused Bolshevism. But he was too intelligent and lucid not to realize that the RCP would get nowhere by following the Comintern's behest on the agrarian and nationalities questions. Convinced that the unification of Transylvania with Romania was not the result of a “colonial occupation,” Rozvan dared to vote against the resolution on nationalities at the Second RCP Congress.

Later, in 1926, Rozvan reiterated his staunch opposition to the inaccurate description of Romania as an imperialist, multinational con-

struct. Charged with “rightist deviation” by the ultraleftist leadership headed by Luximin, Rozvan was threatened with “firing” from his position in the party’s legal front, the Workers’ and Peasants’ Bloc (on whose list he was, however, elected to parliament in May 1931). In 1929, he was expelled from the RCP because of his refusal to endorse the “self-determination and secession” slogans. The leadership did not find it useful to inform Rozvan about his expulsion, and he continued to represent the RCP in public campaigns. But he knew that the increasingly erratic and suspicious top clique were circulating the most vicious charges about him. Sick, isolated, and disgusted, Rozvan left Romania for the Soviet Union, where he hoped to find moral solace and political vindication for his honest beliefs. For a while, the odds seemed to be on his side.

In February 1932, Rozvan was appointed a senior researcher at Eugene (Jenö) Varga’s Institute of Politics and International Relations. During those years, Rozvan probably maintained close relations with powerful Hungarian émigrés in Moscow, who included, among many others, Varga himself, Béla Kun, György Lukács, and Imre Nagy. His main research topic was Italian fascism, on which he wrote a booklet that was used as a handbook by the Red Professors’ School. Later, in 1937, he completed a project on the history of Italian fascism and received a doctoral degree in social science. His thesis was highly praised and selected as a handbook by Varga’s institute. Among its main themes, the most important was the impact of fascism on the European revolutionary movement. Apropos of Antonio Gramsci’s last writings, especially after 1936, and the first Moscow show trial, Rozvan may have obliquely referred to the consequences of Stalinism for European socialism. In any case, he was arrested in December 1937 and, as his wife was to learn later, was sentenced to death and executed as a “traitor” and “enemy of the people” on the basis of a tribunal decision of May 20, 1938. During Stalin’s Great Terror a person could be praised one day as a prominent Bolshevik militant and arrested the next on the most insane charges. Rozvan’s name figured prominently among those rehabilitated by the April 1968 plenum of the central committee of the RCP as part of Ceaușescu’s attempt to validate his anti-Stalinist credentials and undermine rivals in the post-Dej leadership.³⁵

But most of Cristescu’s and Rozvan’s comrades were too busy denouncing one another to the Comintern’s presidium to pay attention to the party’s decline. Neither Luximin, Elek Köblös, Boris Ștefanov nor Imre Aladar appeared disturbed by the party’s political marginality. Before it was banned, the RCP’s membership varied between 2,000 and

2,500, but by the time of the Fifth Congress in 1931, it had fallen to 1,200.³⁶ With the exception of the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc, the party could barely invoke even limited success in its endeavor to escape from the political ghetto to which it had, to a great extent, condemned itself. This is not to deny the intensity of the anticommunist repression: numerous reports of various international human and civic rights organizations show that the Doftana prison, where many of the communists were held, was one of the most atrocious in Europe. But after the mid 1930s, when communists received the status of political prisoners, their conditions started to improve: they had access to books, political indoctrination could be organized in jail, and a genuine political life continued behind the prison walls in places like Doftana, Mislea, Dumbrăveni, Braşov, and Jilava. There was nothing to compare, in this respect, to the conditions the RCP would impose on its victims under the communist dictatorship, especially during the first Stalinist stage, which included complete isolation, psychological pressures, and physical torture.

Romania between the wars was not a democratic paradise, as some post-1989 anticommunist rhetoric would have it: people were harassed because of their political views, and ethnic discrimination was often seen as normal. In his critique of the National Liberal Gheorghe Tătăraşcu government, the National Peasant Party leader Iuliu Maniu attested to these problems. Not only communists but also right-wing radicals considered Romanian democracy a sham, partly because they intensely despised it and partly because they thought that whatever civic guarantees the constitution provided did not apply to them. This sentiment of being outcasts, victims of society's contempt and rejection, strongly contributed to the violence and intransigence of the communist and Iron Guardist hostility to democratic institutions and values. At the same time, it is fair to say that, in spite of all the faults of Romanian interwar democracy, Romania was a constitutional monarchy more tolerant of political diversity than most of its neighbors (with the exception of Czechoslovakia, where the communists enjoyed legal status).

The Defeat of the First Generation

All the historical leaders of the RCP, including both those who perished during the Stalinist Great Terror and Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu (who later became the proponent of a mild version of "national communism"), were proud to proclaim unwavering commitment to the "fatherland of the

proletariat.” With few exceptions, they seem to have experienced no pangs of conscience in underwriting Soviet claims to the Romanian provinces of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina and willingly endorsed the Comintern’s “class against class” strategy (especially after 1929).

Indifferent to Romania’s political traditions—and in fact making it a point of honor to repudiate this “politicianism” (i.e., petty politicking), contemptuous of patriotic sentiments and aspirations, and professing an extreme form of internationalism, indeed subservience to the Kremlin, Romanian communists remained an unappealing marginal group until the occupation of the country by the Red Army in 1944. When it emerged from two decades of underground conspiratorial activity, the RCP’s membership was approximately 1,000. These communists were, moreover, a minority within a minority, since the Left as such was far from being a significant social and intellectual force in a traditionalist political culture dominated (at least until the breakdown of the parliamentary system and the advent of King Carol’s royal dictatorship in 1938) by the National Peasant and National Liberal parties.

Some influential members of the RCP’s successive elites were indeed concerned about the party’s numerical weakness. In the 1970s, the late Liuba Chişinevschi, widow of one of the most powerful members of Gheorghiu-Dej’s inner circle until 1957, told me that in August 1944, her husband had lamented the fact that the party then had at most 1,000 members.³⁷ This was one of the main reasons for the RCP’s pariah status (as it was in the case of the Albanian party), which later led to Gheorghiu-Dej’s and Ceauşescu’s attempts to invent a different history, with different heroes and villains.

The socialists fared somewhat better than their communist rivals in the years between the wars. They were more influential especially in Transylvania and Banat, where the influence of revolutionary syndicalism and modern social democracy had been stronger during the Habsburg days. Internecine strife prevented the socialists from becoming a powerful political force, however, and although in the 1928 elections, running in alliance with the National Peasant Party and the German Party, they had received 9 percent of the vote nationally, in the last free elections in 1937, they got only 0.9 percent.³⁸ The Social Democratic Party’s leadership split in 1928, followed by the breaking away of a leftist faction headed by Ştefan Voitec and Leon Ghelerter, which assumed different names, usually emphasizing its socialist orientation, such as the Socialist Workers’ Party and the Unitary Socialist Party. This was joined in 1932 by the former communist general secretary Gheorghe Cristescu,

and in 1934 by Constantin Popovici's group, but Popovici was expelled in 1936 because of his collaboration with the communists.

New combinations followed the establishment of the royal dictatorship in 1938 and the decision of Bukovinian and Transylvanian socialists Grigorovici and Fluieraş respectively to join the "Front of National Renaissance" dominated by the king. During the war, the clandestine SDP was headed by Constantin Titel Petrescu, and the leadership included Ştefan Voitec, Leon Ghelerter, Lothar Rădăceanu (who in 1943 formed his own, more left-wing and possibly procommunist group, which was soon allied and merged with Mihail Ralea's splinter group from the National Peasant Party), Şerban Voinea (a key theorist of Romanian social democracy), and Ilie Moscovici. Shortly before the August 1944 antifascist coup, Rădăceanu rejoined the SDP, a tactical measure meant to provide a platform from which to engineer the party's self-annihilation in future years.

In Romania, the Left was thus peripheral during the interwar period and unable to devise significant "political myths," in Georges Sorel's sense, to inspire revolutionary imagination and galvanize social energies. The communists, imbued as they were with Bolshevik visions of a classless, stateless, supranational utopia, did not know how to translate these ideas into political catalysts. For economic, cultural, and sociological reasons, in Romania, the shock of modernization did not lead to the development of genuine mass working-class parties, but rather to anti-capitalist resentment, superstitious quasi-religious mysticism, and communitarian-agrarian nostalgia manipulated by the antiliberal, xenophobic radical Right. It is not surprising therefore that the advance of the Iron Guard—the Romanian fascist movement headed by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu—coincided with the Great Depression and the slow but irresistible collapse of the parliamentary system.³⁹ Had it not been for its obsequious relationship with Moscow, which branded it as alien, the tensions within the establishment, exacerbated by the outrageous behavior of the royal camarilla, might have given the RCP scope to grow into a national party.

In fact, there was a large audience ready to consider radical alternatives to Romania's corrupt political culture, and much of the communist message might have stirred responsive chords in it had it not been for the widespread sentiment that the communists were not truly interested in Romania. Romanian youth yearned for new, pure existential guidelines, and writers like André Malraux, Romain Rolland, and André Gide were as popular in Bucharest in the 1930s as they were in Paris, Prague,

or Barcelona. There was a huge amount of poverty, despondency, and despair in the country, which constituted a basis for revolutionary ideologies and actions, both leftist and rightist. But instead of capitalizing on this and searching for the genuine causes of social malaise, the RCP slavishly implemented the suicidal tactics devised and imposed by the Comintern. Parroting paranoid Stalinist rhetoric, self-enclosed, and politically underdeveloped, Romanian communists denounced the Social Democratic Party as a “Trojan horse” of the bourgeoisie infiltrated into the ranks of the working class. Such vituperation further aggravated the estrangement of the RCP from the only political group that might have tolerated the Leninist zealots. No alliance with the socialists was envisaged by the RCP leadership until the dramatic overhaul of the Comintern line at the Seventh Comintern Congress in 1935.

Fathoming the mentality of the interwar Romanian communists requires understanding the political makeup and the moral values of the original Leninist elite of the RCP. Activists like Imre Aladar, Ecaterina Arbore, Alexandru Buican-Arnoldi, Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Elek Köblös, David Fabian, Elena Filipovici, Ștefan Foriș, Nicolae (Miklos) Goldberger, Vasile Luca, Gelber Moscovici-Bădulescu, Vanda Nikolski (Sheiva Averbuch), Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, Ana and Marcel Pauker, Eugen Rozvan, Boris Ștefanov, Timotei Marin, and others belonged to the same spiritual family. They behaved like political sleepwalkers, possessed by the quasi-religious belief that the Soviet Union embodied humanity’s sacred dreams of social justice and freedom. The memoirs of Arthur Koestler and the great Comintern trilogy by Manès Sperber capture the passion involved in their fanatical commitment. Many of them had known Lenin personally, and some of them worshipped Stalin, because they identified personally with the Russian Revolution. For them, as for György Lukács, Louis Aragon, Bertolt Brecht, and Ernst Bloch, “objectively speaking” socialism had to be Stalinist, and they had to set aside any sentimental petit bourgeois doubts. In many respects, they are comparable to the old guard of Polish communism, Wera Kostrzewa, Adolf Warski (Warszawski), Julian Lenski (Leszczynski), and many others murdered in the Soviet Union, the country they had so fervently adulated. Social utopianism justified any sacrifice in the name of the millennium to come. Some of them had been close to Zinoviev, others to Bukharin, and by 1930, they might well have noticed the problematic, even appalling features of Stalinism. Their mentor, Christian Rakovsky, had written a cogent critique of bureaucratic socialism in 1928, during his exile in Astrakhan, which people like

Luximin and Fabian had undoubtedly read. "We had the hope that the party leadership would have created a new, truly worker-and-peasant apparatus, proletarian syndicate, and morality of daily life," Rakovsky wrote. "We have to realize frankly, clearly and with a high and intelligible voice: the apparatus of the party has not accomplished this task. It has shown in this double task of preservation and education the most complete incompetence; it has become bankrupt; it is insolvent."⁴⁰

But what, then, could these East European refugees caught in the clutches of the NKVD empire really do? Furthermore, unlike Rakovsky, they had experienced the rise of dictatorial movements in their countries and could not separate the struggle against fascism from the defense of the USSR (regardless of Stalin). Whatever doubts they might have nourished, Hitler's coming to power in January 1933 and the persecution of communists that followed dispelled them.

There were no genuine heretics in the RCP: obedience and solidarity with Moscow determined proper revolutionary behavior. Even a theorist like Fabian, born in 1895 and trained in the Western Marxist tradition, did not go beyond conventional, liturgical-style Leninism in his analyses of the Russian revolutionary message and the tasks of the world and Romanian proletariat. In fact, he became one of the most ardent proponents of the maximalist, pro-Bolshevik line. Writing in 1919 to his political friend Ilie Moscovici, Fabian proudly remembered the moment of "revolutionary fervor" when he and his comrades had made their public avowal of their firm Bolshevik commitment.⁴¹ In January 1925, while in the Jilava prison, Fabian, Sașa Gherea, and Luximin were the main proponents of the hunger strike and actually started one to force the release all political prisoners. It was not simply a short-lived protest either; as they wrote at the time, "[I]t was a protracted resistance strike, like the Olympic games to which each country sends its best athletes." Instead of leading to the release of political detainees, however, the protracted hunger strike killed some of the party elite. Associated primarily with Marcel Pauker, hunger strikes were subsequently referred to as "adventurous, irresponsible, and suicidal" in party documents, including those of the November–December 1961 plenum organized decades later by Gheorghiu-Dej to rewrite the party's history.⁴²

Harassed by the Siguranță (the prewar political police), Fabian left Romania and became the RCP's representative abroad, establishing his headquarters in Vienna. During this period, he served on successive central committees, and in 1926, he laid the foundations for the party's ideological apparatus as the editor in chief of a series of the RCP's theoretical and po-

litical monthly *Lupta de clasă* (which retained this name until it morphed into *Era Socialistă* in 1972 and became a bimonthly), whose first editorial meeting he attended in Moscow in May 1926. He also maintained close relations with the RCP's home directorate, headed by the Ukrainian-born Pavel Tkacenko and the Bulgarian militant Boris Ștefanov.

The fall of this leadership occurred in August 1926, when the Siguranță captured both Tkacenko and Ștefanov. From that moment on, two leaderships were formed: a secretariat inside the country and a politburo abroad (of which Fabian became a member). In November 1926, Fabian expressed his concern about the party's future in a letter to the Comintern's Balkan Federation, advocating the establishment of its headquarters inside Romania. Fabian was purged from the party in the late 1920s and immigrated to the USSR, where there was already a strong (albeit not very numerous) group of Romanian political émigrés in Moscow and other cities. His writings and editorial contributions reflected a first-rate Marxist and Leninist culture and familiarity with the major discussions going on in socialist and Bolshevik circles. He tried to convince the RCP's new general secretary, Vitaly Holostenko-Barbu, that he could contribute to the party's ideological life by translating writings such as Lenin's *Left-wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder* and *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, but the new leadership, which was directly linked to Béla Kun's ultrarevolutionary stance, turned down the offer and treated Fabian as a political outcast. Holostenko could not forgive Fabian and Köblös for their strong criticism of his methods and strategy. In the meantime, like most political émigrés in the USSR, Fabian had joined the CPSU. Although nominally editor of *Lupta de clasă* (published in Moscow), he was isolated in Kharkov, and in December 1929, he received a vote of censure and warning from the CPSU because of his alleged participation in factional activities in the RCP. Like other exiles, Fabian implored the Comintern to allow him to go back to Romania. There was perhaps a glimmer of hope when his old friend Elena Filipovici was elected to the number two position in the RCP at the Fifth Congress in December 1931, after Holostenko's fall from grace, and Fabian was reinstated to ideological work in the RCP (albeit still stuck in the USSR) and put in charge of the publication of selections from Lenin's writings in Romanian.

Until the Nazi takeover in January 1933, the members of the Romanian party's politburo and other revolutionaries, including Fabian, had lived in Berlin. After Hitler came to power, most East European political refugees moved to Moscow, where they hoped to continue their ac-

tivities at the Comintern's central headquarters. (The whereabouts of these refugees is often obscure, however, because of their paranoid secrecy and use of aliases.) For the Romanians, there was little else to do in Russia but ideological work, and Bădulescu-Moscovici, Ecaterina Arbore, Sașa Gherea, Leon Lichtblau, and Timotei Marin, for instance, all worked at translating Lenin's writings. One of Fabian's last translations was of Stalin's speech to the CPSU's March 1937 central committee plenum. This was at the height of the Terror: a time of universal fear and suspicion.⁴³ Like so many of his friends, Fabian found himself trapped in the Kafkaesque universe of the so-called Yezhovshchina—the terrifying period between 1937–39 when Nikolay Yezhov headed the NKVD and no one was safe. He was arrested and executed at the age of forty-two in December 1937.

The Mysterious Fourth Congress and the Doctrine of National Nihilism

As mentioned before, the theoretical imagination of the Romanian communists was rather limited. Even people like Sașa Gherea, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, and Eugen Rozvan were not in the same class as Lukács, Gramsci, or even the less sophisticated French Marxist Georges Politzer. This is not to say that there was no theoretical potential. However, from the very outset, the party had a strong anti-intellectual bias, aggravated by the perception of intellectuals as troublemakers whose taste for abstraction prevented the party from acting resolutely. Ideological submission to the Comintern bureaucracy was total and unconditional. Nothing in the theoretical output of the RCP smacks of an original search for an alternative strategy of revolutionary struggle. There is nothing comparable to Lukács's 1928 "Blum Theses" (immediately denounced by the Comintern) calling for a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" as a transitional stage on the way to the fully developed "dictatorship of the proletariat."⁴⁴

For Romanian communism, the nipping in the bud of any heretical temptation coincided with the complete Bolshevization—that is, Stalinization—of the party. Luximin, for instance, was linked to the Western side of the Romanian socialist tradition: he had been educated in Switzerland, and the combination of "primitive magic and Asiatic despotism" that Isaac Deutscher calls the hallmark of Stalinism could scarcely have appealed to him.⁴⁵

With all its continuous purging, the RCP in 1928 was still too much influenced by its pre-Comintern memories. The party also was beset by ruinous factionalism, pathological suspiciousness, and an unsparing struggle for power. As Nicolae Ceaușescu admitted years later, the threat of complete extinction loomed large.⁴⁶ The IKKI (the Comintern's executive committee) felt the need to establish absolute control over the RCP. Similar trends were occurring in other communist parties around 1928: the Jenő Landler faction of the Hungarian Communist Party and the rightist Heinrich Brandler–August Thalheimer and Heinz Neumann deviations in the German Communist Party were eliminated, for example, and the ascent of the mediocre, ultra-obedient Ernst Thälmann began in the German party.

The complete Bolshevization of national communist parties was the watchword in the late 1920s. This amounted to the ruthless eradication of their social democratic legacy. Collaboration with the socialist infiltrators of the working class was a mortal sin, according to Stalin; they were traitors and renegades. The most absurd self-defeating slogans were thus imposed, regardless of the conditions in each country. On June 1, 1928, the IKKI addressed an “open letter” to the RCP urging it to act resolutely “against the social democrats, who had entirely identified themselves with the bourgeoisie and were pursuing its interests to the detriment of the working class.”⁴⁷ At the same time, there were attempts in Romania to develop grassroots activism both within the unions and among the youth. In October 1927, a Communist Youth Union (UTC) conference took place and elected a new leadership, consisting of Gheorghe Stoica (Moscu Cohn), Nicolae Goldberger, and Alexandru Buican.

Efforts were made to organize a congress to discuss the major political problems faced by the party. But there was little agreement among the Comintern, the Balkan Federation, and the national communist parties about the main priorities of such a conclave. Paradoxically, under the Ceaușescu regime, official Romanian communist historiography strongly emphasized the “uneven” ethnic makeup of the RCP in 1920s and 1930s. The ethnic composition of the leading party bodies, which were dominated by Jewish, Hungarian, and Bulgarian militants, was held responsible for its isolation and lack of communication with the real Romanian proletariat. No less insistent was the reference to the fact that most of the general secretaries were either members of ethnic “minorities” or foreigners designated by the Comintern to run the party. To quote Mușat and Ardeleanu, definitely the most authoritative voices

among the official historians of the Ceaușescu era: “The composition of the RCP cadres resulted in, among other things, a certain isolation from the broad masses of the Romanian people and offered the repressive authorities a pretext to denigrate it by falsely presenting the RCP as not being the product of the Romanian soil.”⁴⁸ This thorny topic of the role of ethnic minorities in radical movements, especially on Romania’s extreme Left, comes up again and again in RCP history. As we have seen, when Greater Romania emerged after World War I, the country incorporated large minorities. In Transylvania, there was a significantly more developed urban industrial proletariat than in the old kingdom of Romania, many of whom were Hungarian, German, or Jewish. Jews were particularly active in leftist circles in Bessarabia, where communist internationalist rhetoric was an extremely powerful myth. The “rejected minorities” (a term proposed by R. V. Burks) turned to communism because it promised to resolve their predicament.⁴⁹ They fantasized about the USSR as a place where ethnic discrimination had been abolished and there was true human solidarity. Many Jews who had joined the RCP in the old kingdom of Romania had done so for intellectual reasons, but they were less prominently represented than the Transylvanians in the top leadership, especially after the destruction of the old guard in Stalin’s Russia.

Ana Pauker, who was born in the historical province of Moldova in Romania, was an exception to the rule. Most other representatives of the minorities among the top elite had been born and been educated (if at all) in Bessarabia, Bukovina, or Transylvania. But none of them were there to preserve or promote particularistic interests or motivations: on the contrary, their lack of concern for Romanian national claims was equaled by their rejection of any form of nationalism, be it Jewish, Hungarian, or Bulgarian. They were soldiers of Stalin’s international army, and their commitment was supranational. This was a novel type of political fanaticism, unknown to previous generations, and it was much easier to resort to the ludicrous but infectious myth of the “Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy” than to realize that the issues involved in the communist faith transcended any ethnic or religious affiliation.

Another exception was Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, who was neither Jewish, Hungarian, nor Ukrainian, but a scion of one of Romania’s distinguished intellectual families. He joined the party at a very early age, totally identified with the Leninist-Stalinist creed, never challenged the official CPSU and Comintern documents, and continued to be faithful to his communist—that is, Stalinist—ideals until his arrest in early 1948. But notwithstanding Pătrășcanu and others like him, the RCP elite was

primarily made up of individuals with strange names and strange accents, which played a very important role in the general perception of the party as alien to Romania. Furthermore, the RCP's inflammatory internationalist rhetoric appealed predominantly to those who did not have strong attachments to the ideal of Greater Romania. That said, however, these were far from being the only Romanian communists. Indeed, there was a solid communist presence among railroad and oil workers in Bucharest, Ploiești, and Iași. Much of the RCP's appeal (to the extent that it had any) thus actually arose from real issues in interwar Romania.

The Fourth RCP Congress, which took place in Kharkov in 1928, sealed the triumph of the party's Stalinist core. Available documents still do not make clear the situation within the top leadership before the congress. Tracing back the political itineraries of different personalities during those years is sometimes as difficult and risky as trying to pierce through the different pseudonyms used by the militants. After 1925, Marcel Pauker lived in the USSR and was active in the top echelons of the Comintern. In 1925, he had been sentenced in absentia in Romania to a ten-year prison term. At the Sixth Comintern Congress, held in August 1928, Pauker was elected a member of the IKKI under the purely Romanian alias of Popescu.⁵⁰

Later, Marcel Pauker (alias Luximin, the former Ion Protiv and Popescu) became involved in the internecine struggle that brought the RCP to the brink of collapse. In late 1927 and early 1928, the politburo was based in Vienna, and Elek Köblös, Sașa Gherea, Berger Aladar, Iasz Deszö, Victor Tordai, and Leon Lichtblau figured among its members at various times. Documents often mention the name of Solomon Schein, who was in charge of the home secretariat (what happened to him is still a mystery, but most likely he disappeared in the Gulag). Pătrășcanu, already a central committee member, returned to Romania along with Buican in October 1927 to reorganize the party and youth apparatuses. Not only the Comintern but also many within the RCP felt that unless urgent measures of consolidation were adopted, the party would fall apart. The former general secretary Gheorghe Cristescu had been expelled from the party in 1926 following bitter conflicts over his marginalization within the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc (BMT).⁵¹ In 1926, the top leadership inside Romania was in the hands of the Pavel Tkacenko–Boris Ștefanov group. The Comintern criticized the RCP-controlled BMT's participation in local elections that year and accused the leadership of collaborationism with the bourgeois parties.

The Comintern flooded the Romanian party with abstract, completely unrealistic guidelines regarding the struggle for a “Balkan Soviet Federation” and other self-destructive slogans. Between 1926 and 1928, Köblös led the RCP from abroad, relying for home operations on Wilhelm (Willi) Roth, the only politburo member still in Romania and free. Roth, however, was captured by the Siguranță in November 1926 and talked. The consequences were enormous. He gave the secret police information about the communist leadership, including the addresses of their hideouts, the real names of party members, and the composition of all party organizations. Roth was released in 1927 and went to Vienna, where he was tried by an RCP commission and expelled from the party. The next leader within Romania, Solomon Schein, engaged in a bitter competition with the external politburo, headed by Köblös.⁵² These struggles brought the party near to extinction.

Initially supposed to be just a conference, the Kharkov meeting had been prepared by a Comintern commission headed by the Ukrainian communists Vitali Holostenko and Iosif Suslik (Badeyev). Completely ignoring both the external politburo and the operative home secretariat (headed by Schein), the Comintern invited sixteen activists from different cities in Romania. Most of the invitees were extremely young (under thirty), and four were still members of the UTC. The historical leaders were marginalized. Even Bădulescu-Moscovici and Gherea, who were present, did not represent anyone but themselves: Moscovici had resigned as RCP delegate to Comintern in January 1928, and Gherea had been denied active central committee membership in April 1927. A year later, complaining to the Comintern presidium about the methods used for organizing the congress, Köblös presented it as an intraparty coup backed by the Comintern. The beneficiaries were the young activists suddenly catapulted to the top positions, students of the Leninist Comintern School in Moscow and some selected individuals covertly brought from Romania. The will of the party members and the strategy for allowing the party to overcome its painful marginality in a time of dramatic turmoil were not on the agenda. The congress was first and foremost an exercise in political control and domination.

The Comintern’s delegate, the Czechoslovak communist leader Bohumil Smeral, led the proceedings. Symptomatic of the antidemocratic atmosphere, Köblös, still nominally the RCP’s general secretary, and Schein, the secretary in charge of activities inside Romania, were deprived of the right to deliberative votes. In previous years, in memoranda addressed to the Comintern, these two had viciously attacked

each other for all imaginable deviations and other “sins.” The final resolution on the nationalities issues was in no way different from earlier blindly antinational manifestos. The resolution perpetuated the fiction that Transylvania, Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Banat, united with Romania as a result of the Trianon, Versailles, and Neuilly treaties, were predominantly inhabited by non-Romanians. Echoing Great Russian chauvinist theories, the resolution claimed that the Bessarabian Romanians—referred to as Moldavians—constituted a national minority in themselves:

The working class from Bessarabia joined the Russian proletariat in making the Great October Socialist Revolution. . . . Though, as a result of the October Revolution, Bessarabia achieved national liberation, ten years ago the Romanian landlords and capitalists . . . enslaved this region again. In order to justify the predatory annexation of Bessarabia, the Romanian bourgeoisie seeks to prove that the Moldavians, who make up the relative majority of the population, are Romanians, whereas the Moldavian population considers itself, and is in fact, a different nation, with its own culture, fighting along with the other nationalities of Bessarabia against their national and class oppressor, the Romanian bourgeoisie.

In accordance with this doctrine of national nihilism, the participants defined Romania as a “faithful gendarme of the imperialist powers [England and France] against the first proletarian state, the USSR, and the future of the revolution in the Balkans.”⁵³

To be sure, not all the delegates (and definitely not all RCP members) were satisfied with these false statements. For instance, a plenum of the RCP’s central committee expelled Eugen Rozvan from the party in February 1929 for “right-wing opportunism.” The truth was that as a member of the BMT’s council, Rozvan had opposed the nefarious policy of encouraging the self-determination and separation of several historical Romanian territories. But the Fourth Congress was not a place for dialogue and free exchange of ideas. Bolshevism, especially in its Stalinist interpretation, meant individual subservience and blind recognition of Moscow’s a priori superior reasoning. When Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu (alias Mironov) dared to challenge the definition of Moldavians as a nationality different from Romanians, Bohumil Smeral accused him, too, of ignoring the Comintern’s guidelines and of potential “right-wing opportunism.”⁵⁴

In order to implement this counterproductive resolution, the Comintern representatives, the genuine masterminds of this strange event, imposed a dramatic reshuffling of the party elite. One of the most fateful

consequences of this leadership overhaul was the elimination from the central committee of the RCP's "Leninist guard" (e.g., Eugen Rozvan, Elek Köblös, and David Fabian) and the appointment as general secretary of a non-Romanian Comintern activist, Vitaly Holostenko (Barbu).⁵⁵ Holostenko had been a delegate from Bessarabia to the RCP's First Congress in May 1921. Arrested in Iași in March 1921, he was released in June 1922, went to the Soviet Union, and became a member of the central committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party. His "election" as general secretary of the RCP—in fact, a Comintern decision—sealed the fate of the real or potential heretics or relatively independent-minded members of the top echelon of the RCP. The whole party leadership was removed and replaced with acquiescent younger militants ready to implement any decision the Comintern (i.e., Stalin) might concoct for Romania.

Two politburos were elected: one within the country, consisting of Vasile Luca, Dori Goldstein (alias Klimenko), and Alexandru Nikolski (alias Feodorov), and another abroad, which included Vitaly Holostenko, Ion Heigel, and a representative of the Ukrainian Communist Party. For many activists, the resolutions of the Fourth Congress were striking proof of the shortsightedness and isolation of the exiled leaders from the real situation in Romania.

Speaking in May 1966, on the occasion of the forty-fifth anniversary of the RCP, Nicolae Ceaușescu would blame the Comintern for its insensitive interference and lack of understanding of Romanian affairs. According to Ceaușescu, the Second, Third, and Fourth Congresses reflected the party's attempts to formulate a general strategic line and consolidate its organizational structure. On the other hand, Ceaușescu insisted, this evolution was very difficult, because of the "ideological heritage of the old socialist movement" and the effect of clandestinity on the party's work:

In addition to this, one should take into account the negative consequences of the Comintern's practices of appointing the leading cadres of the party, including the general secretary, from among people outside the country who did not know the life and the concerns of our nation. The older party members still remember that at the Fourth and Fifth Congresses, the designated RCP central committee's general secretaries were two militants of other parties. If we consider that other members of the party leadership were also appointed from among individuals living outside Romania who were ignorant of the country's social and political conditions, we realize the damage inflicted by these practices on the revolutionary movement at that time. The ideological confusions within the workers' move-

ment and the existence of petit bourgeois, careerist elements within the party, as well as the above-described practices, led to the outbreak of factional struggle in 1929, which dangerously disorganized the party's activity, bringing it to the edge of liquidation precisely at the moment of the capitalist offensive against the popular masses, on the eve of imminent great class battles.⁵⁶

The Fifth Congress: A Reassessment

For a long time, especially under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, official historiography described the RCP's Fifth Congress (Moscow, December 3–24, 1931) as a watershed in the party's history.⁵⁷ It was argued that the Congress had abandoned the most counterproductive theses and offered a realistic strategy for the forthcoming revolutionary confrontations. However, the Fifth Congress paid tribute to the old fictions about the artificial character of the Romanian state and did not renounce the description of the social democrats as a corrupting force within the working class and "objective" allies of the bourgeoisie. The Congress brought together thirty-eight delegates from Romania, as well as representatives of communist parties from the USSR, Ukraine, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Finland, and elsewhere. The major reports to the Congress were delivered by the Hungarian Communist leader Béla Kun ("The International Situation and the Danger of an Anti-Soviet War"), Elena Filipovici ("Romania's Political and Economic Situation and the Tasks of the RCP"), Imre Aladar ("The Economic Struggles and the Tasks of the Party in the Union Movement"), and Eugen Iacobovici ("The Organizational Tasks and the Cadres Policy of the Party").⁵⁸ The final resolution announced that Romania was ripe for a bourgeois-democratic revolution to be carried out, not by the national bourgeoisie, but by the proletariat in alliance with the peasantry.⁵⁹ In accordance with this view, Romania had no reason to fear its eastern neighbor. Moreover, it was argued that only in alliance with the USSR could the country solve its problems and become a modern industrial nation. In her concluding remarks, Elena Filipovici summarized the main tenets of the Congress: "The Fifth Congress offers the correct political line and five fundamental slogans. . . . [The RCP stands] against fascist dictatorship; for the eight-hour workday; for land for the peasants; for self-determination up to [the point of] secession; and for the defense of the USSR. These slogans must be our beacon in the effort to transform the everyday struggle into a superior one, aimed at seizing the power and fulfilling the bourgeois-democratic revolution."⁶⁰

Following Béla Kun's instructions (he was one of the Comintern's most authoritative voices, and was instrumental in engineering elite shake-ups in many East-Central European parties), the Congress elected Alexander Danieliuk-Stefanski (Gorn), a member of the Polish Communist Party, as the RCP's general secretary. The protagonists of the earlier factional struggles, most of who had been among the founders of the RCP, were dropped from the supreme hierarchy. With their heretical propensities, they represented a critical potential, intolerable now that the party had to operate as a military unit.⁶¹ The Fifth Congress ensured the triumph of a new political generation less linked to the Leninist origins of Romanian communism and more conditioned by the ideology of unreserved solidarity with the Stalinist leadership. Hence, through the elimination of the "romantic revolutionaries" and the election of totally reliable Comintern activists, the Fifth Congress perfected the Stalinization of the RCP. The new central committee included such activists as Bela Brainer, Elena Filipovici, Nicolae Goldberger,⁶² Emil Halički, Eugen Iacobovici,⁶³ Vanda Nikolski (Sheina Averbuch), Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, and others who considered Stefanski's appointment an improvement in the quality of the party leadership.⁶⁴ Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu's presence was probably linked to his growing prestige among left-wing Romanian intellectuals. Even more important, in the summer of 1931, Pătrășcanu had been elected a member of parliament on the list presented by the front organization called the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc.

In spite of the Comintern's attempt to limit the damage of factionalism, the tension between the domestic and foreign leaderships did not lessen. The RCP was now directed by the Berlin-based politburo headed by Alexander Danieliuk Stefanski and composed of Elena Filipovici, Eugen Iacobovici, Emil Halički, and Vanda Nicolski, as well as by an internal secretariat consisting of Bela Brainer, Gheorghe Stoica, and Dora Rotman, who were later replaced by Alexandru Sencovici, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, Vanda Nikolski, and Nicolae Goldberger.⁶⁵

Stalinist Antifascists: The RCP between 1931 and 1944

After the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (Moscow, July 25–August 20, 1935), the RCP switched to the Kremlin's new strategy of creating antifascist "popular fronts." The Romanian delegation to this congress was headed by Boris Ștefanov, who was soon appointed general secretary of the party. The delegation included Nicolae Goldberger, Vanda Nicolski,

and Marcel Pauker as members with deliberative votes, as well as N. Dubinski and Manea Ehrlich as members with consultative votes.⁶⁶ Ştefanov, a founding member of the RCP, was elected a deputy on the list of the “Socialist-Communist Party” in 1922. He was a Bulgarian born in Romania, fluent in Romanian and less alien to the country’s culture than his foreign predecessors, and his rise to the top of the hierarchy was welcomed by many underground militants as a restoration of the party’s national dignity.⁶⁷ But they were profoundly wrong. Ştefanov was, in fact, a rigid ideologue, whose unique concern was to carry out the Comintern’s schemes.⁶⁸ His role in the party leadership was to supervise the new front organizations, to keep the cadres under strict control, and to maintain an unyielding sense of discipline. Ştefanov epitomized a political generation immune to self-questioning and moral dilemmas, whose members shared the vision of Stalin’s party as the avant-garde of the world proletariat and were not tormented by doubts about the suffocation of open discussion within the CPSU and the Comintern. It is noteworthy that, between the ousting of Gheorghe Cristescu in 1924 and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej’s appointment in 1944, none of the RCP’s general secretaries were indigenous Romanians. Some of them, like Elek Köblös and Ştefan Foriş were Hungarians; others were Jews, Bulgarians, Poles, or Ukrainians.

If members of the party elite had any doubts about the totalitarian bureaucratic logic of Stalinism and the RCP’s boundless subservience to Moscow, these were forgotten (or at least suspended) with Hitler’s rise to power in January 1933. For Romanians in the 1930s, as well as for Polish, Hungarian, and German communists, the only choice appeared to be between Stalin’s socialism and Hitler’s Nazism. Many among them eventually realized the scope of Stalin’s insane purges, but they could not voice their doubts lest this help their mortal enemy. This generation of so-called idealistic communists were not timeservers prepared to make any compromise in order to climb to a higher rung on the ladder of the Stalinist hierarchy. Fanatical and gullible, they remained dedicated communists even when confronted with the atrocious reality of the Moscow trials and the Gulag. The moral chemistry of Romanian communism was thus the product of a generation that had totally internalized Stalin’s definition of proletarian solidarity: “An *internationalist* is one who is ready to defend the USSR without reservation, without wavering, unconditionally; for the USSR is the base of the world revolutionary movement, and this revolutionary movement cannot be defended and promoted unless the USSR is defended. For whoever thinks

of defending the world revolutionary movement apart from or against the USSR goes against the revolution and must inevitably slide into the camp of the enemies of the revolution.”⁶⁹

Most of the members of the original Romanian Stalinist elite were executed or disappeared in Soviet concentration camps, joining their former idol and protector, Christian Rakovsky. Among those who perished during the Great Terror were Imre Aladar, Ecaterina Arbore,⁷⁰ Ion Dic-Dicescu, Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea,⁷¹ David Fabian, Elena Filipovici, Dumitru Grofu, Elek Köblös,⁷² Alexandru Nicolau, Marcel Pauker,⁷³ Eugen Rozvan, Marin Timotei, and many others. In doing research for this book, I interviewed many Romanian survivors of the Comintern’s purges in the late 1930s who still regarded Stalin and the USSR as the only source of hope in the antifascist struggle. Their rationalizations were based on the assumption that initially the purge had a necessary character. Furthermore, they had all been marked by the mechanism of terror, and it must be stressed that few parties were more tragically bedeviled by personal resentments and mutual denunciations than the RCP.

To exemplify: in July 1968, I accompanied my mother, a former Spanish Civil War International Brigade veteran, who during World War II had worked as an announcer for Radio Moscow’s Romanian service, on a trip to what was then the German Democratic Republic. In Leipzig, we met Basil Spiru (Erich Hutschnecker), one of the founders of the RCP, who in the 1930s had been a member of the RCP delegation to the Comintern. When I mentioned the then recent rehabilitation by Nicolae Ceaușescu of Elena Filipovici (April 1968) to him, Spiru commented sardonically: “Yes, she was shot, but only after she had given [the NKVD] so many people.” Back in Bucharest, I was shocked to learn from another RCP old-timer, Iacob Feuerstein Adam (whose sister, Paula Bessler, was married to the GDR’s first deputy minister of the interior, the Spanish Civil War veteran Herbert Grünstein), that Spiru himself had been instrumental in fomenting the charges against Elena Filipovici and other exiled militants. In this Borgesian story of endless betrayals, plots, and crimes, nobody can claim innocence, least of all those who, whether openly or covertly, eased the murderous tasks of the “organs.”

However, the members of the original RCP elite were outlived by the myth of the Soviet Union as a proletarian mecca that they had managed to impress on the minds of younger militants. Even in the writings of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, one of the very few prominent intellectuals to hold

an important position within the RCP, there were attempts to justify the theses of the Comintern rather than to offer critical or dissenting ideas. Although certainly more sophisticated than his peers, Pătrășcanu was a disciplined “soldier of the party,” ready to follow Soviet instructions without question. After the war, faced with infinitely more complex issues and aware of the cynicism of the Soviet attitude toward Romania, Pătrășcanu tried to articulate a more balanced view of the country’s social history, albeit one still imbued with Leninist-Stalinist clichés. Privately, however, he expressed reservations about the Moscow show trials and the condescending behavior of the Soviet “comrades.” Actually, if Pătrășcanu’s close friend Belu Zilber is correct, Pătrășcanu had read Koestler’s *Darkness at Noon* and thus understood the technique of extorting confessions in the name of ultimate party interests. Much in his behavior, including readiness to engage in a cat-and-mouse game with Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (Pătrășcanu being the mouse) is reminiscent of Bukharin’s series of recantations and letters of submission to Stalin after the beginning of the Great Purge.

The intellectual debility of interwar Romanian communism, determined by the party’s elitism as well as by its aversion to any stance that seemed nationalistic, explains the limited appeal the RCP had for the intelligentsia. In this respect, Belu Zilber aptly remarks:

The very few that were interested in us were driven by various reasons, ranging from those who manifested curiosity about a mysterious organization, glorified by partisans and cursed by enemies, to the intellectuals who were convinced that here were gathered the best people on earth fighting for a happy future... between the two extremes being all those who were unsatisfied with their jobs, the state [in which they lived], their family, their neighborhood. Hungarians and Bulgarians who wanted secession from Romania, workers who envisaged themselves as owners of factories, Jews frightened by antisemitism, unemployed people without any qualifications or with [only] mediocre competence in their fields, politicians who had not succeeded in making a career..., ugly [Madame] Bovary-type housewives, children who did not want to go to school; this is the world from which party activists were recruited before the war.⁷⁴

The only theoretical heritage Romanian communists could rely upon—Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea’s theory of the new serfdom (*neoio-băgie*)—was denounced as a camouflaged version of Menshevism with baleful consequences for the development of the Romanian revolutionary working-class movement.⁷⁵ Some younger intellectuals, either party members or just fellow travelers (*simpatizanți*), tried to pierce the dogma and embark on a more sophisticated approach to Marxism. Lu-

cién (Gică) Goldmann, the future French neo-Marxist thinker, started his dialectical investigations in Bucharest, but his unorthodox views aroused suspicions among fellow communists and led to his break with the RCP after 1934.⁷⁶ Even Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu's original historical research did not generate any profound discussions within the Romanian radical Left.

The party-controlled cultural-political magazines—*Cuvîntul Liber*, *Reporter*, and *Era Nouă*—professed a Manichean worldview based on unqualified support for the USSR and visceral hostility toward Romania's parliamentary system. Indeed, the only intellectual pursuit encouraged by the Stalinist watchdogs was the perpetual rumination over Stalin's booklets and Comintern directives. No György Lukács, Bertolt Brecht, Antonio Gramsci, or Palmiro Togliatti emerged as intellectual spokesman for Romanian communism. Romanian communists waited for Moscow's suggestions and signals, and with the exception of Pătrășcanu, the RCP did not beget any theorist worthy of note.

After 1933, the intensification of international antifascist campaigns helped the RCP to build bridges to left-wing Romanian intellectuals. The National Antifascist Committee, founded in 1933, managed to attract the support of important cultural figures. As in other European countries, the fascist threat radicalized the left-oriented intelligentsia. Some joined the party, like the endocrinologist C. I. Parhon, the philosopher Tudor Bugnariu, the historian Scarlat Callimachi, and the lawyer Ion Gheorghe Maurer. Others, like the psychologist and literary critic Mihai Ralea and the politician Petru Groza,⁷⁷ engaged in dialogue with RCP representatives and sponsored several antifascist actions. The main organizer of these propaganda operations was Ana Pauker, who had returned from Paris in 1934. Arrested in 1935, she was convicted and sentenced to a ten-year prison term in a much-publicized trial in Craiova in June 1936. Thanks to the Comintern's propaganda machine, Ana Pauker's name became an international symbol of opposition to fascism. The Craiova trial launched a cult of Ana Pauker's personality among Romanian communists at home and abroad.⁷⁸

Among the most active in the Agitprop cadres were Ștefan Foriș, Iosif Chișinevschi (Roitman), Sorin Toma, Ana Toma (Grossman), Grigore Preoteasa, Miron Constantinescu, Alexandru Buican (Arnoldi), Mircea Bălănescu (Eugen Bendel), Ștefan Voicu (Aurel Rotenberg), Petre Năvodaru (Peter Fischer), Leonte Răutu (Oigenstein), Valter Roman, and Constanța Crăciun. After 1948, many of these held influential positions within the party's ideological apparatus: Chișinevschi was its

head; Răutu was first his second-in-command, then director of the party's propaganda and culture directorate; Sorin Toma was editor in chief of the party's daily newspaper, *Scînteia*; Ștefan Voicu was editor in chief of the official theoretical monthly, *Lupta de clasă*; Valter Roman was director of the party's publishing house (Editura Politică); and Constanța Craciun was minister of culture. Despite its increasingly patriotic rhetoric, the RCP could not set down roots in the Romanian working class and continued primarily to recruit radicals from among the increasingly persecuted ethnic minorities. Even legal organizations like the MOPR (the Romanian branch of a Moscow-sponsored international organization to support political prisoners) and the Student Democratic Front remained isolated and never attracted a mass following.⁷⁹

Both in the operative ("technical") and propaganda sectors, the party apparatus was dominated by non-Romanian Transylvanians and Besarabians, mostly of Jewish extraction. The significant Jewish presence in radical leftist groups in East-Central Europe was linked to the illusion entertained by many Jews that the Soviet Union was the embodiment of Marxist humanism. Dissatisfied with the status quo, disgusted with bourgeois values, victimized by discriminatory measures, and appalled by the rise of Nazism, they indulged in fantasies about a worldwide communist revolution that would create a climate conducive to what Marx had called the "realization of human essence" and thus excise the cancer of antisemitism. Their dream was to overcome their Jewishness, to be part of a universal movement whose aspirations and promises transcended national, religious, and racial boundaries. Their romanticized image of the Soviet Union functioned as a compensation for their frustrations and humiliations. Like their Polish and Hungarian comrades, most Romanian Jewish communists abjured their background and proudly severed all links with their ancestors' traditions. They were, to use Isaac Deutscher's term, "non-Jewish Jews," yearning for a new identity that would enable them to act as citizens of a universal homeland. Hence they refused to see the chasm between their hopes and the reality of Stalinism. Mátyás Rákosi and Jozsef Revai, Jacob Berman and Hilary Minc, Iosif Chișinveschi, and Leonte Răutu were all united in denial of their Jewishness and a frantic desire to negate it.⁸⁰

Rooted in alienation and malaise, the belief in internationalism prevented most East European communist parties from becoming mass movements in countries where independence was the most cherished national value. The Romanian situation was strikingly similar to the Polish one as diagnosed by Czesław Miłosz: "The truth is that in pre-

war Poland the leftists were mainly Jews. There is no racial mystery in that. They simply had an international outlook, whereas since the nineteenth century the Poles had a very strong tradition of fighting for independence. The Poland that had reappeared on the map of Europe seemed so precious to them that the very idea of any end to the unique arrangement that allowed Poland to exist was unthinkable. A whole series of imponderables prohibited any sympathy for the Communist Party.”⁸¹ Eastern European communists, who identified themselves with the USSR, a “foreign enemy” for most of the countries of the region, inevitably struck their fellow countrymen as agents of national dissolution.

Although it was, to be sure, a peripheral formation, the RCP was nevertheless highly efficient in manipulating antifascist symbols. In January–February 1933, the communists helped organize major strikes at the Grivița railroad workshops in Bucharest and the Ploiești oil refineries. Among those who became famous as a result of these strikes and the subsequent political trial were Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Constantin Doncea, Dumitru Petrescu, and Gheorghe Vasilichi. For years, RCP propaganda insisted that the Grivița riot was one of the first antifascist actions in Europe. After the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, the party succeeded in recruiting an impressive number of Romanian volunteers for the International Brigades. According to RCP historiography, more than 500 volunteers from Romania fought in the International Brigades on the Republican side.⁸² My own research suggests that the figure of 300 volunteers (among them my parents, other relatives, and close family friends) is closer to the truth.

With a new world war becoming increasingly more likely, the Comintern leaders were satisfied with the “inflexible discipline” governing the RCP. True, the party lacked a broad mass base, but this deficit was compensated for by its loyalty to the Soviet Union and to Stalin himself. In 1986, Nicolae Ceaușescu, who was in jail between 1936 and 1938, and was again arrested in 1940,⁸³ referred to the Doftana prison as a main “academy of revolutionary thought.” This statement suggests Ceaușescu’s pivotal role in the communist underground establishment and his desire to maintain the image of the party as a tightly knit community of fighters dedicated to furthering the “most advanced ideals of mankind.”⁸⁴ Ceaușescu was right to emphasize the cardinal role of the prison “collective” in shaping his revolutionary view. But the theoretical training in prisons amounted to parroting the official *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) Short Course* and other Stalin-

ist treatises. With mentors like Ana Pauker, Ștefan Foriș, Iosif Chișinevschi, Lazăr Grünberg, Leonte Răutu, Andrei Bernath, Ileana Răceanu (Ilonka Popp), Zina Brâncu (Haia Grinberg), Manole H. Manole, Ofelia Manole, Iosif Rangheț, and Bela Brainer, most of whom had graduated from the Leninist Comintern School in Moscow, such indoctrination of the few men and women of genuine working-class extraction imprisoned in such places as Doftana, Jilava, Aiud, Brașov, Mislea, and Dumbrăveni was only to be expected. Gheorghiu-Dej, who was co-opted as a CC member in 1935 and by the end of the 1930s had become the undisputed leader of the Doftana RCP organization, masterfully appropriated the “mysteries” of party propaganda and carefully supervised the doctrinarian initiation of neophytes like Gheorghe Apostol, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Alexandru Drăghici, and Alexandru Moghioroș.⁸⁵

During his prison term (1933–44), Gheorghiu-Dej realized the immense strategic value of propaganda, and after the war, with the decisive support of the RCP’s Soviet advisers, Iosif Chișinevschi and Leonte Răutu were appointed leaders of the party’s Agitprop Department.⁸⁶ Again, the presence of a tiny group of déclassé Bessarabian or Jewish semi-intellectuals at the pinnacle of the RCP propaganda apparatus—Iosif Chișinevschi, Leonte Răutu, Mihail Roller, Sorin Toma, Ștefan Voicu, Ofelia Manole, Zina Brâncu (Haia Grinberg), Iosif Ardeleanu (Demö Adler), and Barbu Zaharescu (Bercu Zuckerman)—as well as the strikingly disproportionate representation of militants who were not indigenous Romanians on all the central committees up to the Seventh Congress (the Second RWP Congress) in 1955 is significant. It is tempting to assume that Moscow favored those who were least likely to turn the RCP into an autonomous party.

The ethnic composition of the Romanian Stalinist elite could hardly have improved the party’s influence and authority in the country, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s, when both the USSR and Hungary voiced discontent with post–World War I East-Central European frontiers. The Romanian communists did nothing to mitigate their predicament. On the contrary, they yielded to the humiliating 1940 Comintern directives describing Romania as a “multinational, imperialist country” and criticizing the RCP for having launched a campaign for the defense of its borders in the late 1930s.⁸⁷ With very few exceptions (Grigore Răceanu and probably Ion Popescu-Puțuri and Grigore Preoteasa), no true resistance to these politically paralyzing guidelines developed within the RCP. This readiness to endorse the twists and turns of the Comintern line also explains the bland reaction to the signing of the Nazi-Soviet

Pact in August 1939 and the emergence of the Soviet-German condominium.

In June 1940, as part of the Nazi-Soviet agreements, the USSR issued an ultimatum to the Romanian government demanding the retrocession of Bessarabia (a territory controlled by Russia between 1812 and 1918) and northern Bukovina (a region with no record of Russian domination). Isolated and increasingly under siege from the extreme right, King Carol's government bowed to the Soviet diktat. For the RCP, the Kremlin's pressure was not an expression of imperialist behavior but a historically legitimate demand. Furthermore, the directives issued by the central committee urged RCP members of Bessarabian or Bukovinian extraction (and not only them) to apply for Soviet citizenship and "repatriate" to their "homeland." Răutu, Luca, Sorin Toma, Zina Brâncu, and several others thus ended up as Soviet citizens.

In his illuminating essay on the experience of Polish communism, Isaac Deutscher shows how Stalinization resulted in the fatal manipulation of revolutionary enthusiasm by the practitioners and beneficiaries of bureaucratic uniformity.⁸⁸ The dissolution of the Polish Communist Party on Stalin's orders during the Great Terror, the resurgence of Polish communism under Gomułka in occupied Poland, and the salient links between the recurrent antitotalitarian Polish movements and the legacy of the anti-Stalinist Left cannot be comprehended without taking into account the survival of a pre-Leninist, intrinsically anti-authoritarian strain rooted in the tradition of Rosa Luxemburg. In Deutscher's view, a "certain law of continuity" ensured this distinctive Polish feature: "Since nothing in nature is ever lost completely, the Luxemburgist tradition had not vanished completely either, in spite of the years that had been spent on uprooting it. The opposition's influence and the effect of that tradition was such that even the most orthodox Polish Communist left much to be desired from the Stalinist point of view."⁸⁹

Another analysis emphasizes the tradition of rebellion in the commitment of the Hungarian Left, with its incessant internal disputes and electrifying intellectual polemics. If these parties had been irretrievably Bolshevikized—turned into mere conveyor belts for Moscow's orders—it would be difficult to explain the rise of the revisionist generation after Stalin's death. A humanist approach to socialism emerged in Poland and Hungary from within the communist elite, whereas the party elite in Romania preempted this possibility by stifling the very idea of dissent.⁹⁰ In the Czech, Polish, and Hungarian parties, for example, there were dissenting voices—intellectuals ready to question the most irrational features

of Stalinist dictatorship. Examples include the Slovak Vladimir Clementis, the Hungarian poet Jozsef Attila, and the many influential Polish left-wing critics of the Stalinist show trials.⁹¹ Ironically, documents from the long-secret archives indicate that no such critical temptation occurred among Romanian communists. One striking, moving example: during the secret police investigation of Ana Pauker in mid February–March 1953, information was gathered from old-timer ex-cellmates about her reaction to the announcement, via an internal, confidential party memorandum, of the “liquidation of Marcel Pauker’s deviation” (clearly, this meant his execution or, at best, deportation to the Gulag). According to the former worshippers turned Securitate informers, Ana Pauker sighed but did not express any reservation or doubt regarding the wisdom of the party’s decision. The logic of this infinitely subservient behavior is linked to the Bolshevik mystical belief in the party’s infallibility: “No one can be right against the party.” The mystique of the party as charismatic savior, repository of ultimate historical wisdom, and epitome of rationality and justice explains this otherwise astounding behavior that without the slightest questioning approved the vilification and demonization of one’s closest relatives, associates, and friends.

One of the facts obscured by the communist official historiography was the competition during the war between the two domestic groups within the RCP. The central committee and its secretary-general, Ștefan Foriș, theoretically led the party, but his leadership was seriously challenged by the prison nucleus, especially after the start of the Soviet-German war in 1941. Aside from some personal animosities that nourished the competition, the two groups differed in their views on strategies for antifascist resistance in Romania. It is almost certain that Foriș and his supporters, among whom Remus Koffler was the most influential, opposed the idea of organizing a partisan movement, while the prison nucleus favored it.

The prison nucleus was unquestionably dominated by Gheorghiu-Dej, whom my interviewees characterized as imbued with a sense of political mission and responsibility, eager to exert total control over the party organization, powerfully persuasive, and ruthless with respect to potential rivals. Gheorghiu-Dej’s principal supporters in Doftana prison included Dumitru Petrescu, Constantin Doncea, and Gheorghe Vasilichi, fellow railroad workers of his who had organized the 1933 strikes.⁹² As an essential ingredient of RCP’s legitimating campaign, the 1933 strikes deserve a closer look. The deep economic crisis of 1929–33 produced massive wage reductions that led to workers’ revolts,

strikes, and demonstrations. According to communist historiography, between 1929 and 1932, three hundred and seventy-seven workers' protests (strikes, revolts, and demonstrations) took place in Romania;⁹³ for example, railroad workers protested in Cluj (May 1930) and in Bucharest (September 1930).

The period from 1932 to 1933 was also characterized by violent workers' revolts, and an analysis of the industrial branches in which protests occurred reveals that railroad, oil industry, metallurgy, and textile workers conducted the majority of the strikes.⁹⁴ When the government of Alexandru Vaida-Voevod implemented the so-called third sacrificial curve on January 17, 1933, reducing wages by 10 to 12.5 percent, there were demonstrations in the major industrial areas of the country.⁹⁵ During January–February 1933, the workers of Prahova Valley oil industry and Grivița Bucharest railroad repair shops held violent protests. In Prahova Valley, strikes occurred between January 30 and February 1, 1933. In spite of massive unrest among Prahova Valley workers, the protest did not lead to a violent repression. The local authorities agreed to free the arrested workers, and eventually the protest ceased. On February 2, 1933, workers in the Grivița railroad workshops in Bucharest went on strike. Their major requests were (1) a wage increase of 40 percent; and (2) that the management stop firing workers and rehire those already fired. The management agreed to satisfy some of the workers' demands, and the strike ceased the same day. However, during the night of 3–4 February, the Vaida-Voevod government proclaimed a state of siege and proceeded with massive arrests among the strikers. Around 1,600 workers were arrested.⁹⁶

On February 15, 1933, the same Grivița workshops went on strike again, demanding the liberation of workers arrested after the strike of February 2 and the carrying out of the previous agreement. On February 16, the authorities decided to occupy the workshops. Army troops attacked, and three workers were killed and sixteen seriously wounded. The accounts of the Grivița strike in communist historiography are vague and biased. It is still difficult to evaluate the real impact of the repression of Grivița workers on Romanian public opinion, but it can be argued that the workers' sacrifice remained a collective memory. Post-1989 analyses, such as that by Florin Constantiniu, for instance, underline the violent repression of the Grivița protesters. Constantiniu gives the same figures for the number of dead or wounded among the protesters as Mușat and Ardeleanu but does not confirm their assertion that there was massive support for the strike by the people of Bucharest.⁹⁷

Other communist activists in Doftana were Gheorghe Apostol, Teohari Georgescu, Iosif Chişinevschi, Alexandru Drăghici, Chivu Stoica, Iosif Rangheţ, Bela Brainer, and Alexandru Moghioroş, as well as a group of Soviet agents charged with espionage. The most prominent among the latter was Pintilie Bodnarenko (Pantiuşa), who became the chief of the Romanian secret police in the 1950s. Gheorghiu-Dej's group was split up in 1940 after the establishment of General Ion Antonescu's military regime. Some prisoners, including Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceauşescu, were sent first to the Caransebeş penitentiary and then to the Tîrgu-Jiu concentration camp, while others, mostly Jews, were deported to camps in Transnistria, an area of the Soviet Union then administered by Romania. After 1941, Gheorghiu-Dej's faction allied itself against Foriş with Petre Gheorghe, Foriş's former deputy and the secretary of the Bucharest party organization.⁹⁸

A fierce struggle within the Tîrgu Jiu camp opposed Gheorghiu-Dej to other aspirant communist leaders. Drawing on the support of his faithful followers, Dej managed to isolate his opponents Ovidiu Şandru (a veteran of the Griviţa strikes) and Alexandru Iliescu (Ion Iliescu's father). At the same time, Dej was distrustful of Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu and opposed the latter's integration into the party organization committee during Pătrăşcanu's short stay at Tîrgu Jiu (1943). In late 1943–early 1944, Dej masterminded and cooperated with Emil Bodnăraş and Constantin Pîrvulescu, two of Stalin's main agents in the Romanian party, in an operation that resulted in the ouster of Ştefan Foriş, Remus Koffler, and the whole Comintern-appointed leadership. Dej and his cohorts judged the Foriş team to be politically bankrupt and recommended that Foriş be removed from his position of secretary-general and that Moscow back the prison nucleus. For Dej, Bodnăraş, Pîrvulescu, and, most likely, their Soviet protectors, the Foriş central committee was too isolated and sectarian to transform the RCP into a mass party. The elimination of Foriş and his coterie, and Bodnăraş's early support, greatly contributed to Gheorghiu-Dej's rise to prominence: as an ethnic Romanian, he benefited from Moscow's decision to build up the national base of the RCP to counteract the negative impression created by the predominance of foreigners in the party leadership.⁹⁹

Consequently, with Moscow's blessing, the group of imprisoned communists led by Gheorghiu-Dej fomented an internal coup against the Comintern-appointed general secretary Ştefan Foriş in April 1944.¹⁰⁰ The main accusation against Foriş, formulated in letters sent by the prison nucleus to Moscow during the war, was his "cowardice and capit-

ulation," later described as a betrayal of class principles. Once Foriș was eliminated (first politically, then physically), the road was open for Gheorghiu-Dej and his henchmen to take power within the RCP. The arrival of the Red Army provided the once minuscule communist formation with the political and logistic support it needed to transform itself into a key national political party. The communists, Stalin's loyal supporters, had espoused Moscow's strategies and opposed fascism, Romania's alliance with Hitler's Germany, and Antonescu's fateful anti-Soviet war. Their time had come.

CHAPTER 3

The Road to Absolute Power

*From Quasi-Monarchy to People's
Democracy, 1944–1948*

In the complexity of Leninism, there is a particular poison: the immoralism that the followers take for the height of political ability. It seems that all is permitted “for the sake of the cause,” but as the latter remains to be defined, everybody can afford to construct a convenient definition.

Boris Souvarine, *À contre-courant* [Against the Current]

When Stalin decided to move the headquarters of the Cominform (Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties) from troublesome Belgrade to obedient Bucharest in 1948, the world knew very little about the party of Gheorghiu-Dej and Ana Pauker, notwithstanding its tragically fascinating history. Founded in 1921, the Romanian Communist Party emerged from underground in 1944 with only a tiny membership, yet it managed after 1945, through deception, mobilization, and manipulation behind the protective shield of the Red Army, to become increasingly hegemonic, slowly but decisively eliminating or emasculating political rivals.

A coup on August 23, 1944, overthrew the pro-Nazi dictatorship of Marshal Ion Antonescu and brought Romania into the antifascist coalition. It was a time of fierce competition among factions in the RCP, explained by the “tri-centric” hypothesis outlined below. What separated the factions was not only their different experience of the war (some had spent it in the USSR, others in clandestine hideouts, and still others in prisons and camps) but also the existence of deep relations (including

personal ones) with Moscow and the movers and shakers of the CPSU's International Department. There were, however, no significant strategic disagreements within the RCP leadership regarding the need to promote "bourgeois-democratic" transformations in the direction of a "socialist revolution."

For Gheorghiu-Dej, Pauker, Bodnăraș, Luca, and Pătrășcanu, the Stalinization of Romania seemed an urgent task, and the distinctions among them were minor nuances. The Red Army offensive on the Iași-Chișinău line in the spring of 1944 accelerated the activities of anti-German forces within Romania. Suddenly, the traditional (historical) parties realized that the RCP was a potentially significant partner in any future coalition. Pătrășcanu, the only communist leader whom the "bourgeois" politicians could identify as a political figure, represented the RCP in negotiations conducted in the spring and summer of 1944. In the meantime, the post-Foriș triumvirate, Pîrvulescu, Rangheț, and Bodnăraș, dominated the RCP leadership. Bodnăraș was instrumental in organizing underground secret paramilitary units that played an important role in the aftermath of the anti-Antonescu coup. A coalition government—made up of the National Peasant (NPP), National Liberal (NLP), Social Democratic (SDP), and Communist parties—was established following the coup that switched Romania's allegiance from the Axis to the Allied powers. By that time, Soviet armies were in Romania, just days away from Bucharest. The coup permitted Romanian democracy to reemerge briefly and prevented the immediate imposition by the Russians and their Romanian supporters of a Bulgarian-style Stalinist regime. When Red Army detachments reached Bucharest in late August, communist-led demonstrations enthusiastically welcomed them. Among those who greeted the arrival of the "liberating" Soviet Army were the communist union leader Gheorghe Apostol and Nicolae Ceaușescu, leader of the resurfaced and now legal Communist Youth Union, who had recently returned from the Tîrgu-Jiu camp.

The Soviet presence naturally enabled the RCP to gain a political preponderance in the coalition government that it would not have achieved by itself. Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu became a minister of state, equal in rank to the main figures of the established political parties. Soon thereafter, communist leaders took over important ministerial portfolios: Pătrășcanu at Justice, Gheorghiu-Dej at transportation, and so on. Benefiting from the bandwagon effect and skillfully exploiting antifascist rhetoric, Romanian communists aimed at enlarging their popular base and weakening the influence and authority of their opponents, particularly the

National Peasant Party, which was headed by the veteran politicians Iuliu Maniu and Ion Mihalache. Communists became the champions of the continuation of the war against Nazi Germany, for the liberation of northern Transylvania, and further military cooperation with the Red Army until the final victory. “Totul pentru front, totul pentru victorie” (All for the front, all for the victory) was the party’s incessant slogan. Mass meetings were organized to support the country’s denazification, which for the communists coincided with direct attacks on the historical parties, which they accused of sabotaging the war effort. The RCP claimed not only to be the party of the heroic anti-Nazi resistance but also the main guarantor of the country’s break with the fascist past.

RCP membership increased very rapidly, something that deserves closer examination. Post-1989 research reveals that when the coup took place on August 23, 1944, there were only 80 RCP members in Bucharest and fewer than 1,000 throughout the country, including those in prisons and concentration camps (these statistics apparently do not, however, include Romanian communists in the USSR and in France and other Western European countries). Within three months, in October 1944, RCP membership was somewhere between 5,000 and 6,000. In February 1944, RCP already had 15,000 members, and by April 23, 1945, its membership had risen to 42,653. Iosif Rangheț, the head of the organizational section of the central committee of the RCP, provided these figures at a meeting of key party *aktiv* (“effectives”) in April 25–27, 1945. Rangheț also stated there that the RCP already had 55,253 members, while the Communist Youth Union (UTC) had 62,925.¹ RCP membership and the way in which new members were allowed into the party became an important issue during Ana Pauker’s interrogations after the purging of the so-called Pauker–Luca faction in June 1952. For instance, on June 12, 1953, during the interrogation conducted by Alexandru Moghioroș, in the presence of Gheorghe Apostol, Petre Borilă, and Constantin Pîrvulescu, Pauker was accused of giving directives for “inflating the party,” as Moghioroș put it, and therefore allowing large cohorts of new members to enter the RCP without a thorough verification. Gheorghe Apostol reiterated the charge at the same meeting.² For anybody familiar with Leninist jargon, this amounted to the mortal sin of “liquidationism”—renunciation of the sacrosanct duty of revolutionary vigilance and intransigence. In other words, Pauker’s fault had been to “open the party gates” to elements other than well-tested revolutionary workers, thereby neutralizing its vanguard role. Needless to say, as Pauker reminded her ex-colleagues, none of these decisions regarding party admissions policies

had been original to her. In fact, from the moment the so-called Muscovites returned to Romania, all decisions related to cadre policies were discussed within the central committee secretariat. In addition, these policies were discussed with representatives of the Soviet International Department. All RCP leaders, including Gheorghiu-Dej, Pătrășcanu, Teohari Georgescu, Iosif Rangheț, Iosif Chișinevschi, and Miron Constantinescu, had been perfectly aware that there was a desperate need to broaden the party's mass base. The speeches delivered during those years by Romania's Stalinist luminaries show how they competed with one another to emphasize the party's deep popular roots and enhance its appeal among workers, peasants, and intellectuals.

The year 1947 was a crucial one. It had become clear that Stalin's intention was to establish loyal "fraternal" satellite regimes in the Eastern European countries led by communists devoted to him. By mid 1947, Robert R. King has perceptively argued, "the peace treaties with the former enemy states in Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania) had been signed, the patterns of the cold war were beginning to harden in U.S.-Soviet relations, and the communist parties were in relatively strong positions in all countries. Thus, it was no longer necessary for the Soviet Union to postpone the full and unequivocal integration of these countries into its sphere, which involved insuring conformity not only in foreign policy, but in domestic matters as well."³

Communist internationalism meant nothing less than unconditional solidarity with Moscow. In the Romanian case, as elsewhere in East-Central Europe, the communist party proved to be the ideal instrument for attaining Moscow's objectives. Although immediately after its relegalization, following the coup of August 23, 1944, the party, as noted, had fewer than 1,000 members, the presence of Soviet armies on Romanian territory was a decisive element in transforming this communist minority into a dynamic pressure group. The Kremlin established a "radial system" of relations with the communist parties of East-Central Europe that permitted communication only between Moscow and its satellites and made it extremely difficult, at least in the beginning, for the "people's democracies" of the region to communicate directly with one another. Moscow was linked by radio with the communist leaderships in East-Central Europe, but with a few exceptions, these countries' top communist elites had no such radio connections among themselves. If they wanted to get in touch with one another, it had to be through Moscow.⁴ Although the Comintern had officially been dissolved in June 1943, it was reorganized and continued to function under the guise of a

“research institute” until the fall of 1945. The Comintern’s central apparatus and the entire system of relations within the local communist parties was subordinated to the CPSU central committee’s Section for International Information, which, as Leonid Gibianskii argues, played a major role in shaping the long-term strategy of the satellite communist parties:

Officially, [the section’s] head was [Aleksandr] Shcherbakov, a candidate member of the politburo and secretary of the central committee, but in reality it was directed by [Gheorghe] Dimitrov, who in June 1944 received the formal position of head [of the section]. A resolution of the politburo confirmed the section’s place in the organizational structure of the central committee of the Soviet Communist Party. Documents from the central committee [of the CPSU] and those of other Communist parties show that long-term objectives and current problems of the satellite Communist parties played an important part in the section’s work. . . . After many of the activists who worked in the Section for International Information had returned at the end of the war to their countries of origin, the section began to operate as a foreign policy arm of the central committee of the CPSU under the direction of [Mikhail] Suslov. It was an important instrument of supervision of the East European Communist parties and was responsible for drawing up and transmitting Soviet directives.⁵

Archival evidence reveals that during the 1944–45 period, the general strategy of the communist parties in the region and many of their concrete actions were coordinated or ordered by the Kremlin. The RCP was no exception: it followed Moscow’s orders strictly during its rise to absolute power in Romania.

Moreover, there were additional elements that favored the RCP’s ascension. Numbd by the lack of Western response and determined action against the abuses committed by the communists, the historical parties had little room to maneuver. Furthermore, the communists used demagoguery very effectively in their efforts to take over the government: a series of violent propaganda attacks on the historical parties (accused of anti-Sovietism, pre-1940 collaboration with the Iron Guard, and residual fascism) and the slandering of the palace-appointed prime ministers (first Constantin Sănătescu, then Gheorghe Rădescu) were accompanied by Bolshevik-style demonstrations meant to destabilize the country.

The goal was to gain control over the key ministries and impose communists as the heads of the crucial departments with respect to both the war effort and administrative and economic control of the country. Provocations, vilification of their enemies, and enticement of

industrial workers were among the means used by the communists to achieve their goals (continuously coordinated with Soviet emissaries). An important role was played by the notorious Andrei Ianuarievich Vyshinsky, ex-prosecutor in the infamous Moscow show trials of the 1930s, first deputy commissar of foreign affairs of the USSR, and Stalin's point man in Romanian affairs. It was Vyshinsky's direct diktat that forced the young King Michael to accept the transfer of power to a government that was, for all practical purposes, the expression of the emerging communist dictatorship. The imposition of the communist-controlled government in March 1945, headed by Petru Groza, a bon vivant landowner with leftist penchants and a deep resentment of Iuliu Maniu, facilitated the RCP's posturing as the party of social justice and economic equality. The land reform of 1945 and promises of economic support for the less favored contributed to an attenuation of popular distrust of a party long perceived as lacking national roots. The communist rhetoric, imbued with pathetic declarations praising democracy and equality, proved to be extremely successful in attracting a certain degree of popular support. In the meantime, based on intimidation and benefiting from the unconditional support of the Soviet military commander, General Ivan Zaharovich Susaikov, the Romanian communist leaders prepared a cold-blooded coup meant to liquidate the last vestiges of the parliamentary democracy and transform Romania into a Soviet-type regime.

Between August 1944 and March 1945, Romania had three governments: the first Constantin Sănătescu government (August 23–November 2, 1944); the second Sănătescu government (November 4–December 6, 1944); and the Nicolae Rădescu government (December 6, 1944–February 28, 1945). The Groza government (March 6, 1945–December 30, 1947) was imposed under the direct pressure of the Soviet envoy to Bucharest, A. I. Vyshinsky.⁶ In Romanian collective memory, it was Vyshinsky who ruthlessly transformed the country into a virtual Soviet colony. Within the Groza government, the communists acquired influential posts. From the Sănătescu to the Rădescu cabinets, communists held the ministries of Justice (Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu) and Communications (Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej) and a subsecretaryship of state at the Ministry for the Internal Affairs (Teohari Georgescu). In the Groza government, communists held Justice (Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu), Communications (Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej), Internal Affairs (Teohari Georgescu), and Propaganda (Petre Constantinescu-Iași), as well as subsecretaryships of state at the Ministry of Agriculture (Constantin Agiu) and

Communications (Ion Gheorghe Maurer).⁷ The most important victory in this sea change was the takeover of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The former Soviet spy Bodnăraş controlled the much-feared Special Service of Information attached to the presidency of the council of ministers, and Teohari Georgescu became head of all public order forces. The communists were finally in the position to start their overall offensive against their adversaries and place their partisans in key positions for the ultimate confrontation. Behind the scenes, these strategic moves were masterminded by the RCP secretariat, headed by Gheorghiu-Dej in cooperation with Pauker, Luca, Georgescu, and Chişinevschi.

Obviously, in 1946–47, the Romanian communists benefited from the fake pluralism of the Petru Groza regime. As a result of Western pressure, the historical parties were for a short period of time represented at relatively minor level in the government.⁸ But Maniu and the Liberal leader Dinu Brătianu clearly understood that their Western friends were increasingly abandoning them. The Greek Civil War was the main Western priority, and with the deterioration of the former anti-Nazi coalition, Romania's democratic forces were basically left on their own. The Western democracies had no intention of intervening in any significant way on behalf of Romania's beleaguered democrats. Fantasies aside, there were basically no realistic opportunities for more than diplomatic protests regarding the communist abuses: the fact of the matter was that the Soviet Army occupied Romanian territory and that the Soviet-controlled political formation called the RCP was exploiting this state of affairs to establish a Stalinist regime as soon as possible, whatever the human cost. The RCP's appetite for power grew exponentially as a direct effect of its belief that no external force could intervene to prevent its ultimate triumph. The RCP leaders thought that history was on their side and acted accordingly. Long distrustful of liberal values, they had no pangs of conscience in dismantling liberal institutions. Educated in the Leninist logic of "Who-Whom" (i.e., who's getting rid of whom), they truly enjoyed the destruction of all remaining enclaves of social or political autonomy.

Although the communists were essentially in control of the government, their strategy was oriented toward total control of the society. The very existence of the traditional, so-called historical political parties was an obstacle on RCP's road to absolute power. The historical parties represented the only form of official opposition to the communists, so they had to be destroyed. Some important steps toward the total destruction of the official opposition had already been taken. Under the leadership

of Teohari Georgescu, the communist minister of internal affairs, the elections of November 19, 1946, had been falsified, an enormous electoral fraud that permitted the RCP and its allies to take a major step toward a monopoly of power.⁹ In spite of the supervision of Georgescu's prefects and "revolutionary" squads terrorizing the voters and creating a sense of panic and national desperation, however, communists in fact performed poorly in the elections. The real victor was the NPP, which the communists rightly perceived as the core of national resistance to the country's Sovietization.¹⁰

The control of the post-1946 parliament made the communists increasingly eager to speed up the transformation process. Their enemies had been reduced to marginal positions, and to Gheorghiu-Dej, Pauker, and Luca, the time appeared propitious for a radicalization of the party line. There was no need to stick to the earlier cajoling, reassuring rhetoric about democratic alliances and collaboration with other progressive forces. Pătrășcanu himself had organized purges of the justice system and called for the punishment of all collaborators with the Antonescu regime (obviously, this term was elastic enough to allow the communists to designate their enemies as collaborators). As opposed to the "bourgeois" vision of constitutional monarchy, the communists touted the ideal of "people's democracy." Their propaganda eulogized Tito's great accomplishments in neighboring Yugoslavia. Lip service was paid to King Michael, but there was no doubt that things were rapidly moving toward the end of pluralism in Romania. The plenum of the central committee of the RCP of January 8–9, 1947, decided on a set of measures for "strengthening the links with the masses." In reality, the party was taking steps toward increased control of society. In March 1947, after a short-lived experiment called Tineretul Progresist (Progressive Youth), the Communist Youth Union was reestablished; in May, in Cluj, the National Union of the Romanian Students was established. This was controlled by the communist representatives, among them, Corneliu Bogdan; Gheorghe Brătescu, Ana Pauker's son-in-law; and the left-wing Social Democrat Alexandru Glanstein-Muşat.¹¹

However, the traditional parties were the main target of the communists. The first victims were the influential National Peasant and the Liberal parties. To achieve their goal of monopolizing power, Emil Bodnăraş, head of the Secret Service of Information (SSI) and a member of the RCP politburo, and Teohari Georgescu, the minister for internal affairs and a member of the RCP secretariat, with the help of Soviet agents, masterminded the Tămădău episode, which put an end to the

two historical parties. In July 1947, major NPP figures (including Vice-Chairman Ion Mihalache, General Secretary Nicolae Penescu, and Nicolae Carandino, the editor of the official newspaper *Dreptatea*) tried to leave the country on a chartered airplane, which was to take off from a small airfield at Tămădău, near Bucharest. In fact, one of the pilots was secret police informer and foiled this attempt by the NPP opposition to create an alternative government abroad. The NPP leaders, including Iuliu Maniu, were arrested. The Tămădău episode offered the ideal pretext for getting rid of the National Peasant and Liberal parties, and in August 1947, they were dissolved by decree.

The next victim was the Romanian Social Democratic Party (RSDP), led by Constantin Titel Petrescu. The communists forced a split within the RSDP, based on the collaborationist faction led by Theodor Iordăchescu, Mișa Levin, Lothar Rădăceanu, Barbu Solomon, and Ștefan Voitec. At the Eighth RSDP Congress (October 4–9, 1947), the collaborationist faction succeeded in imposing a resolution that pushed through approval of the unification of the RCP and the RSDP. Titel Petrescu and his supporters were expelled from the party. Many of them served long prison sentences in communist prisons on charges of treason and sabotaging the “unity of the working class.” On November 12, the central committees of the RCP and RSDP adopted a joint program as the “unique workers’ party.” However, by 1948, the RCP was able to dispense with its coalition partner.

The Sixth Congress of the RCP (the First Congress of the Romanian Workers’ Party), held February 21–23, 1948, sanctioned the termination of the Romanian Social Democratic Party (RSDP) through its “merger” with the Communist Party into the Romanian Workers’ Party (RWP). The decisions taken at this congress pounded the final nails into the coffin of the “united antifascist front” and firmly established the communists in power. The unification of the RCP with the RSDP gave the communists a total preponderance in the new, united RWP. The statistical data show that out of a total of forty-one full central committee members, thirty-one came from the RCP, while only ten came from the RSDP; similarly, out of a total of sixteen candidate members, eleven were RCP and only five were RSDP. Of the thirteen full members of the politburo, ten were RCP and only three were RSDP; among the candidate members, out of a total of five, three were RCP and two were RSDP. Of the five members of the secretariat of the RWP’s central committee (Gheorghiu-Dej, Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, Teohari Georgescu, and Lothar Rădăceanu), four were RCP and one was RSDP.¹² The so-

cial democratic leaders who had opposed the merger with the RCP were imprisoned, while those who cooperated with the communists (Iordăchescu, Rădăceanu, Voitec) became their pawns. A special message from the central committee of the CPSU signed by Mikhail Suslov was read to thunderous applause, and a central committee member, Constanța Crăciun, expressed the congress participants' boundless admiration and love for Stalin in a joint telegram to the Soviet dictator. Dominated by Gheorghiu-Dej and Ana Pauker, both of them tempestuously acclaimed, the congress codified the new strategy that turned Romania into a people's democracy.

The first step toward the dictatorship of the proletariat had been taken when the National Peasant and the Liberal parties were dissolved in August 1947. The last blow came on December 30, 1947, when King Michael was forced to abdicate and, on the same day, the creation of the Romanian People's Republic (*Republica Populară Română*) was announced. The forced merger between the RCP and RSDP only concluded the process that had started in 1944 when Soviet troops occupied the country. From that moment on, slower or faster, in accordance with Soviet international interests, Romanian communists pursued the strategy of slicing up the democratic body politic and taking over the main centers of power, authority, and symbolic influence one after another. In this respect, there were no crucial differences between the Romanian takeover strategy and Mátyás Rákosi's "salami" tactics in Hungary. Denazification, mass democracy, peace, and support for the underprivileged among workers and peasants; all these slogans were used to persuade large segments of the population that the objective of the Romanian communists was simply the creation of a just, stable political community.

As the Cold War developed and intensified, the communists took a more confrontational approach and insisted that, because of the exacerbation of class conflict, both internally and externally, the country was entering the stage of socialist transformation. Revolution, not reform, was the answer Pauker and Gheorghiu-Dej brought to the social, economic, and political problems of the country. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, this was the point when the Soviet leaders selected Bucharest as the location for the Cominform's publication and related offices. Gheorghiu-Dej and his associates at the helm of the Romanian Workers' Party appeared to Stalin, Malenkov, and Suslov to be trustworthy comrades, and the "new Romania" was seen as a true friend of the USSR, unlike treacherous Yugoslavia.

Internationalism, Factionalism, and National Communism in Romania, 1944–1948

Writing the political history of any Leninist party or movement means, first and foremost, understanding of the roles of individuals in the making and unmaking of crucial decisions. Strategic issues are, of course, important, and in Eastern Europe, they took place within a framework essentially configured by Stalinist dogma (deviation amounted to treason, be it “objective” or “subjective”). Enemies were everywhere, and the first duty of a Stalinist militant was to watch out and identify infiltrated “vermin.” As Franz Borkenau put it, “a man who, working within the party, is personally guilty of the failure of the revolution to come, is, in fact, worse than an open enemy; against him every weapon is admitted, nay, is obligatory. He is a ‘traitor;’ for in the communist mentality, every failure—not objective failure, but failure of the reality to comply with the Utopia—supposes a traitor.”¹³ In terms of obsession with the enemy (I call it the Trojan Horse complex), there were no fundamental differences between Romania’s Gheorghiu-Dej and Ana Pauker and Czechoslovakia’s Rudolf Slánský and Klement Gottwald; or Hungary’s Mátyás Rákosi and Ernő Gerő; Bulgaria’s Vulko Chervenkov; or East Germany’s Walter Ulbricht.

To the Stalinist mind, detecting enemies “within our ranks” was even more important than detecting obvious class enemies, because the former were much more difficult to unmask. It was easy enough, Gheorghiu-Dej said, to note and expose the enmity of a Iuliu Maniu. But true Stalinists distinguished themselves by detecting the invisible traitor who claimed to be “one of ours” but in reality subverted the party’s grand achievements. This logic inspired the struggle for power within Leninist parties in East-Central Europe throughout the Cominform period (1947–53). Indeed, although the Cominform never achieved the same global scope and importance as the Third International, it provided the framework within which some of the most atrocious persecutions of both communists and anticommunists took place in the name of the defense of the proletarian revolution. Inspired by the Soviet ideologue Andrei Zhdanov’s Manichean thesis of a new international class war between two camps (one progressive, led by the USSR, the other reactionary, headed by the United States of America), the Cominform’s ideology and practice amounted to exacerbated, paroxysmal Stalinism. Purgers and purged, tormentors and victims, were caught up in an infernal mechanism of continuous, endless liquidation.

Nobody felt secure in this terrorist system, not even Moscow's most trusted agents. One day, Gheorghiu-Dej felt menaced by the intrigues of the "Pauker-Luca group"; the next, the "Muscovites" fell from power (and lost their physical freedom) based on the most absurd accusations.

The RCP leaders were obedient, disciplined participants in this game, and their moves faithfully reflected Moscow's intentions, interests, and expectations. But they also had a relative margin of autonomy, so to speak: it was, after all, their prerogative to designate the victims as a result of the competition for power at the party's pinnacle. The Cominform authors wrote the script. It was up to Romanian, Bulgarian, Polish, or Hungarian Stalinists to enact it most convincingly.

It is thus worth examining the main characteristics of the Romanian communist elites, their factional struggles, and the most prominent personalities who contributed to the Stalinization of Romania and its transformation into a docile Soviet satellite. The RCP was the epitome of a revolutionary sect: fundamentalist in its belief system, strongly opposed to any form of heresy or critical thought, militaristic, highly disciplinarian, conspiratorial, ascetic, millennialist, and staunchly doctrinaire. The abysmal level of ideological work was irrelevant: once the party had received Stalin's Holy Writ, there was no need for discussion. No Lukács or Gramsci could emerge in this suffocating microcosm, whose political creed, enshrined in the documents of the Fifth RCP Congress, derived from the simplistic, Manichean worldview of the Comintern leadership.¹⁴

Forced to act clandestinely after the adoption of the Mîrzescu Law in 1924, the RCP failed to create a mass base among the industrial working class or other underprivileged categories. Primarily because of its doctrinaire sectarianism, the party remained an alien group, whose propaganda slogans barely stirred any responsive chords among the population. Internal struggles at the top, conflicts between different wings and a patronizing attitude on the part of the Comintern exacerbated the party's inferiority complex. This complex was the single most important psychological feature of the successive elites, from the first Comintern generation to Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu. It was indeed the counterpart to the party's lack of political legitimacy: claiming to speak in the name of the working class, the RCP was simply a mouthpiece for theses and directives formulated outside Romania, more often than not in blatant contrast to political common sense and the party's obvious interests. It was as if this movement chose to remain outside the Romanian political mainstream and condescendingly gloss over the central

questions linked to national, state, and institutional building during the interwar period.¹⁵

From the viewpoint of the RCP's very survival, the most cataclysmic event in the years before World War II was the extermination of the Stalinist old guard during the Great Purge: the effect was the elimination of any potential source of autonomous thought or action within the party. The destruction of the old guard was the equivalent of the similar action undertaken by the International against the Polish Communist Party. Although the RCP was not disbanded, its historical elite was purged to an extent unknown in other European parties (again, with the exception of the Poles). After the Seventh Comintern Congress (1935), the RCP espoused the antifascist rhetoric of the "popular front," tried to expand its mass base, and sought to establish alliances with left-wing-oriented groups within the established and legal parties (primarily with left-wing members of the National Peasant Party and the previously vilified social democrats, headed by Constantin-Titel Petrescu). Those were perfunctory openings, because the RCP's ruling team remained completely dominated by sectarian militants with little if any understanding of domestic problems (the Boris Ștefanov group). Between 1940 and 1944, the RCP elite was plagued by factious struggles between different competing forces and groups.

The Three Centers

Schematically, the following factions functioned within the RCP during World War II:

1. The central committee, headed by Ștefan Foriș (alias Marius) and otherwise including Constantin Pîrvulescu, Constanța Crăciun, Ileana Răceanu, Victoria Sîrbu (alias Mira), and the engineer Remus Koffler, an enigmatic politburo member. Other personalities linked to the underground central committee were Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu (before his assignment to forced residence in PoianaȚapului, where he wrote his theoretical contributions during the war years), Ana Grossman-Toma (for several years married to Pîrvulescu, whose first husband, Sorin Toma, was in exile in the USSR), and Ion Gheorghe Maurer (a lawyer specialized in defending prosecuted communists). It is hard to assess the role played by Emil Bodnăraș—a former officer in the Romanian Army of half-Ukrainian, half-German extraction, who had defected to the Soviet Union in 1931, then returned as a Soviet agent, but was arrested and

held until 1942—in the underground party.¹⁶ It is clear, however, that under the alias “inginerul Ceaușu,” Bodnăraș played a part in the murky plotting that led to the replacement of the Comintern-anointed Foriș secretariat by a group loyal to Gheorghiu-Dej, which included Petre Gheorghe (head of the Bucharest party committee), Bodnăraș, and Iosif Rangheț and was able to co-opt Pîrvulescu. The conflict was linked to the explosively neurotic atmosphere in the underground party (which, as already noted, had fewer than 1,000 members), where everybody suspected everybody else of collusion with the Siguranță and the “class enemy.”

Between 1941 and 1942, as has been shown by Peter Stavrakis, the Greek communists’ lines of communication with Moscow were largely severed.¹⁷ Foriș was similarly cut off from the Comintern. In the circumstances, the party leadership had to act on its own, and the profoundly fanatical instincts and drives of its members took a heavy toll on this already anemic group.

The complete control of the RCP elite by Moscow created an asymmetrical relationship of subordination that generated feelings of humiliation and frustration among many activists. Although obscured by all sorts of rationalizations, these sentiments influenced the post-1958 anti-Soviet orientation of the RCP under Gheorghiu-Dej.¹⁸

A clandestine commando was created by the extremely energetic and imaginative Bodnăraș to get rid of the embarrassing Foriș. Given Bodnăraș’s past as a Soviet agent trained in the USSR in special NKVD schools, it is unlikely that this initiative to eliminate the Moscow-appointed leader was a spontaneous local action.¹⁹ RCP archives preserve complaints to Moscow during World War II that show that the Kremlin’s blessing was sought for the anti-Foriș conspiracy. Meanwhile, the Bodnăraș–Rangheț–Pîrvulescu triumvirate was in contact with another influential faction, the prison nucleus, which was also critical of Foriș’s allegedly contemplative, passive, “capitulationist” attitude. Why, it was asked, had no partisan warfare been waged against the Nazis in Romania? Foriș and Koffler were singled out as the main culprits.

2. Gheorghiu-Dej and the “Center of the Prisons.” There is as yet no biography of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej in English. He was the ultimate survivor, the only Eastern European Cominform leader who outlived all the purges, upheavals, and changes, both under and after Stalin, without even losing his seat or being excommunicated. Chervenkov, Slánský, Ana Pauker, and Rákosi all ended their careers in disgrace, slandered by their former comrades. Not Gheorghiu-Dej. He stayed in power, ran

his party, and even espoused a “national communism” of sorts, a tremendous irony, given that it was Gheorghiu-Dej who was entrusted with the “honor” of making a name for himself in 1949 at the Budapest Cominform conclave that branded Tito the chief of a “gang of spies and murderers.” In spite of his reassuring, self-effacing appearance, the man was strong-willed, unusually astute, a consummate intriguer, and a sophisticated negotiator. Gheorghiu-Dej was a Machiavellian, wrote Sorin Toma, the former editor of *Scînteia* and an Orgburo member, who had known him well. Or perhaps one should rather say that Dej was a Stalinist Machiavellian who played a bloody game for power in a Byzantine sect of zealots.²⁰ Miron Constantinescu, who had known him quite well as a fellow politburo member until June 1957, once said: “It was Dej who introduced Byzantine methods into the life of our party.”²¹

Unlike other post-World War II communist leaders in East-Central Europe, Gheorghiu-Dej was not a typical Cominternist. In this respect, there was a psychological incongruity between the profile of the movement and that of the man who was to lead it for twenty years, including in its most dangerous and risky operations during the takeover of power and subsequent consolidation. He remains something of an enigma. Whom did he trust and whom did he hate? Was he a true Stalinist in the sense that he had internalized the Bolshevik political style? What were his political values? Who were his role models? What was his *modus operandi* in the internecine party struggles? How to explain that of all the historical leaders of the RCP, it was Gheorghiu-Dej who, in spite of his lack of seniority as a party member, emerged as the undisputed head of the prison nucleus?

The role played by the group of Soviet agents held in Romanian prisons in the 1930s in Gheorghiu-Dej’s “acculturation”—that is, in his adoption of values, beliefs, and practices characteristic of Stalinism—must be emphasized. The most effective of them was the Ukrainian-born Pantelei Bodnarenko (Pantiușa), who later headed the Securitate until 1960 under the name of Gheorghe Pintilie, and who was clearly very loyal to Gheorghiu-Dej.²²

Connivance between Gheorghiu-Dej’s prison nucleus and the underground conspirators outside (e.g., Bodnăraș, Pîrvulescu, and Rangheț) culminated in Foriș’s abduction in April 1944 in a party coup that was to be something of a rehearsal for the August attempt by the communists to hijack the democratic antifascist coup d’état. (Marshal Antonescu would, in fact, be confined in the party safe house where Foriș was held hostage between April and August 1944.) Foriș was first accused of hav-

ing acted against the revolutionary movement and demoted from the party's leadership. Then, after August 1944, Gheorghiu-Dej's prison nucleus and the Romanian communists who had returned from Moscow with the Red Army combined to eliminate him. At the beginning of January 1945, Foriș was let go, but he was seized again on June 9, 1945, by a band led by Gheorghe Pintilie, who, with the help of his underling, Dumitru Neciu (who just happened to be the personal chauffeur of the Soviet agent Pantelei Bodnarenko, *dit* Pantiușă), battered Foriș to death with an iron bar in the summer of 1946, acting on the instructions of the RCP's new ruling quartet, Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, Gheorghiu-Dej, and Teohari Georgescu.²³

The RCP was not the only communist party to use such gangsterlike methods to settle accounts among fratricidal factions. Similar events took place in Poland. In November 1942, Zygmunt Molojec, the brother of Boleslaw Molojec, a former Spanish Civil war veteran and member of the triumvirate heading the clandestine Polish Workers' Party (PPR), murdered Marcelli Nowotko, another of its members. As Krystyna Kersten writes: "The circumstances of the murder, the real reasons for its commission, and even the murderer are depicted in various fashions without conclusive evidence on which to definitively determine who murdered Nowotko, on whose order, and for what reason. The only thing that is certain is that the Germans did not carry it out."²⁴

It was thus in prison, first in Doftana, then in Caransebeș, and finally in the Țirgu-Jiu camp for political detainees, that Gheorghiu-Dej established his authority as the chief of the political phalanx that became hegemonic in the RCP after August 1944. Among his prison cohort, Gheorghiu-Dej enjoyed absolute authority, and he resented party members who because of their more impressive communist pedigrees dared to question his supremacy. His plotting with the Soviet agent Emil Bodnăraș, with whom he was as thick as thieves after 1943, paved the way for the Mafia-style elimination of Foriș. Gheorghiu-Dej's conflict with the Foriș central committee had no philosophical dimension: neither man doubted the Kremlin's right to determine the Romanian party's strategy. The issue was who could better implement what Stalin (acting through the RCP's Moscow Bureau) had in mind for Romania.

3. Ana Pauker and the Romanian Émigré Bureau in Moscow. Between 1922, when she was first elected a central committee member, and 1952, when she was ousted by Gheorghiu-Dej on charges of simultaneous "rightist" and "leftist" deviationism, Ana Pauker was a most influential leader, indeed a Pasionaria-like figurehead of Romanian commu-

nism (Dolores Ibárruri, known as “La Pasionaria” [the Passionflower], was one of the top communist leaders during the Spanish Civil War, internationally celebrated for her formidable antifascist speeches, and Ana Pauker was often compared to her by Comintern propaganda). Ana Pauker derived paramount authority from her privileged contacts with Comintern headquarters, where she was accurately perceived as an inflexible, absolutely trustworthy Stalinist. Within the RCP, Ana Pauker’s authority was also enhanced by her performance at the Craiova trial in 1936, which was widely publicized by the national and international antifascist media. During her prison term (until 1940, when she was traded by the Romanian government for a Bessarabian politician held hostage by the Soviet regime and was thus able to go to Moscow), Ana Pauker was one of the leaders of the communist movement inside the prisons (Mislea and Dumbrăveni).

Ana Pauker met Gheorghiu-Dej and had long discussions with him at the Caransebeş prison. The devout militants who developed a real cult of “fearless comrade Ana” considered her directives and opinions infallible.²⁵ Understanding that no family bond should prevail over loyalty to the Comintern, Ana Pauker refrained from expressing any doubts about the Moscow trials and the Great Purge, even when her own husband, Marcel Pauker (Luximin), was shot as an “enemy of the people.” On the contrary, all the sources converge in indicating Ana Pauker’s full support for the witch-hunt organized by Stalin against foreign communists, including the elite of the RCP. True, she did not engage in a criticism of Marcel Pauker, and some old comrades remembered this reluctance during the 1952 investigations (e.g., Zina Brîncu and Liuba Chişinevschi). At the same time, as Ana Pauker admitted herself on various occasions during the numerous discussions (interrogations) that followed her downfall in May 1952, she never doubted the wisdom and necessity of the Great Purge, not even the terrible accusations against the RCP’s historical leaders, among whom were close friends and her husband, the father of two of her children.²⁶

After her arrival in Moscow in the fall of 1940, Ana Pauker reorganized the Romanian political emigration. She was personally close to many of the Comintern’s luminaries (among them Georgi Dimitrov, Vasil Kolarov, Palmiro Togliatti, Dmitri Manuilsky, and Maurice Thorez), and she was co-opted onto its executive committee, where she played an important role in drafting the Kremlin’s plans not only for Romania but for the Balkans as a whole. There is evidence that she intervened with the NKVD to bring several Romanian survivors of the

purges back to Moscow, including Vanda Nikolski, a one-time member of the RCP's politburo and ally of its former general secretary Alexander Stefanski-Gorn (executed during the Purge), who became one of Pauker's closest collaborators in the Romanian Émigré Bureau.

In light of the influence of this group on postwar Romanian political struggles, it is necessary to examine its composition and dynamics. In addition to Ana Pauker and Vanda Nikolski, other prominent figures of the emigration who were to be highly influential in the years to come included Vasile Luca (Luka Lászlo), a Hungarian-born trade union activist who adopted Soviet citizenship and served as a member of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet between 1940 and 1941; Dumitru Coliu, a Bulgarian-born militant who later served as head of the RWP's central control commission and alternate politburo member (between 1954 and 1965, under Gheorghiu-Dej); and Leonte Răutu (Lev Oigenstein), the head of Radio Moscow's Romanian Service, who in the late 1930s was editor of the RCP newspaper *Scînteia* and emigrated to Bessarabia after its annexation by the USSR. After the war, Răutu became the RCP's principal ideologue, closely cooperating with Iosif Roitman-Chișinevschi, another Bessarabian, in imposing Stalinist dogmas on Romanian culture. Chișinevschi did not emigrate to the USSR, however, and did not participate in the activities of the Moscow group, which tends to undermine the simplistic dichotomies so dear to those who seek to explain all intraparty factionalism as a conflict between domestic (home-based) ethnic Romanians and émigré non-Romanians.

Political identities within the RCP elite transcended conventional ethnic differences and were linked to personal experiences that shaped beliefs and memories, such as the Grivița railroad strike, the Spanish Civil War, prisons and concentration camps, and Soviet exile. In this respect, somebody like Chișinevschi was closer to Gheorghiu-Dej, Apostol, and Drăghici than to Răutu, Pauker, or the Bulgarian-born militant Petre Borilă (Jordan Dragan Rusev). Borilă had served on the executive committee of Communist International of Youth (KIM); was a senior political officer in the Spanish Civil War; worked in Moscow for the Comintern; returned to Romania with the "Tudor Vladimirescu" Division, made up of Romanian prisoners of war; became the head of the Romanian Army's political directorate (before Nicolae Ceaușescu's appointment to the same position); and was a politburo member and close associate of Gheorghiu-Dej until the latter's demise in March 1965. Valter Roman (Ernest Neuländer), a militant of Jewish-Hungarian extraction, with an engineering degree from Brno (Czechoslovakia), who

fought in the Romanian artillery unit with the International Brigades in Spain, headed the Comintern's Romanian broadcasting station "România Liberă" and returned with the Soviet Army to Romania, where he became a political general in the Romanian Army and minister of telecommunications. Roman was purged during the early 1950s but rehabilitated and appointed by Gheorghiu-Dej as director of the party's publishing house, a job he kept (along with central committee membership) until his death in 1983.

No less important were the former leaders of the Grivița strikes who had escaped from the Doftana prison and gone to the USSR. Of these, Constantin Doncea was regarded as the true leader of the Grivița strikes. Doncea, who also fought in the Spanish Civil War, was an anarchic personality, turbulent and ebullient, barely able to cope with the Comintern's Spartan discipline. Dumitru Petrescu (Gheorghe), another former leader of the railroad workers' strike and survivor of the Moscow purges, worked for the Moscow State Publishing House until his co-optation by the RCP's Émigré Bureau. Gheorghe Stoica (Moscu Cohn), a seasoned Stalinist and founding member of the party, who was deeply involved in the factional struggles of 1928–29, apparently on the side of Marcel Pauker, was one of the party instructors of the Grivița strike committee and a political officer, reportedly with NKVD connections, during the Spanish Civil War.

After returning to Romania with the Tudor Vladimirescu Division, these three had very different careers. Doncea made a name for himself as the proverbial "bulldozer-happy" mayor of Bucharest and joined the central committee for a while, but was purged by Gheorghiu-Dej during the notorious June 1958 plenum on charges of "factionalism" (actually for having spoken openly of Gheorghiu-Dej's personal responsibility for Stalinist atrocities and economic aberrations). Petrescu, a more temperate individual, more thoughtful than Doncea, and often described as a self-taught worker, served for a while as a political general, then was the head of the organizational department of the RCP's central committee, minister of finance (succeeding Vasile Luca), and deputy prime minister, until his demotion during the same June 1958 plenum. Rehabilitated by Ceaușescu in May 1965 (two months after Gheorghiu-Dej's death and Ceaușescu's election as general secretary), Petrescu became a vice president of the state council (a ceremonial position, to be sure); in 1969, at the Tenth RCP Congress, he was elected a member of the permanent presidium of the RCP's executive committee (a really influential position), but he died a few months later. As for

Gheorghe Stoica, he became the head of the Bucharest party organization and a central committee member, then held a number of party jobs in the central apparatus, including membership of the party control commission, where, along with Coliu, Pîrvulescu, Elvira Gaisinski, and Vincze János (better known by his Romanianized name, Ion Vințe), Stoica was able to put his skills as an interrogator to work in terrorizing those being investigated.

Stoica was particularly vicious in denigrating his old comrades Ana Pauker, Luca, Chișinevschi, Doncea, and Petrescu at the December 1961 plenum, one of the most ferocious settlements of accounts in the entire history of the party. Known for his moral versatility, Stoica was selected by Ceaușescu to represent the old guard in the reorganized politburo after the Ninth RCP Congress in July 1965, when he was elected a full member of the party's executive committee. His main task was to chair the secret commission formed by Ceaușescu to analyze the judicial murder of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu in April 1954 and repression of other party veterans and to draw up an indictment of Alexandru Drăghici, Gheorghiu-Dej's chief hatchet man. The World War II Moscow émigré group thus continued to influence Romanian communist politics long after the elimination of the so-called Pauker-Luca faction in June 1952.

Pătrășcanu's Defiance

Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu's case is the most interesting one in this period, because he tried to formulate a Romanian "road to socialism." Although Pătrășcanu nurtured no heretical proclivities, his intellectual subtlety and interest in theoretical matters offended both Gheorghiu-Dej and Ana Pauker. Pătrășcanu's contributions to social history and cultural analysis are imbued with Marxist jargon, but they at least show a minimal respect for the life of the mind.²⁷

Pătrășcanu was singled out for a Romanian show trial for different reasons, however. In the first place, both the "Muscovites" and Gheorghiu-Dej's "home" communists resented the way he stood out among the elite. He had made a name for himself and built an authority in the larger political culture as a result of his key role in the negotiations and alliances that led to the antifascist coup of August 23, 1944. His liquidation would serve to cement the party elite's problematic unity; warn party intellectuals not to ask too many questions; strengthen Gheorghiu-Dej's image in Stalin's eyes by showing that the Romanian general

secretary was as vigilant as the other leaders in East-Central Europe; and create the general sense of political mobilization needed for the “heroic-transformative” philosophy of mature Stalinism.

The uniqueness of the Pătrășcanu trial, emphasized by Lena Constante in her moving memoir *The Silent Escape*,²⁸ was the refusal of the man designated as the key defendant to cooperate with his tormentors and engage in self-deprecating pseudo-confessions. Paradoxically, it was in one of the smallest and best-controlled former sections of the Comintern that the Stalinist scenario of “unmasking” class enemies within the top elite met with its most stubborn resistance. Pătrășcanu rejected both the Lukácsian theory of the “cunning of reason” and masochistic Rubashov-like self-sacrifice on the “altar of the goddess History.” He heaped scorn on the attempts of his fellow defendant Belu Zilber to emulate Karl Radek’s abject cooperation with the prosecution in the vain hope that this might soften the verdict.²⁹ He understood, and made it clear at his trial, that he was the victim of a monstrous frame-up, fomented by political scoundrels (these were his literal formulations when he challenged the witnesses for prosecution recruited from among RCP veterans).

What Pătrășcanu’s future might otherwise have been is unknowable, because following the judicial farce of his trial in April 1954, he was underhandedly put to death: the politburo never so much as formally discussed his sentence, let alone approved it, as Miron Constantinescu later made clear in his statement to Ceaușescu’s “Rehabilitations Commission.” Taking into account developments in world communism, including the dissolution of Moscow-centered monolithic unity and the rise of neo-Marxist revisionist movements and groups in other Eastern European countries, it may be considered likely that Gheorghiu-Dej was simply weeding out the only credible alternative to his power that might have emerged from within the party. The elimination of Pătrășcanu (and implicitly of the political platform potentially associated with his name) amounted to a coup de grâce to any hope of a genuine Romanian national communism developing. What occurred instead was the simulation of a break with Moscow, the ethnicization (Romanianization) of an elite that had little to do with national traditions, and the concoction of the corporatist-ethnocentric “Romanian ideology” under Ceaușescu.

Some provisional conclusions: in 1948, at the beginning of Romania’s full-fledged Stalinization, the RCP’s elite included heterogeneous, mutually suspicious groups with different life experiences. They were all, however, ready to endorse Stalinist internationalism. The idea that there were “two parties,” one of the interior and one of the exterior, one

consisting of true ethnic Romanians and other of “foreigners,” was a self-serving fallacy produced by Ceaușescu’s “school of falsification” (as Trotsky once called Stalin’s rewriters of Bolshevik history). The conflicts between the three centers analyzed in this chapter primarily arose from personal, subjective hostilities. All the Romanian communists, without exception, vied for the Kremlin’s support and endorsement. For all of them, it was a matter of *ex Oriente lux* — their sun rose in the east, in Moscow. The liquidation of Foriș, the arrest of his closest collaborators, and the elimination of Pătrășcanu as a “nationalist deviator” (along with many other former underground leaders) laid the basis for the provisional, uneasy alliance between Gheorghiu-Dej and his group, on the one hand, and the “Muscovites” Pauker and Luca, on the other.

It was Teohari Georgescu, one of Ana Pauker’s closest collaborators who, at the First Romanian Workers’ Party Congress, in February 1948, took the lead in attacking Pătrășcanu by name. In so doing, Georgescu echoed previous anti-Pătrășcanu statements by Gheorghiu-Dej, especially the 1946 criticisms of the justice minister’s controversial statements in Transylvania about Hungarian-Romanian ethnic disputes. But times had dramatically changed. Seated in Bucharest’s most luxurious concert hall, the “Ateneul Român,” Pătrășcanu must have realized that Georgescu’s virulent critique was just the prelude to a terrible ordeal that would lead not only to his political defeat (this had already happened), but even to his physical destruction. He knew what had happened to Foriș in 1946 and was fully aware of the tragic fate of many of the comrades of his youth in the USSR.

Lászlo Rajk, a Hungarian politburo member who brought Rákosi’s greetings to his Romanian comrades, must similarly have sensed that new witch-hunts were being prepared and that nobody was safe. In June, the Cominform meeting adopted its first anti-Tito resolution. The tone of the anti-Yugoslav campaign grew fiercer and fiercer from week to week. In Hungary, Rajk was arrested and then tried on charges of Titoism, nationalism, and, of course, treason. Under house arrest, Pătrășcanu was asked to confess to nationalist mistakes. But this was just the beginning. In 1949, at another Cominform meeting, held in Budapest, where he presented a report (written, of course, by the Russians) on “The Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the Hands of Murderers and Spies,” Gheorghiu-Dej denounced Rajk, Kostov, and Pătrășcanu as imperialist agents infiltrated into the working-class movement. International communism was entering the age of universal suspicion, diabolical conspiracies, and mass terror.



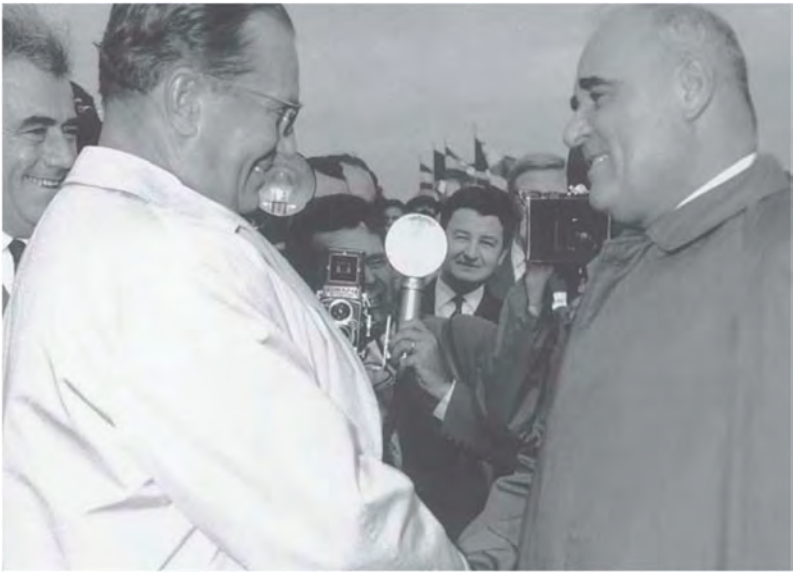
1. Bucharest, January 1948, during the Bulgarian leader Georgi Dimitrov's visit to Romania. Left to right: Dimitrov; Bulgarian official; Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, general secretary of the RCP; Romanian Prime Minister Petru Groza; and Ana Pauker, Romanian politburo member, party secretary, deputy premier, and minister of foreign affairs. Courtesy *Orizont* Magazine (Timișoara).



2. The veteran communist leader and Marxist intellectual Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, executed under false charges in April 1954. Ceaușescu rehabilitated Pătrășcanu in April 1968. Courtesy Rompres.



3. Official visit of Nikita S. Khrushchev to Romania, July 1961. Public rally in the mining city of Lupeni. First row, left to right: (1) Gheorghe Apostol; (2) Nicolae Ceaușescu; (3) unidentified Soviet official; (4) Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej; (5) Soviet interpreter; (6) Nikita Khrushchev; (7) local Romanian party official; (8) Romanian Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer. Courtesy Sergiu Celac.



4. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Marshal Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia in Timișoara in 1964. Courtesy Rompres.



5. Meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid I. Brezhnev, during the Soviet leader's official visit to Romania, November 1976. In the middle, Ceaușescu's official interpreter, Sergiu Celac. Courtesy Sergiu Celac.



6. Ceaușescu's first official visit to the USSR as the newly elected leader of the Romanian Communist Party, September 1965. Left to right: Romanian Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Soviet interpreter, General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin, and Nicolae Ceaușescu. Courtesy Rompres.



7. Nicolae Ceaușescu and President Charles de Gaulle during the French president's triumphant visit to Romania in the spring of 1968. Courtesy Rompres.



8. Nicolae Ceaușescu's meets with Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong during the Romanian leader's visit to China, June 1971. The 1971 visit to China and North Korea prompted Ceaușescu to unleash a neo-Stalinist campaign to curb the budding liberalization (a "mini-cultural revolution," as Romanian intellectuals dubbed it) upon his return to Romania. Courtesy Rompres.



9. Nicolae Ceaușescu holds the heraldic scepter at official swearing as president of the Socialist Republic of Romania in 1974. Author's personal collection.



10. Nicolae Ceaușescu and Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito, Bucharest, 1976. Courtesy Rompres.



11. Nicolae Ceaușescu and Constantin Pîrvulescu, a veteran party member and former general secretary of the RCP's central committee, at Neptun Black Sea coast resort, in the late 1960s. In 1979, Pîrvulescu attacked Ceaușescu's cult at the Twelfth RCP Congress. Author's personal collection.



12. Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's official visit to Romania. Left to right: Elena Ceaușescu, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Mikhail Gorbachev, Raisa Gorbachev. Relations between the Romanian leader and the architect of perestroika were particularly stressed. Courtesy *Orizont* Magazine.



13. Ceaușescu and his lieutenants, May 1969, in the resort area of Snagov, in the outskirts of Bucharest. From left to right: Nicolae Ceaușescu, executive committee members Manea Mănescu (prime minister, 1974–80), Ilie Verdeț (prime minister, 1980–1982), Iosif Banc, and Petre Blajovici. Author's personal collection.



14. Meeting between delegations of the Romanian and Spanish communist parties, Bucharest, 1975. On the left, the Romanian delegation: Nicolae Ceaușescu; Paul Niculescu-Mizil, secretary in charge of international affairs; Ghizela Vass, head of the International Department; and the veteran party members Gheorghe Vasilichi, Alexandru Sencovici, and Valter Roman (and an unidentified party official); on the right: Dolores Ibárruri (La Pasionaria), chair of the central committee of the Spanish Communist Party; Ramon Mendezona, a Spanish politburo member; and Irene Falcon, Ibárruri's personal secretary and closest friend. Author's personal collection.



15. President Richard Nixon's official visit to Romania. Protocol meeting between President Nixon and Nicolae Ceaușescu (interpreting in the middle Sergiu Celac). Courtesy of Sergiu Celac and Rompres.



16. Elena Ceaușescu during a trip to Greece in the early 1970s. Author's personal collection.



17. The Romanian delegation visits China in spring 1971. From left to right: Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, Romanian Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Elena Ceaușescu, Ye Qun (wife of Mao's then deputy and heir-apparent, Marshal Lin Biao), and Nicolae Ceaușescu. In September 1971, the bodies of Lin Biao, his wife, and his son Lin Liguo were found dead in a desert of Mongolia, following a plane crash. Lin Biao was accused of having tried to assassinate Mao. Courtesy Rompres.



18. Nicolae Ceaușescu and North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung, Pyongyang, April 1982. It seems it was during this visit that Ceaușescu, impressed with the North Korean dynastic scenario, decided to promote his youngest son Nicu as designated heir. Courtesy Rompres.



19. Meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Kampuchean Khmer Rouge strongman Pol Pot, Phnom Penh, May 1978. Courtesy Rompres.



20. July 1985, Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu at a mass gathering celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Ninth RCP Congress that elected Nicolae Ceaușescu as party general secretary. Courtesy *Orizont* Magazine.



21. Nostalgic gathering around Nicolae Ceaușescu's grave, Ghencea cemetery, Bucharest, on the occasion of his birthday, January 26, 1993. Author's personal collection.

CHAPTER 4

Stalinism Unbound, 1948–1956

The enthusiastic belief in the rapid approach of the millennium has never been without a vengeance.

—Franz Borkenau, *World Communism*

Following the communist takeover of political power in East and Central Europe, no efforts were spared by the Soviet rulers and their local underlings to establish monopolistic, one-party systems based on the ideological dogmas of Stalin's interpretation of Bolshevism. More and more, the communists toned down the ideological pretense of "people's democracy" and insisted on the imperative of constructing Soviet-style "dictatorships of the proletariat." Any lingering memories of the once-emphasized propaganda theme of different national roads to socialism were repressed. The Stalinist blueprint for Eastern Europe was based on a unique strategy of transforming national political cultures into carbon copies of the USSR. The leaders of the local communist parties and the growing administrative and secret police apparatuses enthusiastically implemented this blueprint, transplanting and even enhancing the characteristics of the Soviet type of totalitarian system.¹

What were the main goals of Stalinization? In the realm of economics, it was the transformation of the market-based, privately owned economy into a centrally planned, state-owned one. First of all, this meant the nationalization of the main means of production in the country, an important point in the prewar communist program. Although it was cautiously dropped from the 1946 RCP platform, preparations for

this had in fact begun in December 1945, when the communists took over the Ministry of Industry. An intermediary step was the nationalization of the National Bank of Romania on December 28, 1946. The decisive move was a law passed by the communist-dominated Grand National Assembly on June 11, 1948, nationalizing industrial, banking, insurance, mining, and transportation enterprises, which, according to the RWP's central committee, would resolve the contradiction of the working class being unable to control the economy even though it had assumed political power.²

Second, Stalinization meant the development of heavy industry, particularly machine-building industry. Stalin, like Lenin, had grown up in an era in which the steel, electrical machinery, and chemical industries had come to dominate Western capitalist economies, and he believed that the power of a state was based on these giant industries.³ For a predominantly agrarian state like Romania, heavy industrialization meant the destruction of a potentially prosperous source of growth and of the equilibrium among various economic branches. As for the transformation of economy into a centrally planned (command) one, a decree issued on July 18, 1948, established a state planning commission that was bound to exert full control over the development of all branches of the national economy. The chairman was none other than Gheorghiu-Dej himself, minister of the national economy and general secretary of the RWP. For decades to come, the dogma of the central plan, as a mandatory set of directives for the development of the national economy, remained untouched in Romania. Market mechanisms were destroyed, small businesses virtually disappeared, and the plan became an object of worship, to the extent that poems were written in the early 1950s to celebrate the superiority of the command economy over the dangerously anarchic forces of competitive private enterprise. From Gheorghiu-Dej to Ceaușescu, collective (i.e., state) ownership of economic resources was regarded as the touchstone of true commitment to the Marxist ideal of a classless society.

In the realm of agriculture, Stalinization meant abolishment of private ownership of land and the establishment of collective farms. This goal was initially hidden, however, and the first communist-dominated government, headed by Petru Groza, implemented an agrarian reform program in March 1945 that actually distributed 1,057,674 hectares to 796,129 beneficiaries.⁴ However, according to the Marxist-Leninist creed, the peasantry, because of its inherent attachment to private property, was a reactionary class that needed to be reeducated in socialist community. Total war against the peasants was crucial to obtaining a completely con-

trollable economy. Inspired by the Bolshevik tradition, Romanian communists were convinced that the gap between the socialist (industrial) and nonsocialist (agricultural) sectors of the economy needed to be overcome. The beginning of the “socialist transformation of agriculture” in Romania was announced by the RWP Central Committee Plenum resolution of March 3–5, 1949. The theoretical rationale for the collectivization campaign was the Stalinist theory of the alliance between the working class and poor peasants as the social basis for the “dictatorship of the proletariat.” This fundamental program of collectivization in Romania postulated the existence of four categories of peasants, according to the amount of land they owned: proletarian, poor, middle, and kulak (*chi-abur*). The first two categories were expected to ally themselves with the third and together wage war on the kulaks. The road to the fulfillment of collectivization in Romania was a long one. Begun in 1949, the process forced upon peasants was temporarily abandoned in 1952, restarted in 1958, and finally proclaimed complete in 1962.⁵

Third, Stalinization sought the complete destruction of civil society and the regimenting of intellectual life and culture. In order to destroy human bonds, a universal sense of fear was instilled in individuals, who were treated as cogs in the wheels of the totalitarian state machine. The communists gained control of the Ministry of Justice through Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, who became justice minister in November 1944 and also gradually took over the Ministry of the Interior. After the establishment of the “first democratic” government headed by Petru Groza, Teohari Georgescu, until then only undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Interior (since November 4, 1944), became its head after March 6, 1945.⁶ Random terror was directed against all social strata, against all kinds of political enemies, from the members of the traditional parties to those of the Communist Party, up to the highest level. The legal system was redesigned to deprive the individual of any sense of protection or potential support. New judges were appointed, and the whole legal system became a mockery.

In the realm of intellectual life, the goal of the Communist Party was to annihilate any form of genuine creativity: literature, history, art, and philosophy were to be ideologically subordinated to the political sphere.⁷ The whole cultural tradition was reinterpreted in order to meet the new dogmas: the main names of Romanian literature were obliterated from official publications, censorship was ruthlessly applied to eliminate anything that smacked of “nationalism,” “cosmopolitanism,” “objectivism,” or other forms of “bourgeois decadentism.” In 1950, on the occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of the na-

tional poet Mihai Eminescu, party propaganda did its utmost to present the pessimistic romantic writer as a forerunner of proletarian struggles against “soulless capitalism.” In the meantime, endless campaigns were waged against those who refused to fully endorse the simplistic, tendentious official dogmas. The party daily newspaper, *Scînteia*, played an important role in these campaigns. Its editor in chief, Sorin Toma, was entrusted with writing a scurrilous pamphlet attacking one of Romania’s most celebrated poets, Tudor Arghezi.⁸

Philosophy, history, sociology, and other social sciences were the main victims of this Zhdanovite policy. The venerable Romanian Academy was restructured by expelling some of its most prestigious members, accused of “bourgeois” beliefs. Party hacks like Mihail Roller and Petre Constantinescu-Iași became the true supervisors of science and culture in “people’s Romania.” The team that controlled the Agitprop Department between 1946 and 1953, Iosif Chișinevschi, Leonte Răutu, Ofelia Manole, and Mihail Roller, carefully imposed and watched over absolute compliance with the official party line. Whereas technicians were needed to fulfill the party’s plans for industrialization, the creative intelligentsia was destined to build up a new culture based on transplanted Zhdanovist socialist realism. The “creative unions” (such as the Writers’ Union, headed by Traian Șelmaru, Mihai Novicov, Nicolae Moraru, and Mihai Beniuc, the Composers’ Union, and the Fine Artists’ Union) became the party’s main instruments for controlling, corrupting, and co-opting the intelligentsia.⁹ The “Andrei Zhdanov School for the Social Sciences,” a special, party-controlled indoctrination mill directly subordinated to the central committee’s Agitprop Department, was established to train a new generation of communists who had never experienced either clandestine party life or the antifascist struggle.¹⁰ The people trained in this school, who had grown up in the years when the communist new class was establishing itself, would gradually replace the leaders of the previous generation, who were ousted from the leadership of the party one after the other in a ruthless power struggle.

The Leninist Intellectual and the Party: The Ordeal of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu

In Eastern Europe, the late 1940s were years of Stalinist terror, perpetrated by the political police, controlled by Soviet advisers and agents.¹¹ Yugoslavia’s conflict with the Soviet Union in 1948 contributed to the

tightening of political screws. According to Stalinist political demonology, the perfidious “class enemy” had infiltrated the communist parties. For Stalin (and, of course, for his terrified followers in East-Central Europe), nobody could be fully trusted. Rákosi, Berman, Gottwald, Gheorghiu-Dej, and Ana Pauker could all be suspected of treason, and each of them was a potential candidate for the starring role in a show trial. If Tito, with his Comintern and anti-Nazi partisan warfare credentials, had turned out to be a treacherous renegade, then anybody could be suspected of similar nefarious proclivities. Purges were launched to root out the “hidden conspirators.”¹²

It has often been noted that the Stalinist parties in Eastern Europe were characterized by factionalism and sectarianism. It can be said that the more marginal and less historically representative a communist party was, the more profound its sectarianism was. The case of the Romanian party is a perfect example. Torn apart by internal struggles among the three centers during the underground period, the RCP preserved a besieged fortress mentality even after World War II. Given that in the pre-1945 period, mutual accusations had usually resulted in the expulsion of the members of the defeated faction, once the party was in power, the effects of the continued struggles were catastrophic. Once established as a ruling party, the RCP projected a vision based on exclusiveness, fierce dogmatism, and universal suspicion at the national level. The mystique of the party called for complete abrogation of its members’ critical faculties. As Franz Borkenau puts it, communism, “a Utopia based upon the belief in the omnipotence of the ‘vanguard,’ cannot live without a scapegoat, and the procedures applied to detect them, invent them, accuse them, holding them up to opprobrium and destroying them, become only more cruel and reckless.”¹³ If the secretariat found a party member guilty of a “deviation,” the stigmatized individual was lost. Friends and in many cases even close relatives abandoned him or her in hope of convincing the leadership of their own commitment to the supreme interests of the party.

What was the origin of this intolerance, exclusiveness, and rigidity toward alleged adversaries in the party? Whence arose this aversion to any effort to think critically? Why this visceral enmity toward any democratic tendency? The impact of Leninist psychology; the cult of unity at any price; the blind subordination of the cadres to the center; the systematic annihilation of any form of intraparty democracy; the mystical vision of history and of the Communist Party as a group of “chosen,” an elite of heroes ready to make any sacrifice in the name of a would-be

heavenly future, were fundamental. In the case of the RCP, a series of elements related to the inferiority complex of those who dominated the party elite further complicated and aggravated the story, especially the anti-intellectual bias of activists of working-class origin and party ideologists (Leonte Răutu, Mihail Roller, Sorin Toma, Ștefan Voicu, Nestor Ignat, Constanța Crăciun, Zina Brîncu, Nicolae Moraru) engaged, in communist parlance, on the “ideological front” in the struggle against leftover bourgeois mentalities. With the early exceptions of Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, and later on, Miron Constantinescu, Grigore Preoteasa, and Ion Gheorghe Maurer, intellectuals had been conspicuously absent from the party’s upper echelons. This anti-intellectualism had its basis in the Marxist-Leninist concept of the proletariat as the predestined revolutionary class. Intellectuals were seen as unsteady weaklings, lacking strong beliefs and principles, who were at best interpreters of the “proletarian condition.” Far from guaranteeing a career in Leninist parties, a reputation as an intellectual thus evoked suspicion. Moreover, inasmuch as it was disconnected from Romania national history and culture, the RCP’s political and ideological platform was unappealing to the country’s interwar intelligentsia. The party unconditionally adhered to the Comintern thesis that Romania was a “multinational imperialist construct” and supported the idea of ethnic self-determination up to the point of complete secession. To a great extent because of this myopic, sectarian, essentially self-defeating line, the ethnic composition of the RCP in general was unbalanced.

Devoid of any significant unorthodox temptation, isolated from the mainstream in the interwar years, and slavishly loyal to the Stalinist model, the political culture of Romanian communism expressed itself in extreme authoritarianism, bureaucratic centralism, worship of the party leadership, persecution of the handful of critical militants, conspiratorial factionalism, sclerotic dogmatism, persistent refusal to engage in theoretical debates, intolerance, exclusiveness, and unconditional loyalty to the world communist center, represented as “proletarian internationalism.” To these were added the characteristics of the underground conspiratorial experience: disregard for dialogue, deliberate perpetuation of a climate of fear and suspicion, the use of militants like pawns on a chess table, to be manipulated at the leaders’ will, and, finally, an ethic of sacrifice that originated in the Bolshevik mystique of world revolution. From the Romanian national political culture, the RCP derived—and developed to the extreme—a certain versatility in the realm of principles and the temptation to nepotism and corruption that is captured by the

term “Balkanism.” Only by taking into account these characteristics of Romanian communism, especially the joining of Stalinism to amoral Balkan politics, can the dynamics and competition for supremacy in the party be explained.

The purging of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu in 1948, followed by his trial and execution in 1954, is not only one of the most disgraceful episodes in the history of the Romanian communism but one of the least studied of the Eastern European political trials.¹⁴ It falls into the second phase of Stalinist repression—the persecution of prominent national leaders of communist parties who had been active in the anti-Nazi underground (László Rajk and later János Kádár in Hungary, and Władisław Gomułka in Poland).¹⁵ Pătrășcanu was undoubtedly one of the party’s most gifted and popular leaders. Born in 1900 in Bacău, Moldova, into a bourgeois family, he was a lawyer by training, with a doctoral degree from Leipzig.¹⁶ He first joined the socialist movement in 1919, and, in 1921, when the RCP was established, he became a founding member. In the 1920s, Pătrășcanu served as defense lawyer in the trials of several prominent communists. He became a member of the central committee in the 1930s, and represented the RCP in the Comintern in 1935–36. In 1931, Pătrășcanu was elected to parliament as a member of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Bloc.¹⁷ He was also one of the political organizers of the Grivița strike in February 1933. Between 1924 and 1941, Pătrășcanu was imprisoned six times, but unlike the other communists, he was released after short terms. In 1943, he served in the same political prisoners’ camp with Gheorghiu-Dej at Țirgu-Jiu. But after only eight months, he was released and allowed to stay at a resort in Poiana Țapului, in the Carpathian Mountains, where his parents had a villa, a fact that Gheorghiu-Dej, who was serving a long sentence, resented. Pătrășcanu collaborated with Ion Gheorghe Maurer and Emil Bodnăraș in the staging of the anti-Foriș operation in April 1944. Even before the war, he had established close relations with young communist intellectuals who admired his theoretical acumen, such as Miron Constantinescu and Grigore Preoteasa. The provisional post-Foriș RCP leadership appointed Pătrășcanu as the party’s representative in the negotiations with the Liberals, the National Peasants, and royal palace circles that led to the antifascist coup of August 23, 1944. He was appointed minister without portfolio in the first post-coup coalition government, then minister of justice, a position that he held from November 1944 until early 1948. He was a member of the delegation that went to Moscow in September 1944 to negotiate the armistice between Romania and the Soviet Union.

There, being practically unknown to the Soviet leaders (unlike Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca), he was indifferently received. Moreover, it seems that some of his remarks during the armistice discussions were interpreted by the Russians as an indication of “nationalist arrogance.”¹⁸ He was also a member of the Romanian delegation to the 1946 Peace Conference in Paris, where it seems that he read Arthur Koestler’s anti-Stalinist novel *Darkness at Noon*.¹⁹

As already hinted, the origin of the conflict between Gheorghiu-Dej and Pătrășcanu was of a personal nature. The two had had a strained relationship at the Tîrgu-Jiu camp; Gheorghiu-Dej resented Pătrășcanu’s effort to assert his prominent status in the party organization. Later, Gheorghiu-Dej criticized Constantin Pîrvulescu and the other members of the underground leadership for having entrusted Pătrășcanu with the crucial position of communist delegate in the negotiations with the “bourgeois” parties. For Gheorghiu-Dej and his intimates, Pătrășcanu was never one of theirs. They disliked his aloofness, lack of interest in party intrigues, and refusal to take advantage of special perks and privileges. Add to this Gheorghiu-Dej’s discontentment over Pătrășcanu’s popularity among intellectuals and students. To prevent a pro-Pătrășcanu faction from developing within the party, Gheorghiu-Dej and his then close ally Iosif Chișinevschi (who fancied himself the “brain of the party”) decided to charge him with the imaginary sin of chauvinism.

Ana Pauker, who had known Pătrășcanu (called Comrade Andrei in high party circles) since the 1920s, expressed reservations about the depth and reliability of Pătrășcanu’s Leninist convictions.²⁰ In 1946, in the midst of the electoral campaign, Gheorghiu-Dej attacked Pătrășcanu for a speech he had made to Romanian students in the city of Cluj, in Transylvania, following ethnic incidents there. Pătrășcanu had simply tried to emphasize the RCP’s commitment to Romanian patriotic values, but his speech was distorted by Gheorghiu-Dej and invoked against him in the general secretary’s report on “chauvinistic and revisionist currents” to the central committee plenum in November 1946.²¹

At the Congress of the Romanian Workers’ Party in February 1948, Pătrășcanu lost his seat on the central committee and was not permitted to speak in his own defense. The assault on him was launched by Teohari Georgescu, secretary of the central committee and a member of the politburo, who told congress participants that the former minister of justice had “fallen under the influence of the bourgeoisie,” “become an exponent of bourgeois ideology,” and had “overestimated the forces of

the enemy.”²² A few months later, after the break with Yugoslavia, Pătrășcanu was also accused of being a “Titoist-fascist” agent and a spy working for Western intelligence services. On April 28, 1948, he was arrested on the orders of Gheorghiu-Dej and was initially investigated by a party commission composed by Teohari Georgescu, Iosif Rangheț, Alexandru Drăghici, and Gheorghiu-Dej himself. Pătrășcanu was imprisoned, along with his wife and several close associates, and subjected to exhausting interrogations.²³ On May 1, 1948, before the nightmare of interrogations began, Pătrășcanu addressed a moving letter to the secretariat, in other words to Gheorghiu-Dej, Pauker, Luca, and Georgescu, showing that he was innocent:

Today, when the working class, and with it the entire nation, is celebrating May Day in a Romania of which I have dreamed since my youth and fought for my entire life, I pace from one end to the other of my locked cell, exactly as I did years ago at Văcărești, Brașov, or Jilava. And why? It will soon be twenty-nine years since I joined the Communist Party. In these years of continuous activity, I may often have been wrong, done poor work, and even been guilty of misconduct, but nobody ever questioned my sincerity as a communist, my devotion, my wish, and my efforts to follow our party line without hesitation.

And now, because of some information... that is the result of an obvious provocation, I find myself where I am. I do not want to diminish my guilt in being insufficiently vigilant in my relations and discussing some of the things I was concerned about outside the party. I merely ask you, as comrades with whom I started out in the party, to judge me objectively, to evaluate the material to be debated without preconceived ideas, and not to take a decision that will lead not only to my moral but also to my physical destruction. In the secretariat, there are comrades who in 1939 prevented an unjust act against me, as a member of the party, planned by men later proved to be enemies of the movement.

The adversities of the past two months, and especially of the past few days, along with the entire discussion that ensued, cost me great moral and physical suffering, teaching me many things. I joined the Communist Party led by the teachings of Lenin, which dictated my attitude and protected me in the difficult situations I more than once faced. These teachings guide me even today, and I believe unabatedly in them even in this difficult moment. I was thus not for one moment demoralized, and neither my convictions nor my mental strength were diminished, so intact and unconditional is my trust in our party leadership. I have asked to be given party work, and I make the same request through this letter. Let the party and its leadership decide what is to become of me based not on words but on facts. This is all I ask.²⁴

The letter is the *cri de coeur* of a communist facing hallucinatory charges and slanders by people whom he had long considered his brothers and sisters.

Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu was imprisoned for six years and was not executed until 1954. Unlike Lászlo Rajk and Rudolf Slánský, and in spite of countless psychological and physical pressures exerted on him, Pătrășcanu did not confess to his alleged crimes. As a matter of fact, on several occasions, Gheorghiu-Dej criticized Teohari Georgescu's failure to "unmask" Pătrășcanu, thereby suggesting a secret complicity between the Pauker faction and the party's most famous prisoner. One thing is clear: as long as Gheorghiu-Dej shared power in the secretariat with Pauker, Luca, and Georgescu, the investigation did not succeed in producing the proof needed for a Rajk-style trial in Romania. Whether this was a deliberate strategy on Pauker's side, as Robert Levy argues, or just the result of the slow pace of the investigations, conducted by party old-timers and former Soviet agents (e.g., Petea Goncearuk) is debatable.²⁵

In the summer of 1952, after the purge of the Pauker–Luca–Georgescu group (discussed later), a special committee was appointed to finish the interrogation of Pătrășcanu and his fellow prisoners. The new committee was supervised by Alexandru Drăghici, newly appointed minister of the interior, who received instructions directly from Gheorghiu-Dej and the party's number two, the central committee secretary in charge of "special organs," Iosif Chișinevski. Colonel Ion Șoltuțiu of the Securitate, who had been in Prague during the preparations for the Slánský show trial to study how to obtain confessions, headed the investigative team.²⁶ Șoltuțiu changed the style of the interrogations; from September 1952 on, torture and moral pressure were used to "persuade" those arrested to confess their crimes and those of the others in the group.²⁷

Pătrășcanu proved to be a very strong person. Evidence of the pressures he resisted is a November 13, 1952, letter he sent to Minister of the Interior Drăghici:

I conformed with the request to stop the hunger strike, believing that after November 7, the investigation would stop. But the investigation continues and interrogation has started again for the hundredth time. At this rate, the interrogation could last forever.

If to put an end to the so-called "verifications," which in reality for the past two years and eight months have been no more than a sinister masquerade, I have to beat out my brain against the walls of my cell, I am determined to do so; I warn you, as I did before in my [previous] attempts to commit suicide. I refuse to become human debris as a result of my imprisonment without sentence.

After four years and six months of arrest on completely invented grounds, after two investigations arrived at conclusions completely favorable to me, during which I was twice pushed to commit suicide and twice to a hunger strike, I ask you to stop the verifications.

I am repeating the request made verbally in October this year: if, for reasons unknown and absolutely incomprehensible to me, my presence in Bucharest is useless and harmful, I ask to be sent to Snagov [a resort area on the outskirts of Bucharest] under conditions to be established by the organs in whose hands I am.²⁸

Although “verification” continued up to the end in the style imposed by Șoltuțiu, Pătrășcanu stubbornly challenged his investigator and rejected the lies concocted primarily by his ex-friend and fellow defendant Belu Zilber. After months of horrible physical torture, Zilber, a brilliant, highly sophisticated, cynical intellectual, who was proverbially adaptable, came to the conclusion that resistance was hopeless, and that the best strategy was to cooperate with the tormentors. He therefore concocted delusional scenarios of conspiracy and treason in the vain hope that their very enormity would make the whole investigation look ludicrous. Whether he truly believed that Gheorghiu-Dej would act rationally and give up or was merely trying to save his own life by confessing to the most absurd charges, and thereby refuting Pătrășcanu’s claim to innocence, is difficult to know. One thing remains clear: the whole series of charges against Pătrășcanu were based on fabrications rooted in his co-defendants’ testimonies, and primarily in Zilber’s self-indictment.²⁹

The trial was staged on April 12–14, 1954, but, because of Pătrășcanu’s refusal to admit his guilt, it was held secretly in front of a select audience of trusted party militants and Securitate cadres. It thus lacked the spectacular effects of previous show trials in other Eastern European countries. The evidence was based only on the “confessions” of the other prisoners.³⁰ Pătrășcanu was accused of crimes against peace and of high treason and sentenced to death. Curiously, besides Pătrășcanu, the only one sentenced to death in this trial was Koffler, Foriș’s deputy, whose dismissal from the Politburo in 1944 Pătrășcanu had supported.³¹ Aside from these two, there was a heterogeneous group involved, many of whom had personal links with Pătrășcanu and his wife, including Belu Zilber, Harry Brauner, a musician and folklorist, and his friend Lena Constante, a painter of Byzantine icons. Also in the same group were Ion Mocsony-Stîrcea, a former marshal of the palace, who had been active in the coup of August 23, 1944; the engineer Emil Calmanovici; Herant Torossian, an Armenian businessman and former consul in Paris; Jacques Berman, likewise a former diplomat; Alexandru Ștefănescu; and Foriș’s widow, Victoria Sîrbu.³²

The trial pursued several objectives: to expose Pătrășcanu as a devious traitor whose entire political life had been a chain of conspiracies against the best interests of the Romanian working class; to link him

and his group to Western intelligence operations; and to demonstrate the treasonable activities of the Foriș–Koffler RCP leadership during World War II. In other words, it was only thanks to Gheorghiu-Dej and “the healthy Leninist nucleus” around him that these enemies had been identified and their monstrous plans nipped in the bud. Needless to say, when the post-Stalin Soviet leadership moved toward reconciliation with Yugoslavia, the charge of “Titoism” disappeared from the list of “crimes” allegedly perpetrated by Pătrășcanu and his group.

Although Pătrășcanu is widely regarded in the West as having been a potential Tito, there is, in fact, nothing in his writings to suggest an independent approach to socialist revolution.³³ The trial’s purpose was not to stamp out “Titoism” in the Romanian party but to get rid of rivals and discredit the party’s old guard. As Ghiță Ionescu puts it, “the difference between the position[s] of Tito and Pătrășcanu between 1945 and 1948 can be summarized in this double distinction: While the former was in control of the party which was in control of the country, the latter was slipping out of the party which was only then attempting, by means of Soviet intervention, to reach the sources of power.”³⁴ Pătrășcanu was thus not a potential Tito, offering an alternative party line, but rather a potential Romanian Gomulka—a communist for whom devotion to Stalin did not mean abandoning all patriotic sentiment. His tragedy was that he underestimated the intensity of Gheorghiu-Dej’s resentment and tactical skill at getting rid of enemies. Pătrășcanu detested Gheorghiu-Dej’s lack of culture and Ana Pauker’s arrogance. He considered Gheorghiu-Dej a negligible quantity and did not perceive the general secretary’s increasingly influential role within the ruling quartet (Gheorghiu-Dej, Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, and Teohari Georgescu) that dominated the party until 1952. At a time when the break with Yugoslavia could be seen coming, several months after the establishment of the Cominform in September 1947, the leaders of the RCP found in Pătrășcanu the perfect scapegoat for all kinds of deviations of which Stalin might have accused them.

His trial took place in 1954, just when Malenkov and Khrushchev had got rid of Beria and a new course was not only being tolerated but encouraged in the satellite countries.³⁵ True, in other Eastern European states, political trials continued throughout 1954 and 1955 (e.g., in Antonin Novotny’s Czechoslovakia), but they affected medium-rank, not top, officials. In other words, a year after Stalin’s death, Stalinist trials in different countries were domestic affairs, rather than being inspired and controlled by Moscow. Pătrășcanu’s execution was thus the outcome of

a Romanian, not a Soviet, initiative, although the Romanians had received Soviet advice in preparing the trial and the Russians at any rate did not oppose the death sentence.³⁶ His imprisonment for nearly six years could not, however, have been possible without Soviet approval and—in view of the subordination of the Romanian secret police to Moscow—direct Soviet involvement in the investigation of the case. Pătrășcanu was liquidated because Gheorghiu-Dej realized that times were changing and that the unrepentant former minister of justice could provide an alternative that might endanger him and his coterie, heavily identified as they were with the worst Stalinist excesses. Gheorghiu-Dej and his adherents feared Pătrășcanu as a potential catalyst for an anti-Stalinist reaction in the party that might undermine their position. Moreover, they feared that Pătrășcanu might be used as a political card by the Russians in their search for alternatives to the compromised Stalinist leaders in Eastern Europe.³⁷

Pătrășcanu's trial had to accomplish a number of functions essential for the manipulation of the last remnants of independent public opinion. First, it was purgative, eliminating a potential rival whose merits and long service in the revolutionary movement surpassed those of his persecutors. Second, Pătrășcanu's putative treason was an explanation for the party's weakness in the war years and the lack of a communist resistance movement in Romania. Pătrășcanu was therefore purposely associated with the Foriș group, represented by Remus Koffler, the former number two in the party, eliminated in April 1944 together with Foriș. Third, through connections established between Gheorghiu-Dej and the "Muscovites" during the Pătrășcanu affair, the cohesiveness of the hegemonic group in the party was strengthened. Fourth, by putting Pătrășcanu on trial, the RCP participated in the Soviet propaganda concert against Titoist Yugoslavia, emphasizing its own vigilance and teaching lessons of "revolutionary combativeness" to the other parties. Fifth, potential critiques were discouraged and any factional tendencies repressed. After 1954, Gheorghiu-Dej's position in the party leadership appeared stronger than ever. He even briefly appointed his trusted lieutenant Gheorghie Apostol as first secretary of the central committee (1954–55), without any fear of competition. As the country's prime minister, Gheorghiu-Dej had started to cultivate his image as a wise statesman, interested first and foremost in ensuring economic growth and industrial development and raising the population's living standards.

Nicolae Ceaușescu was not a member of the politburo that endorsed Gheorghiu-Dej and Chișinevschi's decision to execute Pătrășcanu, so he

personally was not implicated in the verdict. Later, Ceaușescu capitalized on this dubious political innocence in order to make himself out to be an anti-Stalinist and discredit Gheorghiu-Dej. As part of his offensive against Gheorghiu-Dej's barons after 1965, Ceaușescu rehabilitated Pătrășcanu, but not all the victims of this trial. He not only attacked Alexandru Drăghici, minister of the interior from 1952 to 1965, for carrying out Stalinist purges but spoke of Gheorghiu-Dej's direct responsibility in ordering them:³⁸ "We must stress that a great responsibility falls on the members of the political bureau, who contented themselves with the conclusions presented without asking for firm proof, as they should have done in light of their special party responsibility and of the gravity of the case involving a prominent militant of the party."³⁹ In other words, Ceaușescu was warning the former politburo members Gheorghe Apostol, Emil Bodnăraș, and Chivu Stoica, as well as the recently rehabilitated Miron Constantinescu, that the party was aware of their role in Pătrășcanu's murder. On his road to absolute power, Ceaușescu instrumentalized Pătrășcanu's political rehabilitation and obtained the elimination of his archenemy Drăghici and the political neutralization of the main Gheorghiu-Dej stalwarts within the party leadership. Take, for instance, the case of Apostol: whatever his criticisms of Ceaușescu's policies, they could easily be (and indeed were) countered with legitimate questions about his (indirect, but real) involvement in Pătrășcanu's death.

The Rise and Fall of the Balkan Pasionaria

Better known in Western historiography is the purge by which Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, and Teohari Georgescu were removed from power in 1952.⁴⁰ After the expulsion of Pătrășcanu, it seemed that there was a harmonious collaboration between Gheorghiu-Dej, Pauker, and Luca, which was unceasingly celebrated by the propaganda machine orchestrated by Iosif Chișinevschi and Leonte Răutu. ("Ana, Luca, Teo, Dej/bagă spaima în burgheji"—"Ana, Luca, Teo, Dej/scare the bourgeois" was a famous slogan of the time, and the order of the party leaders' names is significant.) The predominant image was that of a certain distribution of responsibilities among these four leaders, all of whom were secretaries of the central committee of the RCP and unconditionally devoted to the Soviet Union and to Stalin himself. Gheorghiu-Dej, as general secretary of the RCP, was in absolute control of the party apparatus. Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca had their personal fiefdoms at the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance respectively, and Teohari Georgescu, who despite having been a member of the prison nucleus was devoted to Ana Pauker, headed the Ministry of the Interior.

At the beginning, the balance of power among the four seemed to be in equilibrium. During the secretariat meeting on October 24, 1945, two days after the plenum that elected the politburo and the secretariat, the newly appointed secretaries decided that each of them would be in charge of a specific task.⁴¹ Gheorghiu-Dej, as general secretary, was responsible for political education and organization; Pauker supervised communist activities within the government and dealt with economic and administrative issues; Luca was in charge of women's, youth, and minorities' mass organizations; and Georgescu ran the United Workers' Front, which coordinated the handling of the social democrats and party cadres. However, relations between Gheorghiu-Dej and the other three were far from being as amicable as depicted in the official myth of fraternal solidarity.

Between the time of her return from Moscow in September 1944 and the fall of 1945, Ana Pauker led the party, although she never bore the official title of either first or general secretary. At a fateful meeting on October 24, 1945, all the central committee secretaries agreed that Gheorghiu-Dej had to be general secretary, inasmuch as he was an ethnic Romanian and a worker who had suffered eleven years in bourgeois prisons and camps. Pauker herself came up with this idea, in fact, insisting that from any viewpoint, Gheorghiu-Dej would be preferable to her as party leader. It is unlikely that the newly appointed head of the party ever forgot that the short-tempered Luca suggested that Gheorghiu-Dej hold this position only formally, and that in practice the real leader should be Pauker. Whether for tactical reasons or not, Ana Pauker rejected this proposal.⁴² Although united by common strategic interests, and above all by the desire to consolidate communist power in Romania, all of them had personal ambitions, all wanted the top position, and all sought the protection of Moscow.

The Leninist meaning of "factionalism"—a cardinal sin in communist dogma—must be stressed in the case of this episode. The term refers to moves independent of elected party bodies, primarily in parallel centers of political discussion and initiative. In reality, in spite of all the rhetoric about party unity, communist elites were never totally homogeneous. Personalities and groups always clashed. For all practical purposes, in fact, the political history of the international communist movement is the history of continuous purges of different factions branded by the

victors as “anti-party deviations.” Those defeated in party power struggles were labeled factionalists, whereas the winners were lionized as champions of the “holy cause” of party unity. The cases of André Marty and Charles Tillon in the French Communist Party and of the Heinrich Brandler–August Thalheimer and Ruth Fischer–Arkady Maslow factions in the German Communist Party are comparable to the conflict within the Romanian central committee between Gheorghiu-Dej and Pauker et al. Each side desperately vied for the Kremlin’s blessing and used all its connections to undermine the other. Nobody could ignore the fundamental fact that the ultimate decisions regarding purges in the ruling parties in the satellite countries were made by the Kremlin, primarily by Stalin.

Ana Pauker enjoyed the trust of the Molotov–Kaganovich–Voroshilov faction in Moscow, while for his part, Gheorghiu-Dej was linked with Georgi Malenkov, Stalin’s heir-apparent. Moreover, through his ally, Iosif Chişinevschi, Gheorghiu-Dej had contacts in the Soviet security apparatus, above all with Lavrenti Beria. It is also worth noting that whereas Ana Pauker had friendly relations with the Soviet ambassador in Bucharest, Sergei Kavtaradze, Gheorghiu-Dej and his group were in cahoots with the editor in chief of the Cominform periodical *For a Lasting Peace, for a People’s Democracy*, Mark Borisovici Mitin, a member of the central committee of the CPSU and one of the main Stalinist doctrinaires (he was a co-author of the official *Short Biography* of Stalin).

Who were the protagonists in this ruthless struggle for power? Gheorghie Gheorghiu-Dej was a former railway worker, born in Bîrlad (Lower Moldavia) in 1901, who had initially been attracted by the socialist movement. Only in 1932, or even 1933, did he become a member of the RCP, then one of the most devoted and profoundly Bolshevized branches of the Third International. He played an important, though not decisive role, in the strike at the Griviţa railroad maintenance factory in Bucharest in February 1933. After being sentenced to ten years in jail in the so-called trial of the railroad workers, in which Constantin Doncea, Dumitru Petrescu, Gheorghe Vasilichi, and Chivu Stoica were also condemned, Gheorghiu-Dej was elected to the central committee of the RCP while in the Doftana prison. In this position, his only rival from the point of view of ethnic and social origin was Ilie Pintilie, also a railroad worker. Unlike the other Eastern European leaders of the time (such as East Germany’s Walter Ulbricht, Czechoslovakia’s Klement Gottwald, Poland’s Boleslaw Bierut, Bulgaria’s Vulko Chervenkov, and Yugoslavia’s Iosip Broz Tito) and some of the other Romanian commu-

nists (like Constantin Pîrvulescu, Iosif Chişinevschi, Petre Borilă, and Gheorghe Stoica), Gheorghiu-Dej never studied at the Comintern's Leninist school. He learned Russian and got acquainted with the ideological grammar of Stalinism as spelled out in *Problems of Leninism* and the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) Short Course* while in prison (his teachers were Soviet agents jailed in Romania and Simion Zeiger, a communist engineer, who became one of his main collaborators after 1944). Unlike Petrescu, Doncea, and Vasilichi, Gheorghiu-Dej was not helped to escape from Doftana by the clandestine communist apparatus, and he was thus highly resentful of these luckier—and no doubt more important in the eyes of the Comintern—members of the RCP.⁴³

Gheorghiu-Dej was thus not a direct product of the Comintern tradition, and his unconditional loyalty to Stalin and the CPSU had not been tested. However, he brought with him special qualities: his name was relatively well known in Romania because of the 1934 trial and his subsequent imprisonment; as an ethnic Romanian industrial worker, he enhanced the authority of a party widely perceived as overwhelmingly made up of members of national minorities; and he placated apprehensions among the Muscovites by cultivating a self-effacing, friendly, and approachable style. Unlike Rákosi, Gottwald, Bierut, Tito, Ulbricht, Thorez, Pauker, and Togliatti—all of whom had been trained by the Comintern—Gheorghiu-Dej was a born apparatchik. His was a Stalinism of instinct, not ideology.

While in prison, he proved to have a formidable capacity for intrigue and manipulation of the other prisoners, as well as an extraordinary ability to present himself as benign. He was called “the old man,” although he was only in his late thirties or early forties. Later on, he was able to maintain the same style, attracting left-wing intellectuals like Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Ilie Murgulescu, and Mihai Ralea, and even noncommunists ones like C.I. Parhon, Traian Săvulescu, George Călinescu, and Mihail Sadoveanu. During his prison term, Gheorghiu-Dej created two types of relationship, which were interconnected but not identical: on the one hand, there were activists like Gheorghe Apostol, Chivu Stoica, Alexandru Drăghici, Alexandru Moghioroş, and Nicolae Ceauşescu, and on the other, Soviet spies like Pintilie Bodnarenko, Petea Goncearuk, Mişa Postanski (Posteucă), Simion Babenko, and Serghei Nikonov (Nicolau). It was primarily from these Soviet agents that Gheorghiu-Dej learned a primitive, functional Russian, so that he was able to communicate directly with Stalin and later with Khrushchev.⁴⁴

While in prison, as we have seen, Gheorghiu-Dej started a denigration campaign against the clandestine leadership of the RCP headed by Ștefan Foriș. After his escape from the Tîrgu-Jiu prison, Gheorghiu-Dej became the uncontested leader of the RCP, surrounded by nucleus of supporters he had assembled in prison. Then, in September 1944, Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca arrived back from Moscow with the tanks of the Red Army.

Ana Pauker, née Rabinsohn, disturbingly typifies the tortuous course of Romanian Stalinism. She was born into a family of orthodox Jews in the Moldavian village of Codăești (Vaslui district) in 1893 and moved to Bucharest with her parents in her early childhood. Influenced by the revolutionary writings of Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea—then the main proponent of Marxist ideas in Romania—and by the famous Romanian-Bulgarian revolutionary Christian Rakovsky, she became involved in the socialist movement when still very young and took part in an anti-government workers' rally inspired by Bolshevik slogans, which ended with police intervention and several victims, on December 13, 1918. Ana Rabinsohn's marriage to Marcel Pauker, the scion of a well-to-do Bucharest Jewish family that had considerable influence on the leftist press, further radicalized her, and by the time of Second Congress of the RCP in 1922, she was already a member of the party's central committee. Subsequently, she left Romania and joined the "select group" of Comintern instructors with special assignments in France.⁴⁵ She returned to Bucharest in 1934 and was arrested on July 4, 1935, put on trial with other communist activists, such as Alexandru Drăghici, Alexandru Moghioroș, and Liuba Chișinevschi, and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. All of her co-defendants would later collaborate with Gheorghiu-Dej in ousting her from the party.

As previously noted, the 1936 Craiova episode was one of the most significant in the history of the RCP. The international Stalinist left—the "Stalintern"—capitalized on Pauker's trial by making her into a symbol of antifascist militancy. In prison, she met Gheorghiu-Dej, who had succeeded Ilie Pintilie as leader of the communist organization in Doftana, and professional Comintern agent though she was, she was evidently so seduced by the humble, principled style that Gheorghiu-Dej knew so well how to put on that she came to feel that he deserved to lead the party. In November 1940, as the result of an agreement between the Romanian and Soviet governments, she was exchanged for a former leader of the Bessarabian parliament (Sfatul Țării) that had voted for union with Romania in 1918, who had been imprisoned by the Russians after

the reoccupation of Bessarabia by Soviet forces in June 1940. She was allowed to leave for Moscow, where her connections with Comintern leaders like Dmitrii Manuilsky, Dolores Ibárruri, Georgi Dimitrov, Vasil Kolarov, Maurice Thorez, and Palmiro Togliatti enabled her to exercise autocratic control over the Romanian émigré communists.⁴⁶

In Moscow, Ana Pauker rose to be a member of the Comintern aristocracy and made important contacts with Soviet bigwigs.⁴⁷ As a member of the Comintern's executive committee, she headed the RCP's External Bureau and elaborated the party's strategy for taking power in Romania, along with Vasile Luca, Petre Borilă, Valter Roman, Dumitru Petrescu, Gheorghe Stoica, and Leonte Răutu, to mention only a few of her fellow "Muscovites." Then, in September 1944, she and Vasile Luca returned to Bucharest with the Red Army and were immediately included in the secretariat of the RCP's central committee.

Pauker became minister of external affairs in 1947, a position that she held until purged in 1952. At the First Congress of the RWP in February 1948, she was the star who delivered the closing remarks, and she was re-elected to the politburo and the secretariat.⁴⁸

Vasile Luca, Ana Pauker's close Moscow center ally, was the second member of the leading quartet purged along with her. Born Luka László in Transylvania in 1898, he was an ethnic Hungarian who for political reasons changed his name to a Romanian-sounding one. He rallied to the communist cause from his early youth. After the incorporation of Transylvania into Greater Romania, he adhered to the tiny RCP. All the available information on Luca shows that he was relatively uncultivated but extremely self-important and proud of his proletarian roots, notwithstanding a show of humble cordiality. These characteristics served him well in the party. Luca was one of the RCP's most skilled intriguers and expert at backstage maneuvering. Owing both to his service in Kun's Hungarian republic and to the fact that members of ethnic minorities then played such a leading role in the RCP, he was rapidly promoted and sought to be recognized as the legitimate representative of the Transylvanian proletariat in the party leadership. He was active within the Braşov county branch until his arrest in 1924, and then, after three years of prison, in the underground central committee of the RCP.

Luca was involved in the bitter factional struggle of 1928–29 but managed to survive as a member of the leading group by abandoning his former collaborators Elek Köblös, Eugen Rozvan, and Vitaly Holostenco and his protector Imre Aladar. He became more and more active in the union movement and participated in the preparations for the Lupeni

strike in 1929.⁴⁹ Unconditionally devoted to Comintern, Luca was promoted to the central committee after the Fifth Congress of the RCP, when the party was completely Bolshevized. Arrested in 1933 and released in 1938, only to be arrested again, he went to the USSR after 1940. As a proponent of the Stalinist conception of nationality, he soon took Soviet citizenship and subsequently became a deputy in the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet.

Along with Pauker, Luca was the leader of the Romanian communist emigration in Moscow after 1940. He participated in the establishment of Radio Moscow's Romanian Department and in the activities of the Comintern broadcasting unit *România Liberă* (Free Romania). Most of the influential Romanian political émigrés were involved in these two propaganda operations, including Leonte Răutu, Valter Roman, Zina Brîncu, Ana Pauker, Constantin Doncea, Dumitru Petrescu, and Alexandru Bîrlădeanu. Luca also played a crucial role in the indoctrination of Romanian prisoners of war in the USSR.⁵⁰ After he returned to Romania with "Comrade Ana," to whom he was devoted, he rapidly rose to the forefront of communist propaganda. Although not a gifted public speaker and handicapped by his Hungarian accent, he did his best to contribute to undermining of the feeble Romanian democracy of the time by delivering countless addresses lambasting the "reactionary" forces and calling for a rapid communist takeover. In private conversations with Gheorghiu-Dej, however, Luca criticized the domestic leadership for having participated in the August 23, 1944, antifascist coup. In his view, it would have been wiser to just wait for the Soviet Army to reach Bucharest, which, he argued, would have brought the RCP straight to power, avoiding the stage of collaboration with the "bourgeois" forces.

As we have seen, Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca combined with Gheorghiu-Dej and the prison nucleus first in the liquidation of the Foriș-Koffler group and then in the expulsion of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu from the party. These episodes are perfect illustrations of the ethical quandary of Romanian communism, the pervasive climate of intrigues, conspiracies, innuendo, obloquy, bloodthirsty revenge, and ruthless settlements of accounts. People who belonged to Gheorghiu-Dej's entourage at Doftana, Caransebeș, and Țirgu-Jiu—Gheorghe Apostol, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Iosif Chișinevschi, Miron Constantinescu, Alexandru Drăghici, Teohari Georgescu, Alexandru Moghioroș, Iosif Rangheț, et al.—became masters of Byzantine manipulation and learned the art of Stalinist frame-ups and purges.

Teohari Georgescu had been one of Gheorghiu-Dej's acolytes in the anti-Foriș campaign during the war years, but he, too, was purged in 1952 as a member of Ana Pauker's "antiparty" faction. He had not been a member of the "émigré coalition," but Gheorghiu-Dej did not forget that the Comintern had suggested Georgescu's appointment as general secretary in 1940 as a means of Romanianizing the RCP elite.⁵¹ Georgescu apparently refused this promotion, but it was Gheorghiu-Dej's style not to underestimate the risk of Moscow playing the Georgescu card against him. This is worth noting, because there is a widespread tendency to regard the conflict between Gheorghiu-Dej and the Pauker-Luca-Georgescu group as predominantly political. In fact, the "antiparty group" was an ex post facto construct rather than an association of like-minded conspirators intent on toppling Gheorghiu-Dej and pursuing an alternative "rightist" political strategy. Furthermore, unlike Pauker and Luca, Georgescu—an ethnic Romanian worker—had not spent the war years in Soviet exile, which may also explain Nicolae Ceaușescu's readiness to rehabilitate him politically and restore his central committee membership in 1972, while nevertheless avoiding any re-assessment of the May-June 1952 plenum that had led to the elimination of the "right-wing deviators."⁵²

The purge of the Pauker-Luca-Georgescu group was carefully planned and gradually undertaken. Ana Pauker's political prestige had diminished as a result of a campaign to "verify" all party members, following which approximately 190,000 "exploiting and hostile elements" were ousted—around 20 percent of the total—at the January 23–24, 1950, plenum. The communiqué of this meeting and the Cominform magazine *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy* underlined the errors committed in the policy of recruiting new members in 1945–46, when Ana Pauker and Miron Constantinescu had been responsible for what the Marxist-Leninist jargon calls "the construction of the party." At the same time, massive purges in the Jewish Democratic Committee and in the Hungarian Committee (communist fronts among Jews and ethnic Hungarians in Romania) suggest the same policy of weakening the "Muscovite" leaders. In the Byzantine schemes that devoured the Romanian communist elite, the mystical internationalism of the Comintern period was gradually replaced by a cynical, pragmatic position embellished with nationalist, even xenophobic, motifs. Gheorghiu-Dej and his acolytes not only speculated about Stalin's antisemitism but did not hesitate to play the same card. The stakes were absolute power, and the Jewishness of rivals was an argument that could be used with the Soviet dictator.

Gheorghiu-Dej and his group used the local and “parliamentary” elections in 1951 to strengthen their positions in the state apparatus. Organized under the rubric of “the reinforcement of the links between party and masses” (*întărirea legăturilor partidului cu masele*), these elections allowed Gheorghiu-Dej to impose his protégés in influential positions in the local state administration. The cordial smiles and hugs at the thirtieth anniversary of the RWP in May 1951 did not obscure the new power structure: the scant appreciative words addressed by Gheorghiu-Dej to his colleagues on the secretariat underlined the irreversible deterioration in their previously hegemonic position. Gheorghiu-Dej’s move against the so-called Pauker–Luca–Georgescu group went hand in hand with a hardening of internal repression, the stimulation of a climate of suspicion and fear within the party, and the reinforcement of the anti-Yugoslav campaign, especially in the pages of *For a Lasting Peace, for a People’s Democracy*, which had its headquarters in Bucharest, in a compound on Valeriu Braniște Street.⁵³

Gheorghiu-Dej took no step without consulting with his Soviet advisers, who wanted a purge in Romania along the lines of the Slánský purge in Gottwald’s Czechoslovakia. Pătrășcanu, like Gomulka, Rajk, and Kostov, had been selected in the first stage of the delirious attack on the “nationalist-Titoist” deviation. After 1951, Stalin was more and more convinced that an enormous imperialist-Zionist plot threatened socialism, and that communist parties must therefore throw overboard not only “traitors” but all perceived hostile or even wavering elements that had “sneaked into working-class party ranks” (*strecurați în rândurile partidului clasei muncitoare*). The appointment of Iosif Chișinevschi, who was completely devoted to Stalin and the USSR, as secretary of the central committee and head of its Cadre Department, is proof of the direct connection between Gheorghiu-Dej’s maneuvers and Stalin’s wishes.

The first of the “deviators” to be hit by the tidal wave of the purge was Vasile Luca. At a meeting of the politburo on February 19, 1952, Miron Constantinescu presented a report that accused Luca and his collaborators in the Finance Ministry and the National Bank of enemy activity and sabotage. Luca was pressed to undertake a very radical self-critique related to the fact that he had argued against the currency reform, which nevertheless had been implemented on January 28. At the February 29–March 1, 1952, central committee plenum, Luca was linked with “right-wing deviation” and a commission was created to investigate “errors” at the Ministry of Finance and the National Bank.

Luca recognized his mistake in not having quickly enough uncovered the right-wing deviationism of his direct subordinates in these two institutions. Ana Pauker and Teohari Georgescu, who tried to support Luca, were accused of what was called an “appeasing attitude” (*împăciunitorism*) in Stalinist cant. In Bolshevik logic, lack of vigilance amounted to “objective” support for the enemy. On March 8, 1952, Luca was accordingly dismissed from the Ministry of Finance and replaced by Dumitru Petrescu. At a meeting on March 13, 1952, Luca, backed by Pauker and Georgescu, fought back and withdrew any acknowledgement of political mistakes. Educated at the Comintern school, Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca knew perfectly well that there was only one step from self-criticism to political trial, so they preferred to adopt a relatively offensive attitude and defied their former sycophants turned prosecutors.⁵⁴

After this meeting, Gheorghiu-Dej, Miron Constantinescu, Iosif Chișinevschi, and Gheorghe Apostol went to Moscow for talks with Stalin and Molotov. The Romanian delegation explained that a right-wing deviation had been discovered at the top of the RWP, and that a commission was looking into the guilt of the accused.⁵⁵ When Stalin asked how this could have happened, Constantinescu made the mistake of saying that Gheorghiu-Dej was a soft-hearted man, an unfortunate phrase that would later cost him a great deal. For the moment, however, Gheorghiu-Dej appointed him to attack the deviators at the next plenum.⁵⁶ In the meantime, a group of party workers translated the documentation for the forthcoming central committee plenum into Russian.⁵⁷ This had probably been drafted by Constantinescu and Chișinevschi under the supervision of Soviet agents, among whom the most important were Gheorghiu-Dej’s official “advisers” Mark Borisovici Mitin (the editor in chief of *For a Lasting Peace, for a People’s Democracy*), Nikolai Shutov, and Semion Katelineț.⁵⁸ The documents were transmitted to Moscow through the Soviet embassy in Bucharest. Alexandru Moghioroș, the RWP secretary in charge of organizational matters (whose wife, Stela—born Esther Radoshovetskaya—was the RCP delegate to the Bucharest-based Cominform magazine) further elaborated on the charges in an issue of the Cominform journal.⁵⁹

A psychological and political climax was reached at the plenum on May 26–27, 1952, when the “Luca–Pauker–Georgescu group” was finished off en bloc. Luca was accused of an antiparty and antistate stance in the preparations for and carrying out of currency reform, and of an anti-Leninist line contrary to the interests of the working class and

the peasantry with respect to the cooperatives. Alexandru Moghioroș called for his expulsion from all positions and his “verification” by the party control commission.⁶⁰ Hearing the accusations, and knowing very well what his fate was henceforth to be, Luca fainted in the middle of the meeting.⁶¹ Some of his collaborators—Alexandru Iacob and Vasile Modoran, his deputies at the Ministry of Finance, and Aurel Vijoli, the chairman of the National Bank and deputy minister of finance—had already been dismissed, arrested, and interrogated.⁶² As for Luca’s former protégés in the RWP leadership, Alexandru Moghioroș, Alexandru Sen-covici, Vasile Vaida, Ion Vințe, and Iosif Rangheț, instead of defending him, they struck without mercy at their former idol.

Luca was accordingly dismissed both from the vice-premiership and from the central committee and its Organizational Bureau (Orgburo). Shortly after the May plenum, he was arrested. After six weeks of interrogation, promised that he would be released if he did so, he confessed to the most bizarre sins and the most terrible crimes, including the supreme one in the eyes of the party’s old-time *ilegalisti*: complicity with the bourgeois secret police.⁶³ Following the investigation of the party control committee, he was expelled from the party at the plenum on August 19–20, 1953,⁶⁴ then put on trial on the basis of his confessions and condemned to death on October 10, 1954, a sentence that was later commuted to life in prison.

Luca desperately wrote to Gheorghiu-Dej denying that he was guilty of the crimes of which he was accused. It is not clear whether Gheorghiu-Dej ever replied, but the archival evidence indicates that he read these memoranda carefully, underlining things and adding sarcastic comments in the margin. Gheorghiu-Dej’s ironical annotations in fact appear in almost every paragraph of Luca’s memoranda.⁶⁵ Luca died in prison at Aiud on July 23, 1963.⁶⁶ His rehabilitation by Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1968 came too late for him, but at least other people involved in his demise benefited from it.⁶⁷

Teohari Georgescu was accused at the plenum on May 26–27 of a conciliatory stance regarding Luca’s deviation and of lacking militancy against the class enemy and revolutionary vigilance. Consequently, he was dismissed from all his positions in the party and state apparatus—as minister of the interior, vice-premier, and member of secretariat, politburo, and organizational bureau—and “assigned to work at a lower level.”

Ana Pauker, once Balkan communism’s Pasionaria, was likewise ousted from the politburo and secretariat as guilty of tolerating and en-

couraging the deviation of Luca and Georgescu. The plenum's communiqué condemned her for having let politically compromised elements such as former fascists into the party and having allowed Zionists to emigrate to Israel. She was accused of a "leftist-rightist deviation," because, on the one hand, she had neglected the formation of new collective farms and tolerated kulaks, but, on the other hand, had violated the principle of peasants' voluntary consent in joining collectives. The three "right-wing deviators" were judged guilty of the failures in Romania's economic policy, an old device, used in other communist countries as well, for blaming errors in policy on the defeated faction.⁶⁸

A new politburo was elected at this plenum on May 26–27, primarily made up of unconditional supporters of the general secretary. Aside from Gheorghiu-Dej, the Romanian communist Olympus now consisted of Alexandru Moghioroș, Iosif Chișinevschi, Miron Constantinescu, Gheorghe Apostol, Chivu Stoica, Emil Bodnăraș, Petre Borilă, and Constantin Pîrvulescu. Teohari Georgescu's successor at the Ministry of Interior, Alexandru Drăghici, was elected candidate member of politburo, as were Dumitru Coliu and Nicolae Ceaușescu, who was now promoted for the first time to the highest institutions of the party. At the same time, the central committee's Organizational Bureau, a transitory body created in January 1950, was restructured. The new members were Alexandru Moghioroș, Gheorghe Apostol, Chivu Stoica, Ana Pauker Leonte Răutu, Gheorghe Florescu (then first secretary of the UTC), Sorin Toma (editor in chief of the party daily *Scînteia*), Liuba Chișinevschi, and Nicolae Ceaușescu.

After the May plenum, the "right-wing opportunistic deviationists" were systematically erased from the official history of the Communist Party, although Pauker still held her position in the Orgburo for a while. Books containing their biographies or pictures were withdrawn from circulation, and everything they had ever written or signed was excluded from any bibliography used in party propaganda.⁶⁹ Perhaps to preempt charges of antisemitism or anti-Sovietism, Pauker was replaced on July 5 as minister of foreign affairs by Simion Bughici, the former ambassador to Moscow, a Jew who had spent the war years in the Vapniarka camp in Transnistria. She lost any position in the nomenklatura on September 12, 1952, when she was dismissed from the position of vice president of the council of ministers. After a period of interrogation, she was arrested, along with Teohari Georgescu, on February 18, 1953, but was released in late March after Stalin's death. Her case was not, however, allowed to drop; the August 19–20, 1953, plenum that had expelled Luca

established a party committee to investigate Pauker's antiparty and anti-state activities.⁷⁰ It is said that before her release, when Pauker heard of Stalin's death from Alexandru Moghioroș, she began weeping, but Moghioroș told her that she should not cry, because if Stalin had been alive, she would be dead.⁷¹

Pauker subsequently pursued a marginal, passive existence, under permanent surveillance, in Bucharest. After February 1954, she was allowed to live with her family and earn a salary by making translations from Russian for Editura Politică, the official party publishing house.⁷² As a result of the investigation, she was expelled from the party on May 11, 1954.⁷³ Until her death in 1960, she would periodically be attacked by the party's leaders and propagandists,⁷⁴ and she was never reintegrated into the party's ranks. As for Teohari Georgescu, although he confessed himself guilty on all charges,⁷⁵ he was released from prison, and allowed to return to his original job as a printing worker. After Gheorghiu-Dej's death, he was appointed manager of the main printing house in Bucharest, "Întreprinderea 13 Decembrie." At the party's national conference in 1972, Georgescu was appointed candidate member in the central committee, an ephemeral triumph over the late leader who had ruined his career twenty years earlier.

With the benefit of hindsight, the May–June 1952 purge of the "Pauker–Luca–Georgescu faction" appears to have been the first attempt by the national Stalinist elite to achieve cohesion by forcing out the Moscow-backed faction headed by Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca, but this was hardly the perception the RCP party apparatus had at the time.⁷⁶ Soviet advisers played a crucial role in preparations for what eventually turned into an intraparty coup.⁷⁷ Gheorghiu-Dej and his accomplices—among whom were Iosif Roitman-Chișinevschi, Moscow's right-hand man in Romania, and people with impeccable pro-Soviet credentials like Leonte Răutu (Lev Oigenstein), Petre Borilă (Jordan Dragan Rusev), and Miron Constantinescu—were unlikely to express "autonomist" propensities at a juncture when "bourgeois nationalism" and "rootless cosmopolitanism" were Stalin's preoccupations. After all, it had been none other than Gheorghiu-Dej who, at the 1949 Cominform meeting, had been selected by Stalin to deliver the notorious speech about the Communist Party of Yugoslavia being "in the hands of murderers and spies."⁷⁸ Hence, the 1952 ouster of the Pauker–Luca group was by no means the harbinger of national communism *in statu nascendi* but rather a successful attempt by Gheorghiu-Dej and his faction to take advantage of Stalin's paranoid delusions in order to consoli-

date their hold on the RCP apparatus and put an end to the centrifugal trends of the “duality of power.”

In this sense, Gheorghiu-Dej knew how to gain the support of an important nucleus of communists known to have steady connections with the Kremlin; among these, Iosif Chişinevschi played the most important role. Also, the fact that communists of Jewish origin like Chişinevschi and Leonte Răutu, the Zhdanov of Romanian culture, kept key positions in the party apparatus, and that Pauker's successor at the Ministry of External Affairs was Simion Bughici, also a Jew, shows that the elimination of the Pauker–Luca–Georgescu group was the result of a struggle for absolute power and not an ethnic “purification” of the party. Gheorghiu-Dej nonetheless knew how to take advantage of the antisemitic campaign that had started in the USSR in 1952. Unthinkable as an “autonomist” orientation was in a satellite country during the Cold War, it would have been all the more extraordinary coming from one of the most regimented Stalinist elites in Eastern Europe. In other words, Ana Pauker's downfall did not occur merely, or even primarily, because of Gheorghiu-Dej's skillful maneuvering—as some Romanian novels published in the 1980s would have us believe⁷⁹—but first and foremost because of Stalin's decision to initiate a major political purge in Romania.

Pauker's designation as the victim of a show trial was a godsend for Gheorghiu-Dej and his underlings. Psychologically, they had long resented the arrogant behavior of the “Muscovites” and gladly volunteered to participate in their annihilation. Later on, at a meeting of the politburo on November 29, 1961, Gheorghiu-Dej offered his interpretation of the expulsion of Ana Pauker and her acolytes. He remembered that in February 1947, when Stalin had received him and Pauker, the Soviet dictator said he had heard a rumor that some thought that those who were not of Romanian origin, namely, Pauker and Luca, ought not to hold leading positions in the RCP. In this respect, Stalin warned Gheorghiu-Dej that the RCP must not be transformed from a “social and class party into a race party.” The Soviet transcripts of this meeting confirm this part of Gheorghiu-Dej's story.⁸⁰ However, Gheorghiu-Dej went on to say that two days later, when Pauker was already back in Bucharest, Stalin had summoned him again, this time alone, and told him that he should get rid of anyone who stood in his way.⁸¹

If the national Stalinists were the prime beneficiaries of this move against the “internationalist faction” in the RCP, they were neither its initiators nor its architects. No less caught up in the same perverse mechanism of self-humiliation than their Polish and Hungarian col-

leagues, the Romanian Stalinists—Gheorghiu-Dej, Chişinevschi, and Ceauşescu as much as Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca—were willing perpetrators of Stalin’s designs. They were allowed by the Soviet dictator to gain autonomy not from the center but from another generation of the center’s agents. Of course, it was a moment of emancipation, but as those who were victims of the repressive campaign in 1952—the military, students, and intellectuals—still remember, this signified only that Moscow sanctioned the coming of age of a new Stalinist elite in Romania. This is not to say that the two competing factions were completely identical in their strategic visions: Robert Levy’s biography of Ana Pauker shows that in addition to personal elements, the conflict between her and Luca, on one side, and Dej and his supporters, on the other, revolved around burning tactical issues, including the pace of collectivization, fiscal and financial reforms, and even positions with regard to Pătrăşcanu.

In Ana Pauker’s case, her rejection of the crude antisemitic line advocated by Dej, Chişinevschi, and their acolytes and her relative openness to permitting Jewish emigration to Israel are noteworthy. At the same time, she was undoubtedly one of the architects of the communist takeover and of the imposition on the Romanian people of a system they neither wanted nor ever truly accepted.

The history of the Stalinist ruling groups in various other East-Central European countries is strikingly similar. There is the same sense of political predestination, the same lack of interest in national values, the same obsequiousness vis-à-vis the Kremlin. Poland’s Teresa Torańska’s fascinating interviews with Edward Ochab, Roman Werfel, Stefan Staszewski, and particularly Jakub Berman leave no doubt about the Eastern European Stalinist elites’ total subservience to Moscow.⁸² Furthermore, not only psychological but biographical similarities are observable. Ana Pauker, Rudolf Slánský, Bedřich Geminder, and, to some extent, László Rajk and Władysław Gomułka had all been accessories to the Comintern’s conversion into an appendage of the Kremlin’s foreign policy, and all of them had espoused the myth of Stalin’s genius and Soviet primacy in world communism.

A political history of Romanian Stalinism shows the same conspiratorial, hypercentralized, and authoritarian-militaristic structure that characterized the leaderships in other communist countries. There was the same desire to play little Stalin on the part of the general secretary (Gheorghiu-Dej) and chief ideologue (Leonte Răutu); the same Russification of the national culture to achieve total ideological regimentation; the same use

of Soviet agents (Iosif Chişinevschi, Petre Borilă) by the top leaders to supervise their colleagues and diligently report on their behavior to the Soviet “protectors”; the same implementation of a terrorist police state; and the same mechanical mass mobilization based on superstitious veneration of the Soviet Union and Stalin.

The successful enforcement of party discipline and a structural reorganization of the party that brought a new generation of cadres into the apparatus helped Gheorghiu-Dej consolidate power further. Ceauşescu’s political career also benefited from these changes. In April 1954, Gheorghiu-Dej initiated a redistribution of power in order to prevent Moscow from imposing changes similar to those that had forced Mátyás Rákosi in Hungary to share decision-making with the reform-minded Imre Nagy. At the Second RWP Congress, held in December 1955, Gheorghiu-Dej emerged as the party’s uncontested ruler. At this congress, Ceauşescu presented a report on the modification of party rules, his first major political speech. In it, he listed the preservation of monolithic party unity, of the “indestructible alliance with the Soviet Union,” and of the “glorious, invincible doctrine of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin” as his chief tenets.⁸³

CHAPTER 5

Aftershocks of the CPSU's Twentieth Congress, 1957–1960

De-Stalinization did not start with Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in early 1956. The first and the essential act of de-Stalinization was the death of Stalin.

Robert C. Tucker, *The Soviet Political Mind*

Stalin's demise left the ruling elites of the USSR and its satellites in disarray. The prevailing political climate was defined by the literary metaphor of "the thaw." The concept of a "new course" was broached. Between March and September 1953, Stalin's heirs engaged in sweeping efforts to limit mass terror; reassured people that no further purges were being prepared; and significantly toned down anti-Western and anti-Titoist rhetoric. The dominant Stalinist myths began to deteriorate. The mummified dogma of monolithic internationalism was gradually challenged by the subordinated nations' pride, and skepticism affected even members of the party apparatus, the institutional skeleton of totalitarian social order. The competition for power between vying factions in the Kremlin resulted, among other things, in the expulsion and killing of the former chief of the Soviet Ministry of State Security (MGB), Marshal Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria.

The fact that the era of universal fear had finally come to an end was underlined by release of the surviving members of the medical doctors' group arrested shortly before Stalin's death, a bit of clemency attributed by extensive official publicity to Beria, formerly Stalin's most trusted lieutenant, who now sought to present himself as the guardian of a

newly rediscovered socialist legality.¹ If so, his role as a de-Stalinizer was one of the Kremlin's best-kept secrets. His public image, both in the USSR and abroad, was one of ruthlessness, sadism, and total contempt for anything smacking of democratic participation and civic rights. It was therefore with immense joy and high hopes that people of the Soviet bloc received the news of Beria's ouster, arrest, trial, and execution (June–December 1953).²

In any case, the news of the release from jail of the Kremlin doctors in April 1953 and the liberation from the Gulag of hundreds of thousands of prisoners were exhilarating signals that the "thaw" was beginning. The wave of political rehabilitations after 1954, and the reaffirmation, rather demagogical at the beginning, of the long-forgotten "Leninist norms of party life," allowed for the rise of certain expectations for change, not only in the USSR, but also in the satellite countries. Beria and his MGB thugs were the perfect scapegoats, and the "collective leadership" of Malenkov and Khrushchev used their liquidation to reaffirm its own commitment to domestic political relaxation, better living standards for the Soviet people, and improved intrabloc relations. Beria's baleful influence on Stalin, especially during the tyrant's last years, was invoked as an explanation for the most egregious actions undertaken between 1948 and 1953, including the split with Yugoslavia, the show trials in the people's democracies, and the vicious antisemitic campaigns that had taken place. The once all-powerful Cominform began to wither away, and its periodical *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy* sank into well-deserved oblivion.³ The post-1953 toning down and even disappearance of anti-Yugoslav rhetoric and, after 1954, the beginning of Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement were signs that a new system of relationships was emerging both within the bloc and in the world communist movement. After all, the main cause of the Moscow-Belgrade dispute had been Tito's rejection of Stalin's claim to absolute control over the new Leninist regimes in East-Central Europe. The propaganda onslaught on Tito's revisionism, until 1953 considered an imperialist Trojan horse at the very heart of the socialist system, was replaced by talk of peaceful coexistence in international politics and domestic democratization based on collective leadership.

The Berlin revolt in June 1953, triggered by an increase in the norms of production in construction, was the first episode in a series of events that were to lead to the disintegration of the monolithic, homogenous image of the Soviet bloc. The antitotalitarian workers' movement in Berlin, drowned in blood by East German police, supported by Soviet

forces, attracted the attention of the West to the centrifugal phenomena in the communist world and contributed to the awakening of the liberal Western intelligentsia from its frivolous honeymoon with Stalinist pseudo-humanism and acknowledgement of the terrorist essence of Stalinism. However, this did not mean the recognition that Leninist systems were intrinsically corrupt and unable to reform themselves radically. There were calls for Marxist renewal and rediscovery of the emancipating dimension of socialism. The appointment of Imre Nagy as prime minister of Hungary in June 1953, his moderate political program, the curtailment of Mátyás Rákosi's domination in the Hungarian leadership, the opening of the USSR to the West after 1955, and the start of the process of rehabilitating some of the most important communist victims of Stalinist repression were thus without doubt meant to encourage the illusion that the system could be reformed from the top by eradicating the malignant tumor of Stalinism and restoring of the original humanist impetus of Marxist socialism.

The renunciation of anti-Tito slogans confused zealots and encouraged critical minds. If all the charges against the Yugoslavs turned out to have been trumped up, then it was worthwhile to reconsider the very foundations of the Leninist regimes' institutional arrangements. Maybe, in spite of the officially enshrined creed, the party was not always right, and the leaders, the local little Stalins, might have erred as much as their protector in the Kremlin.

In brief, the period between 1953 and 1956 coincided with the dramatic dissolution of the Stalin myth and the beginning of a search for alternative socialist models. More powerfully in Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, but also in Romania, the GDR, and even in the USSR, the democratic socialist temptation affected significant strata of the intelligentsia. As authors like the Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski, the East German physicist Robert Havemann, and the Austrian communist thinker Ernst Fischer admitted, this break with the Stalinist faith amounted to awakening from a dogmatic stupor. The nuclei of intellectual opposition originated from the very same values on which the system was theoretically based, but that had been cynically mocked by the reality of political life. Revisionism was the vocal expression of the outrage experienced by many formerly regimented Marxist intellectuals at the gap between professed ideals and practice. Moreover, the international environment was changing: the spirit of Geneva, named after the place of the summit conference of July 1955, promised peaceful cooperation between East and West, and the neutrality of Austria, with the with-

drawal of Soviet troops from the Russian zone of occupation in that country under the peace treaty signed on May 15, 1955, raised expectations in countries like Hungary, Romania, and Poland. But the outcome of the struggles for power between Stalinists and anti-Stalinists in the Kremlin was far from certain, and significant setbacks occurred as a result of this political and ideological imbroglio. Furthermore, in spite of his success in demoting Malenkov as prime minister in 1955, Nikita Khrushchey, who had become the champion of the anti-Stalinist forces in the CPSU presidium, could not count on a majority among his colleagues. Molotov, Kaganovich, Malenkov, Voroshilov, and the other hard-liners still controlled key sectors of the party and government, and they deeply resented efforts to expose Stalin's crimes.

In 1955, Imre Nagy was forced to resign as prime minister of Hungary, and Rákosi and his unrepentant Stalinists seemed to be making a political comeback. In reality, however, theirs was a short-lived victory: the genie was out of the bottle, Hungarian intellectuals and students had learned that Moscow would not unconditionally back the old Stalinist leaders, and the myth of the party's infallibility had been shattered. The struggle for the rehabilitation of László Rajk and other victims of Rákosism was in full swing, catalyzed by the warming of the relations between the Soviet leaders and Tito. After all, Rajk had been executed in 1949 on the charge of being Tito's spy, and by implication, an agent for the imperialist West. Now, with Tito celebrated as a fellow communist, there was no sense in maintaining the old anti-Rajk criminal charges. Panic, anguish, and insecurity were rampant among the high Stalinist echelons of the East-Central European parties.

The Romanian communist leaders realized that times were changing and that the old methods needed to be dramatically revised, so a kind of relaxation in domestic policy was introduced after 1953. One of the first measures taken was the decision to end construction of the canal between the Danube River and the Black Sea, a huge operation imposed by Stalin that had suited Gheorghiu-Dej's repressive policy.⁴ During the central committee plenum on August 19–20, 1953, under the influence of the New Course and the post-Stalin Soviet rhetoric, Gheorghiu-Dej criticized attempts to promote a personality cult, his point being that party's Agitprop Department should focus on the merit of the leadership as a collective body and not idealize one individual. Criticism was also voiced regarding excessive emphasis on heavy industry to the detriment of consumer goods, and Gheorghiu-Dej insisted on the need to focus on increasing the living standards of the population. More state

budget funds could be distributed to consumer goods industries, Gheorghiu-Dej proclaimed, echoing Malenkov's line in the USSR.⁵

At a World Youth Festival in the summer of 1953, the regime did its utmost to present the image of a joyful, enthusiastic Romanian younger generation, and huge quantities of produce were put on display, to the amazement of Romanians, who for years had not dreamed of anything like it. People would remember the festival as a fleeting Western presence on Bucharest's streets, less police visibility, and a degree of cultural liberalization. In 1955, Miron Constantinescu was appointed deputy prime minister in charge of cultural and intellectual affairs, thereby losing his position as chairman of the powerful state planning committee.⁶ His appointment actually coincided with an opening to influential intellectuals long persecuted or silenced during Romania's Zhdanovschina.⁷ Moreover, in 1955, a more relaxed policy on student admissions was instituted, with new regulations that somewhat moderated the toughness of the exclusionary, pro-working-class affirmative action system. However, "social origin" quotas remained in place, disadvantaging candidates from intellectual, "bourgeois," or "kulak" (*chiabur*) families.

The Second RWP Congress had initially been scheduled for 1954, six years after the previous one, but had been postponed several times.⁸ In April 1954, as we have seen, following a mock trial, Gheorghiu-Dej obtained the execution of his political nemesis and potential rival Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu.⁹ Apparently in order to emulate the changes in Moscow, a much-vaunted "collective leadership" was instituted at the central committee plenum on April 19, 1954. The position of general secretary was replaced by a secretariat of four members, headed by a first secretary. Gheorghiu-Dej, imitating Malenkov, became prime minister, a position he held until October 1955, when, realizing that the locus of power was still the central committee secretariat, he took over the position of first secretary (which was the title borne in the USSR by Khrushchev). Between April 1954 and October 1955, Gheorghe Apostol, Gheorghiu-Dej's alter ego, held the position of first secretary.

It is significant that until that point, Apostol's main positions had been trade union and government assignments. He therefore lacked a power base within the party bureaucracy, and his main role was to ensure the appearance of a division of power at the top of the RWP. On the other hand, according to some of the former communist apparatchiks, Apostol played a critical role in reorienting party propaganda in a less dogmatic way.¹⁰ Everything we know about Gheorghe Apostol suggests, however, that he was his master's voice, and any significant initia-

tive from him likely involved consultation with and approval from Gheorghiu-Dej. As noted, the April 1954 plenum took place two days after the execution of Pătrășcanu, showing that Gheorghiu-Dej took care to eliminate any possible adversary who might introduce genuine liberalization in timely fashion. Among the central committee secretaries newly appointed at this plenum were Nicolae Ceaușescu—who in addition became a candidate member of the otherwise unchanged politburo—and Alexandru Drăghici.¹¹

The Second RWP Congress was held on December 23–28, 1955, shortly after the admission of Romania to the United Nations, along with Bulgaria and Hungary, two other former Nazi allies, on December 14, 1955. The congress was attended by major world communist figures, such as Alexei Kirichenko, first secretary of the central committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party and a member of the CPSU presidium; Marshal Chu Teh, deputy premier of the Chinese People's Republic and secretary of the central committee of the CCP; Dolores Ibárruri, general secretary of the Spanish Communist Party in exile; Mátyás Rákosi, first secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party, and Todor Zhivkov, first secretary of the central committee of the Bulgarian party.¹² A subcommittee made up of Gheorghiu-Dej, Iosif Chișinevschi, Miron Constantinescu, and Leonte Răutu prepared the political report of the central committee, which proposed no ideological innovations.¹³

Since the elimination of the “right-wing deviators” in 1952, Gheorghiu-Dej had considered Iosif Chișinevschi to be his closest, most devoted collaborator. As an indication of this special relationship, Chișinevschi's position in the secretariat included supervision of cadres and “special organs” (the Securitate, justice, militia, and prosecutors' offices). It is likely that Chișinevschi was Ceaușescu's main patron in the latter's appointment as secretary in charge of party organizations and apparatus.¹⁴

The new politburo included not only all of the former members, Gheorghiu-Dej, Chivu Stoica, Iosif Chișinevschi, Gheorghe Apostol, Alexandru Moghioroș, Emil Bodnăraș, Miron Constantinescu, and Constantin Pîrvulescu, but also three new ones, who played significant roles in the following period, Petre Borilă, Alexandru Drăghici, and Nicolae Ceaușescu.¹⁵ As an expression of Ceaușescu's enhanced status, he was entrusted with presenting the report on the party statutes, in which, unsurprisingly, he emphasized the traditional Leninist themes of “democratic centralism” and “socialist internationalism.” Drăghici's promotion was a clear indication that the Ministry of the Interior, that is,

the Securitate, would continue to play an essential role as the regime's "sword and shield." As for Borilă, he was a dyed-in-the-wool Stalinist, a former Spanish Civil War International Brigade commissar, with excellent Moscow connections, especially needed in the increasingly uncertain times that were to come.

Romanian Communists and the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU

The changes that had been taking place after Stalin's death were accelerated by the famous Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, when, on February 25, 1956, Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin's crimes before a stupefied audience, especially the persecution of party and government cadres, the destruction of the Red Army's general staff and officer corps, the lack of preparation for Hitler's attack in June 1941, and the lurid "Leningrad Affair." These facts had long before been made public by Trotsky, Boris Souvarine, Bertram Wolfe, and other anti-Stalinists and were well known in the West. The key point, however, was that Stalin's atrocities (in fact, only parts of them, since Khrushchev did not touch upon the horrors of collectivization, the judicial frame-ups of the 1930s, including the three Moscow show trials, or the extermination of the former members of the Jewish Antifascist Committee) had never been admitted, let alone responsibility assumed for them, from the official communist perspective. Nonetheless, Khrushchev, who as first secretary of the CPSU's central committee, was world communism's most authoritative mouthpiece, denounced sins theoretically unforgivable from the Leninist viewpoint.

In his "secret speech" (written by a commission headed by the veteran party ideologue Piotr Pospelov), Khrushchev also acknowledged the existence of Lenin's long-denied "Testament" warning the party against Stalin. What the Soviet leaders limited themselves to defining as Stalin's "cult of personality" was, however, the tragic but logical consequence of an inhumane system based on despotic-authoritarian institutions structurally hostile to the rules of traditional democracy, a social order for which ideological and police terror was the main source of political legitimacy and economic, political, social, and cultural reproduction.¹⁶ Logically, the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU dramatically affected the relations of Moscow with its satellites. By attacking Stalin's leadership of the CPSU, Khrushchev implicitly called into question Moscow's supremacy in the international movement, and many com-

minist parties—among them the Chinese, French, Italian, Albanian, and Romanian—began to question Soviet policies. Even so, however, until the era of glasnost and perestroika, French communists preferred to question the authenticity of the “secret speech” and called it “le rapport attribué à Khrushchev” (the report attributed to Khrushchev).

The Romanian delegation at the Twentieth Congress was headed by Gheorghiu-Dej and included Miron Constantinescu, Iosif Chişinevschi, and Petre Borilă.¹⁷ Obviously, the delegation had no idea that a bombshell like Khrushchev’s speech had been prepared. It is hard to imagine that Gheorghiu-Dej, undoubtedly a genuine Stalin worshipper, was enthusiastic about the criticism of the former Soviet leader. According to Constantinescu, Gheorghiu-Dej was, in fact, profoundly upset by the revelations in Khrushchev’s secret speech. Khrushchev had committed a historical blunder in denouncing the idol of world communism, Gheorghiu-Dej thought—and he shared the contempt of Mao Zedong and Maurice Thorez for Khrushchev’s “sensationalism.”¹⁸ Gheorghiu-Dej’s dismay at the Soviet leader’s anti-Stalin initiative can be considered the first stage of the Romanian-Soviet dispute. Gheorghiu-Dej now began to court the Chinese. Indeed, after 1956, in their treatment of the Stalin issue and de-Stalinization, the Romanian communists had more in common with Mao’s China and Hoxha’s Albania than with Gomulka’s Poland. Yet Gheorghiu-Dej also used his maneuvering skills to improve the relations of his country with Yugoslavia, whose leaders he had stigmatized at the November 1949 Cominform meeting “as a gang of assassins and spies.”

There is no need to engage in complex psychological exercises in order to realize that in the frosty Moscow nights of late February 1956, Gheorghiu-Dej and his companions were in a state of shock: their former idol had been vilified by his successors and the once celebrated Stalinist development of Leninism had been denounced as bogus. Stalin was criticized not only for gross violations of socialist legality, but also for being an adventurer in international affairs and for asphyxiating Marxist thinking in such fields as political economy, historical materialism, and “scientific socialism.” The Twentieth Congress appealed for a return to “creative” Leninism as opposed to the rigidity and sterility of simplistic Zhdanovite dogma. Ironically, it was precisely Mikhail Suslov, once Zhdanov’s protégé and the main organizer of the ultradogmatic campaigns during the last years of the Stalin era, who now called for an end to cultural sclerosis and a creative approach to Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Inasmuch as Suslov had sided with Khrushchev against

Molotov and the other Stalinist dinosaurs, however, his attack on cultural dogmatism was in reality a criticism of the anti-Khrushchev faction in the presidium.

Based on later statements and extemporaneous confessions, especially on what was revealed during the November–December 1961 central committee plenum, the members of the Romanian delegation to the Twentieth Congress were spending their evenings playing dominos, trying to figure out what was going on at the top of the Soviet party. When informed about Khrushchev's secret speech, Miron Constantinescu took a distant position, claiming that he needed time to study the documents carefully, rather than engaging in idle gossip and game playing with Gheorghiu-Dej. Also, as he was to remember in his foreword to a collection of Palmiro Togliatti's writings published in Romanian in the 1970s, Constantinescu held several conversations at that time with the Italian communist leader, and it was Togliatti who, in a famous 1956 interview with the journal *Nuovi argomenti*, called for a deepening of Khrushchev's critique of Stalin, from the psycho-personal to the structural-institutional level.¹⁹ Did Constantinescu touch on these issues in his private meetings with Togliatti? There is no way to answer this, but the very fact that he went out of his way to assure the party that he had opposed the revisionist and "polycentric" theses in 1957 indicates that something indeed happened in Moscow. This distant, extremely cautious attitude in Moscow was the first signal to Gheorghiu-Dej that Constantinescu was trying to disassociate himself from the old leadership and create a personal Khrushchevite platform.

In short, after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, the Romanian communist leaders were confused, traumatized, and outraged; their former idol had been attacked as a criminal, paranoid monster and a military nonentity: their entire world was falling apart. Whatever his sentiments about Khrushchev before February 1956, it is obvious that from that moment on, Gheorghiu-Dej deeply distrusted the Soviet first secretary. For him, as for Maurice Thorez, Antonin Novotny, and Walter Ulbricht, the debunking of Stalin's myth was a major strategic and ideological blunder, a godsend for imperialist propaganda and a concession to Titoist "rotten revisionism." After having read the full text of Khrushchev's secret speech, the Romanian participants at the Twentieth Congress had to determine how to discuss these documents with the rest of the RWP's leadership. Since the new Kremlin line personally threatened him, Gheorghiu-Dej had to put off the debates that threatened to develop in the party leadership. He accordingly invoked the cri-

sis in Greek Communist Party and his one-month involvement in that party's struggles, alleging that he had no way to direct the RWP's inner party discussions regarding the lessons of the Twentieth Congress. In fact, he was playing for time, cajoling different politburo members, assessing their attitudes, and calculating the optimal strategy for the imminent discussions. In this, he counted primarily on support from Gheorghe Apostol, Chivu Stoica, Alexandru Moghioroș, Petre Borilă, Emil Bodnăraș, Alexandru Drăghici, and, he had reason to hope, Nicolae Ceaușescu. Leonte Răutu's dialectical sophistries could be relied on, he felt certain, to camouflage the effort to preempt de-Stalinization ideologically.

Eventually, in March–April 1956, a series of central committee meetings were called to inform the leading apparatchiks about the Twentieth Congress. These well-orchestrated sessions were meant to be a kind of purifying ritual, in which every member of the communist supreme echelon was asked to engage in the notorious Leninist practice of criticism and self-criticism. At the March 23–25 plenum, Gheorghiu-Dej presented a politburo report (*Dare de seamă*) in which he criticized Stalin and especially his personality cult. However, the secret speech was not explicitly mentioned. As for Stalinism in his own party, Gheorghiu-Dej spoke of Romanian Stalinists without mentioning names and insisted that the RWP had expelled them in 1952, implying that the only Stalinists in Romania had been Pauker, Luca, and Georgescu, and that, he, Gheorghiu-Dej, deserved credit for having courageously embarked on de-Stalinization *avant la lettre*, long before the Twentieth Congress. Also, he emphasized that the Second Congress of the RWP marked a new phase by reason of the fact that collective leadership had been established and democratic centralism now truly governed inner party life. Simply put, Gheorghiu-Dej's game was to invoke the struggle against the expelled "Muscovites" as an argument for his own "presciently correct" political behavior. Compared to other Eastern European parties, Gheorghiu-Dej maintained, the RWP leadership managed to avoid the worst excesses associated with Stalin's cult. Whatever needed to be rectified had basically been done as a result of the anti-Pauker purges. Nothing whatsoever was said about Foriș, Koffler, and Pătrășcanu, all liquidated on Gheorghiu-Dej's orders, or about the lawless treatment of Luca, Ana Pauker, Teohari Georgescu, and so many other party militants.

At this plenum, Iosif Chișinevschi and Miron Constantinescu, both members of the delegation at the Twentieth Congress, each, for very different reasons, challenged Gheorghiu-Dej's authority, so that the meet-

ing was transformed in a real debate.²⁰ This is the reason why among the documents of this plenum only Gheorghiu-Dej's report on the Twentieth Congress was published (and even so in a sanitized version). Constantinescu, supported by Chişinevschi, argued for "regeneration" of the party in the spirit of the anti-Stalinist line promoted by Khrushchev. They invoked the slogan of the Twentieth Congress about the "restoration of Leninist norms of internal party life" in order to weaken Gheorghiu-Dej's position and restructure the party's leadership. Constantinescu also criticized the Securitate, including the fact that the secret police operated within ministries without consulting top officials, even when, as it in his case, the latter served on the politburo.

In Leninist parlance, this was an overall attack, and Gheorghiu-Dej did not miss the point. To Constantinescu's and Chişinevschi's criticism, Gheorghiu-Dej, who was able to combine a seductive personal affability with the icy claims of Stalinist logic, conceded that there had indeed been a personality cult in the RWP, with abominable and tragic consequences, but asserted that all this had come to an end with the elimination of Pauker, Luca, and Teohari. After 1952, Gheorghiu-Dej and his supporters claimed, collective leadership had been reinstalled.²¹ Later, at the central committee plenum in November 1961, Gheorghiu-Dej maintained, seconded by a cohort of sycophants, that normal party life had started only after 1952, and that this was due primarily to Gheorghiu-Dej himself.

It is worth emphasizing that the two main opponents of Gheorghiu-Dej attacked him for very different reasons. In the case of Chişinevschi, it was his enduring opportunism, his chameleonlike political nature, manifested in his will to associate himself with the group most likely to come out on top. A true follower of Moscow's line, whatever its twists or turns, he grasped an opportunity to undermine Gheorghiu-Dej and portray himself as a fighter for intraparty democracy. Inasmuch as Khrushchev seemed to be running the show in Moscow, Chişinevschi thought it likely that a critical reassessment of the Stalinist purges in Romania was inevitable.²²

Constantinescu, for his part, thought that he was the one destined to promote a new political course in Romania and hoped to overthrow Gheorghiu-Dej. In fact, at the next politburo meeting, he attacked Gheorghiu-Dej directly, saying that, although he acknowledged the first secretary's merits, he wanted to underline his defects, considering that the hitherto completely uncritical attitude toward Gheorghiu-Dej was a wrong, non-Leninist position.²³ Constantinescu believed that he also

could count on the support of intellectuals within the party, as well as of some major cultural figures who had been socially marginalized after the communist takeover.

The likely outcome of all this was unclear. Much remained fluid. There was ferment among the intelligentsia, and party members (especially in the ideological apparatus) spoke privately of the need to identify responsibility for strategic errors such as the Danube–Black Sea canal project, the purging of the Pauker–Luca group, the marginalization of party veterans, the suffocation of artistic freedom, the dogmatic treatment of national history, and the overbearing Russification of Romanian culture and education. Romanian activists studying in Soviet elite party schools were aware of the implications of the secret speech and their infectious effects in other countries of the Eastern bloc. “Informal conversations” (later criticized and punished as “unprincipled discussions”) took place in small circles. This was a time of creeping intraparty liberalization. University students were increasingly outspoken in questioning official ideology, and information about liberalization in Poland and Hungary was widely disseminated in such major intellectual centers as Bucharest, Cluj, and Timișoara.

Gheorghiu-Dej’s main confidants and supporters at this point were Gheorghe Apostol, Emil Bodnăraș, Alexandru Moghioroș, and Petre Borilă. Constantinescu’s attempt to enroll Moghioroș on his side backfired: Moghioroș, who earlier had betrayed Vasile Luca and Ana Pauker, immediately went to Gheorghiu-Dej to inform him of the formation of an “antiparty platform.” Chișinevschi approached the less astute Pîrvulescu, who despised Gheorghiu-Dej, and tried to enlist his help in blaming the first secretary for the abuses that had taken place. Pîrvulescu either did not understand that what Chișinevschi proposed amounted in fact to Gheorghiu-Dej’s ouster or pretended that he did not get the message clearly. His failure to inform on Chișinevschi’s courting and invitation to “discuss the past in the light of the Twentieth Congress Leninist course” would cost him dear. At the June 1957 central committee plenum, Pîrvulescu was severely criticized; at the Third RWP Congress in 1960, he lost his politburo seat; and at the November–December 1961 plenum, he was attacked for political myopia and opportunism.

The rivalry between Ceaușescu and Drăghici started to manifest itself during these famous meetings in the spring of 1956, when the future general secretary tried to present himself as a liberal, attacking the brutality of the secret police commanded by the fanatical Drăghici. Ceaușescu’s role in these political debates is ambiguous. According to state-

ments he made later, he took a “liberal” stance, criticizing Drăghici and the political police for the “inadmissible practice of ignoring the party’s control over the security organs.”²⁴ On the other hand, he emphasized that Khrushchev’s report at the Twentieth Congress had also mentioned Stalin’s achievements, not only in the fulfillment of the revolution and the construction of socialism, but also in the struggle against the Trotskyists and Bukharinists. “There is not one of us who did not read some of his works and did not learn something from them,” Ceaușescu said.²⁵

The heated politburo discussions of March–April 1956 resulted in the decision to keep mass party discussions of Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization under strict control. Official explanations highlighted the righteousness of the party line, and any attempt to question it resulted in immediate sanctions. All politburo members were instructed to oppose revisionism and “liberal-anarchic” tendencies. Leonte Răutu was in charge of directing propaganda to conceal the real implications of Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization campaign. Calls for intraparty democratization were steadfastly opposed, and the emphasis was put on the Romanian party’s early rejection of the “excesses” of the vilified “Muscovites,” Pauker, Luca, and Georgescu. The origins of national Stalinism are to be found in these reactions to the Twentieth CPSU Congress.

The Echoes of De-Stalinization among Intellectuals

For the anguished RWP leadership, unflinchingly faithful to Stalinist tenets, the shock waves of the Twentieth Congress in the other Eastern bloc countries represented arguments for the tightening of internal policy in order to avoid what Leonte Răutu’s propaganda machine used to call “the liberal-petit-bourgeois hurricane.” The party needed to exorcise the subversive “intellectualist virus” that brought self-doubt, confusion, disarray, loss of morale, and the breakdown of the whole state socialist edifice. Simultaneously intrigued with and irritated by de-Stalinization, the Romanian communist leaders opposed any attempt to let up on “ideological vigilance” or pressure on the intelligentsia. It was decided that meetings would be held in every party organization to discuss the documents of the Twentieth Congress. The meeting on May 22, 1956, that presented the documents of the Twentieth Congress to the party apparatus of the “I. V. Stalin” residential district, where most of the communist leaders lived, was skillfully staged in such a way as to compromise the apparently “moderate” line adopted by Constantinescu and

crush any ambition to develop a cultural and ideological “democratization” policy in Romania.

Paradoxically, the attack on Stalinist despotism came from Alexandru Jar, a mediocre socialist realist writer whose merits in the French Resistance did not justify the leading positions he had occupied in postwar Romanian literary life. In fact, it was Gheorghiu-Dej himself (who had known Jar from the time when they were in prison together and still called him by his original Jewish name, Pashkela) who, when Jar embraced Khrushchevite revisionism and complained to him about the party dictatorship over literature and the arts, had encouraged him to speak up and publicly express his discontent. The provocation succeeded. Jar was convinced that Gheorghiu-Dej really wanted him to embark on a soul-searching discussion of Stalinist abuses. In fact, selecting Jar, the beneficiary of a totally undeserved prominent literary status, to champion freedom of thought and expression was a masterstroke, indicative of Gheorghiu-Dej’s and Răutu’s sophisticated understanding of the game. Few writers were more despised among their peers than Jar was for his role in the Stalinist propaganda orgies. Having him appear as the voice of “liberalization” made the topic itself ridiculous for the majority of Romanian writers, who perceived it as a family quarrel among the Stalinists.²⁶

More important, the aim of this setup was to compromise the potential “liberalizing” faction. The fact that Jar lacked the credibility to support his charges against Gheorghiu-Dej did not, needless to say, mean that he was wrong. On the contrary, especially because it used party jargon and was larded with references to Marxist-Leninist ideology, his attack, like those of other writers who supported him (all Jewish, all former firebrand Stalinists), was an assault on the party’s ideological monopoly—indeed, a questioning of the regime’s legitimacy. Constantinescu, who was in Cluj, was called back for the meeting on Gheorghiu-Dej’s orders. His presence was indispensable in discrediting Jar’s “intellectualist-libertarian tendencies.” He, Gheorghiu-Dej, and Răutu, who normally would not have attended such a low-level meeting of party workers, were nevertheless present at this one and anathematized Jar, simulating a renewal of internal debate in the party. In the autarchic universe that was Romania in 1956, the publication of their speeches was also sensational in that they insisted on the party’s decision to put an end to all Stalinist abuses.²⁷

At the meeting of the writers’ party organization on May 29, 1956, Alexandru Jar and his two supporters, the playwright Mihail Davidoglu

and the literary critic Ion Vitner, were savagely criticized.²⁸ No writer spoke in Jar's defense, not even when it was decided to expel him from the party that he had served faithfully since the underground years, through the Spanish Civil War and the French Resistance, to the ecstatic paeans to Stalin and Gheorghiu-Dej. Nobody gave Jar the benefit of doubt and admitted that it was highly possible that this former communist zealot, whose wife, Olga Bancic, a heroine of the French *maquis*, had been beheaded by the Gestapo, had finally realized that Stalinism was a moral disaster and experienced a true *crise de conscience*. It was in fact irrelevant who Jar had been before: what mattered was the crux of his attack on the party's monopoly on truth, and Romanian writers in their overwhelming majority failed to endorse it. The humanist-democratic ideas of the Hungarian and Polish intellectuals had little counterpart in Romania. While writers in Poland and Hungary had started to assert themselves as an autonomous group, with well-defined interests and goals, in Romania there was relative calm. At least publicly, all seemed quiet on the Romanian front. The Polish and Hungarian intellectuals acquired their rights after repeated conflicts with the ideological apparatchiks, which, considering the virulent forms of Stalinism in those countries, were not at all just a game. Every concession was won only by united resistance and public expressions of solidarity. Far from trying to synchronize their actions with those of their Hungarian and Polish peers, who were the avant-garde of the antitotalitarian struggle, Romanian writers were happy with the very small degree of liberty offered them after the death of Stalin.

Gheorghiu-Dej's ploy to identify the anti-Stalinist offensive with the much-compromised names of Alexandru Jar, Mihail Davidoglu, and Ion Vitner thus bore fruit. Romanian intellectuals were not seduced by the Marxist rhetoric and saw the whole thing as no more than an internal party affair. Moreover, with the exception of a relatively small group of genuine leftist intellectuals (Petru Dumitriu, A. E. Bakonsky, Geo Dumitrescu, Eugen Jebeleanu, Geo Bogza, Paul Georgescu, N. Tertulian, Mihail Petroveanu, Gheorghe Haupt, and Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu), very few were able to understand the enormous stakes involved in the rearrangements taking place in 1956. None of them, however, publicly expressed solidarity with the revolt of the Hungarian intellectuals (the influential novelist Petru Dumitriu was, in fact, among the first to lambaste the Hungarian revolution in the pages of the Romanian Writers' Union's official weekly). Leonte Răutu, who after Iosif Chișinevschi's removal in 1952 was the propaganda czar, was able to sim-

ulate an ideological “opening” and basically succeeded in nipping any liberalization in the bud. The First Writers’ Congress on June 18–24, 1956, manipulated by Răutu and his zealous underling, the Stalinist poet Mihai Beniuc, reaffirmed the principle according to which art and literature had to follow the party directives.²⁹ Of course, certain concessions were made, including the reintegration of some cultural values, long denigrated, into the political circuit. The works of the poets Octavian Goga, George Bacovia, and Tudor Arghezi, and the novelists Liviu Rebreanu and Camil Petrescu were once again allowed to circulate in Romania. At the same time, the party bureaucracy tried to cultivate the myth of respect for the fundamental values of the past, remaining completely silent about the fact that it was itself responsible for the abuse of those values. Breaking with hard-core Stalinism and rehabilitating national history were vital: in Romania, however, they were not the result of activities championed by critical intellectuals, but rather an opportunistic attempt on the part of the party elite to disguise its unwillingness to engage in real de-Stalinization.³⁰ The regime even went so far as to try to attract back prominent Romanian intellectuals in exile, such as Mircea Eliade and Emil Cioran.³¹

What the protagonists of this drama did not understand was that the liberty the system was ready to grant had to be the result of a struggle and not a heavenly gift. Excited by the fake de-Stalinization staged by the party, Romanian intellectuals capitulated before even starting the fight. Editorials in the *Gazeta Literară* (Literary Gazette) and *Viața Românească* (Romanian Life) from that period describe exactly this strategy of deliberate ethical submission and political abdication. Following the directions given by the ideological commissars, the representatives of the official intellectual elite anathematized the “libertarian spirit,” the “revisionist” temptation, and other such petit bourgeois “hallucinations.” The year 1956, when it was for the first time possible to challenge the Leninist order directly and join the international trend toward a renewal of radical-democratic ideals, was abortive for postwar Romanian culture. It was what the French call *un moment manqué*, a missed opportunity. Instead of realizing that by toeing the party directives and avoiding any heretic propensity, they placed themselves outside the historical mainstream, Romanian intellectuals congratulated themselves on their unsurpassed political acumen.

With the Stalinist monolith disintegrating, Stalin’s heirs wavered. The Titoist model was no longer seen as treason to socialism. Change was a historical possibility, not just a utopian dream. What Romanian

intellectuals failed to understand was that the modest liberties granted in 1956 were not the result of the ideological guardians' benevolence but of their fear. This was precisely the reason why, once the climax of the "thaw" had passed, a new wave of repression was unleashed, and the worst hit were precisely the intellectuals. If there was still need for a bitter lesson regarding the deceptive ethics of Romanian communism, this was given after 1958, when many prominent intellectuals were put on trial.³²

The Jar case, the purging of the Writer's Union, the antirevisionist fulminations of the Romanian literary press, and the furious diatribes of Mihai Beniuc against the humanist manifestos of the Hungarian and Polish intellectuals illustrate the specificity of the Romanian political elite's reaction to the de-Stalinization process going on in the other communist states. The denunciation of the poet Nicolae Labiş at the Young Writers Congress and the perfidious attack of Mihai Beniuc, stage-managed by Leonte Răutu, were obviously seen as warnings to calm radical passions.³³ However, unlike in Hungary or Poland, what the Romanian intellectuals did not have in 1956 was the support of a reform-oriented faction at the top of the party bureaucracy. While the Hungarians could count on Imre Nagy and his comrades and the Poles on Władysław Gomułka and his group, the few potentially heretical writers in Romania lacked any such protectors. Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu had been killed in April 1954, and Miron Constantinescu was too isolated within the leadership of the RWP to become the promoter of an anti-Stalinist campaign. All he could do was test the water and launch a few trial balloons, minor disagreements with Gheorghiu-Dej that were later treated as terrible crimes against the party's leading role. There was some ferment within the party old guard, but no collective efforts ever succeeded in fundamentally jeopardizing the Stalinists' grip on power.

The Effects of the Hungarian Revolution

The wind of liberty of 1956, the Hungarian revolution, and struggle for liberalization in Poland exasperated Stalin's Eastern European disciples, including Gheorghiu-Dej and his henchmen. In October 1956, clinging desperately to power, Gheorghiu-Dej tried to consolidate his prestige by normalizing and enhancing relations with Tito's Yugoslavia. Just like the Hungarian Stalinist Ernő Gerő, Mátyás Rákosi's successor, Gheorghiu-Dej thought that he could convince the Yugoslav leadership of his good

intentions. The same man who had delivered the infamous report entitled "The Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the Hands of Assassins and Spies" at the Cominform's 1949 meeting was not embarrassed to go begging those whom he had affronted for forgiveness.

The Hungarian revolution started with a mass demonstration in Budapest on October 23, 1956. The Romanian party leadership, including Gheorghiu-Dej, was then in Yugoslavia and left for Bucharest on October 28. Until their return, politburo meetings were presided over by Gheorghe Apostol, and the only significant measures taken consisted of reinforcing Romania's border with Hungary and sending some important leaders to the counties in Transylvania that had significant Hungarian minorities, such as Cluj, where the delegate was Miron Constantinescu.³⁴ Immediately after Gheorghiu-Dej's return from Yugoslavia, the Romanian communist leaders hastened to avoid any contamination by the spirit of the Hungarian uprising. Among other things, a high command, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Emil Bodnăraş and also including Minister of the Interior Alexandru Drăghici, Minister of the Armed Forces Leontin Sălăjan, and CC Secretary Nicolae Ceauşescu, was established, which was authorized to take all measures necessary and could order the security forces to open fire if it saw fit.³⁵ At the same time, Soviet troops were massed on the Romanian-Hungarian border, ready for a gigantic police-type action. The fear of the Romanian leadership was not territorial irredentism but the Marxist revisionism of the new Hungarian leadership.³⁶ The main danger for Gheorghiu-Dej was, not a most unlikely Hungarian attempt to redraw the border with Romania by use of military force, but rather the contagious effect of the pluralistic experiment undertaken by the Budapest reformers. With cynical opportunism, the Gheorghiu-Dej regime initially established contacts with the legal government of Imre Nagy, but then in early November, after Moscow intervened for a second time in Budapest, proclaimed its solidarity with János Kádár's puppet government.³⁷

As he mentioned on various occasions, Gheorghiu-Dej secretly visited Budapest immediately after the second Soviet intervention, accompanied by the Hungarian-speaking poet Mihai Beniuc and Valter Roman, a Comintern veteran and director of the party publishing house. The latter, a kind of RWP Hungarian-affairs expert, had been sent to Budapest on October 25 and spent several days there in order to assess the course of events. His reports, in which lynching by the revolutionaries of party apparatchiks and secret police officers were depicted in graphic detail, convinced the Romanian politburo that a similar mass

uprising in Romania had to be prevented at any costs. For the Romanian Stalinists, the crushing of the Hungarian revolution was a mean source of satisfaction; they were jubilant at the thought that their dogmatic theses had been “confirmed” by developments in Romania’s neighbor—as well as by the fact that nobody would now ask them to perform a humiliating self-critique. Experts in social and political diversions, the Romanian leaders used an embarrassing proletarian demagoguery to suggest to the working class that democratization could only be a slogan invented by the “class enemy” and the “imperialist intelligence services.”

After the uprising had been put down by Soviet troops, the Romanian Stalinists supported the Soviet and Hungarian security forces’ use of terror against the revolutionaries. On November 21, 1956, a delegation at the highest level, headed by Gheorghiu-Dej and Bodnăraș, went to Budapest to discuss what needed to be done to completely crush the revolutionary spirit persisting in Hungary with Kádár. The propaganda apparatus went out of its way to portray the Hungarian uprising as a “bourgeois counterrevolution” meant to restore private property in industry, banks, and land. In the Romanian media, there was no mention of the workers’ councils that were the basis of the Hungarian revolutionary regime or of the recovery of Hungary’s national dignity by breaking with the Warsaw Pact and proclaiming neutrality.

In Romania, those most sensitive to the Hungarian Revolution’s message and most excited about the progress of antitotalitarianism in the communist bloc were the students in large university centers such as Bucharest, Cluj, and Timișoara—especially those studying philosophy, history, language, and literature. For a moment, the historical detour introduced by the communist revolution seemed to have been reversed; the image of that “sober and more dignified cemetery” of which Nicolae Labiș had spoken (in one of his most celebrated and quoted poems, “The Murdered Albatross”), outraging the ideological master Leonte Răutu, seemed possible: the students dreamed of a de-Russified, democratic, and sovereign Romania, which for the communist leaders of the time equated with a counterrevolutionary program. It is noteworthy that on November 8, 1956, Khrushchev himself spoke of what he called “unhealthy states of spirit” among Romanian students and praised the quick action of the RWP leadership to eliminate any attempt at liberalization.³⁸ It is thus legitimate to assume that tactical perspicacity and tenacious opposition to revisionist tendencies in the fall of 1956 allowed Gheorghiu-Dej to consolidate his dwindling prestige within the Soviet

bloc after the Twentieth Congress. After the crushing of the Hungarian revolution, Dej seemed a trustworthy comrade to the most conservative among the Kremlin leaders.

In the spring of 1956, terrified by the revolutionary wave in Hungary, the Gheorghiu-Dej regime launched a campaign to intimidate the Transylvanian Hungarian intelligentsia and deployed its gigantic police force to suppress any freedom of thought on its part. After November 1956, numerous writers, philosophers, journalists, and other Hungarian intellectuals were interrogated by the Securitate and jailed for many years for having had the courage to hail Imre Nagy's program.³⁹ Romanian students in Bucharest, Iași, Cluj, and Timișoara who had reacted enthusiastically to the upheaval in Hungary and tried to start a similar movement were no less exposed to Stalinist persecution: hundreds of them were taken from auditoriums and dormitories to the horror of their terrified classmates. Although Romanian intellectuals were unable to organize themselves into a coherent opposition, and the student revolts were no more than spontaneous reactions, the regime was all too conscious of the deadly danger to its supremacy. Anti-intellectualism seems to be a perennial characteristic of the communist strategy; for communists nothing is more dangerous, more subversive, and eventually more odious, than freedom of imagination and the claim to the right to critical thinking and creative doubt.

A new wave of repression again affected the highest ranks of the party. As noted, Miron Constantinescu, the head of the state planning committee, was appointed minister of education on November 18, 1956, a fall in status. In June 1957, Constantinescu was accused of many sins of the Stalinist epoch and, through a typically Stalinist stroke, Gheorghiu-Dej associated him with one of the most compromised and hated Stalinist personalities, Iosif Chișinevschi, removing both from their posts. In 1958–59, thousands of party members again experienced the terror they had felt in the Stalin years. At Gheorghiu-Dej's order, the party control committee, headed by Dumitru Coliu and Ion Vințe (Vincze Janos), launched a new wave of inquisitorial interrogations, which encouraged denunciations. People who had thought that Stalinism was dead in 1956 faced it once again in the years after the Hungarian revolution.

At the same time, the Romanian communists collaborated vigorously in persecuting the Hungarian revolutionaries. After first according political asylum to the Nagy government, the Gheorghiu-Dej politburo became an accomplice of the murderers of the Hungarian revolutionary

leaders by organizing their extradition to Budapest, then occupied by Soviet troops. While the Hungarian revolutionary leaders were under house arrest in Otopeni and Snagov, on the residential outskirts of Bucharest, a number of Romanian party members, including Nicolae Goldberger, Valter Roman, and Iosif Ardeleanu, sought to squeeze confessions from them. Initially, Borilă and Bodnăraș visited members of the Nagy government held in Snagov. Later, because of his personal connections with Nagy (going back to their Moscow émigré years), Valter Roman, the Hungarian-speaking former head of the Comintern-sponsored broadcasting station “România liberă,” became the permanent contact between the Romanians (and their Soviet patrons) and the former Hungarian premier.⁴⁰ In the meantime, pressures from the Kádár regime intensified to convince the Romanians that the Nagy group were traitors and should be treated accordingly. Kádár’s emissary Gyula Kállay visited Bucharest in 1957 and even complained about the “royal treatment” Nagy and his friends were receiving from the Romanian comrades. This came to an end when Nagy and his colleagues were transported back to Hungary, where a pseudo-trial took place that led to the execution of the former prime minister and several of his associates in June 1958.

The military defeat of the Hungarian uprising and the collaboration with the Soviet secret police in the investigations that led to the mock trial in 1958 are episodes ignored by the official history of the Romanian communism. However, the Romanian leaders benefited directly from the Hungarian tragedy, which they used as an argument for tightening totalitarian control over the country. For the Romanian Stalinist nomenclatura, humanist-democratic ideas, the program of the pluralist government of Imre Nagy, were equivalent to a counterrevolutionary manifesto. The logic of bureaucratic survival functioned with terrifying efficiency in the years after the Hungarian revolution, guaranteeing the continuity of Romanian communism under the guise of intrinsic hostility to any democratic renewal of the old-fashioned Stalinist structures. As noted earlier, there was a tremendous difference between the general revolt in Hungary in October–November 1956 and short-lived protests in a ruthlessly Stalinized Romania. The traditions of Hungarian communism were dramatically different from those of the Romanian “brotherly party.” Hungarian revisionist Marxists had a “usable past,” an impressive pre-Stalinist and even anti-Stalinist history that played a major role in Imre Nagy’s efforts to transcend Stalinism and reconcile socialism and democracy: a failed revolution in 1919; political exile in Austria, Ger-

many, and the USSR; a degree of openness, especially up to the 1930s, to political-philosophical thought, as represented by the Hegelian-Marxist dialectical essays of György Lukács and some of his students; and a certain tolerance of the experiments of the literary and artistic avant-garde had left their imprint on the Hungarian Communist Party. There was all too little of this kind that could be invoked by the few would-be antitotalitarian thinkers in Romania.

The June–July 1957 Plenum

The Hungarian uprising and the Polish crisis in the autumn of 1956 placed Gheorghiu-Dej in an advantageous position for behind-the-scenes confrontations with the Khrushchev leadership. These events also reinforced his fear of “anarchic-liberal” developments in Romania. The plenum of the central committee of the RWP held on June 28–29 and July 1–3, 1957, played a crucial role in the restructuring of party’s politburo and the expulsion of the Chişinevschi–Constantinescu “factionalist group.” According to the official version, it was the factionalists’ intention to hamper the healthy course embarked on by the party. In reality, as already noted, no such “group” existed: Gheorghiu-Dej had simply invented it for propagandist purposes. The time frame is the key to this episode, since in fact the purge dealt with the immediate impact on the unity of the RWP ruling team of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. Simply put, the June 1957 plenum was Dej’s response to minimal, but real, attempts by two of his associates to engage in moderate de-Stalinization in the aftermath of Khrushchev’s secret speech. The temporary and uneasy alliance between Chişinevschi and Constantinescu in the spring of 1956 had been dictated by pragmatic considerations. At that time, they believed that Gheorghiu-Dej was so compromised by the revelation of Stalinist abuses that he should be removed from power.

Probably encouraged by Khrushchev, Chişinevschi and Constantinescu tried to persuade other members of the politburo to join them in toppling Gheorghiu-Dej by majority vote. Although they were successful in drawing Pîrvulescu, the president of the party control commission, into the conspiracy, they did not manage to win over Alexandru Moghioroş, who informed Gheorghiu-Dej about the plot. Gheorghiu-Dej’s anti-intellectualism may explain the particular bitterness and violence of the purge that followed the internal party debates in 1956. Constantinescu had, no doubt, been a committed Stalinist, but he had

concluded from the Twentieth CPSU Congress that Gheorghiu-Dej could be replaced by a collective leadership that would undertake a “regeneration of the socialist system in Romania.” Gheorghiu-Dej used Constantinescu’s uninspired alliance with Chişinevschi—by far the most detested party leader—as an argument against the “group.” The two communist leaders were actually very different not only in their intellectual backgrounds but in the way they understood the policy promoted by Moscow and the significance they attributed to de-Stalinization.

Iosif Chişinevschi, who was born Iosif Roitman in Bessarabia in 1905 but later adopted his wife’s family name, was a pillar of Soviet influence in the Romanian Communist Party. Chişinevschi had played a leading role in the Bolshevization and then Stalinization of the RCP in the underground years. Unlike Leonte Răutu, his main disciple after August 23, 1944, Chişinevschi was self-taught: born into a poor family, he became involved in the communist movement in his early youth and did not finish high school. However, in his case, the cultural void was compensated for by a confidence in the educative virtues of the clandestine communist sect. Ignoring and detesting real intellectual problems, unaware of the theoretical debates of the Marxist Left, Chişinevschi venerated the Stalinist ideological surrogate. The book that influenced him most was Stalin’s *Problems of Leninism*, an embarrassing catechism meant to offer rapid, easy-to-understand solutions to some of the most difficult issues in the theory of revolution. Later on, after the publication of the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) Short Course*, a masterpiece of the most outrageous falsification of the past, Chişinevschi saw no need for anything else in the field of Leninist doctrine. Romanian culture and the drama of Romania’s past were of no interest to him.

Chişinevschi knew nothing of the real life of the Romanian proletariat. A member of the RCP since 1928, he was totally uninterested in the national context and became a devoted clerk of the Comintern, a “professional revolutionary” on the payroll of the international center of Soviet expansion, just as Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca were. Arrested in 1928, Chişinevschi went through the experience of prison, which was indispensable for ascension in the communist hierarchy. After being released in 1930, he went to the USSR, where he attended the Fifth Congress of the RCP, held in Moscow in 1931, and was adroit enough to convince the Comintern chiefs that they could count on him in future struggles within the tiny Romanian party. Béla Kun and Dmitri Manuilski, the Comintern delegates at this congress, accordingly sponsored

Chişinevschi's election to the RCP's central committee. While in the USSR, Chişinevschi also attended the Comintern's Leninist school—his only ideological training. Unlike Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, and Teohari Georgescu, Chişinevschi had personal connections in the Soviet secret police, as an agent of which he infiltrated upper ranks of the Romanian communist hierarchy.

Armed with directions from Moscow, Chişinevschi came back to Romania and took part in the reorganization of the propaganda nucleus (the Agitprop Department). He also proved a maestro of manipulation and intrigue, rising quickly to the top of the communist pyramid. Arrested again in 1933, then liberated in 1936, he was integrated into the secretariat of the central committee and became the head of the party organization in Bucharest. In these years, in the murky territory of communist conspiracy, the collaboration between Chişinevschi and those who would later help him demolish Romanian culture was established. Some were recruited in Doftana, others outside prison, but the criteria of selection were the same: thirst for power and lack of education. Among those who were ignorant of the Romanian culture, but on whom Chişinevschi would rely in the propaganda section of the party after 1944, were Leonte Răutu, Sorin Toma, Alexandru Buican, Nicolae Moraru, and Ofelia Manole. To these names should be added those of the fanatical Mihail Roller; the careerist Eduard Mezincescu; and Constanţa Crăciun and George Macovescu, a pair of pseudo-romantics amenable to any compromise.

In 1940, Chişinevschi was reconfirmed as a member of the central committee, from which position he cautiously navigated between the Gheorghiu-Dej faction and that of Ştefan Foriş, playing a crucial role in the outcome of this party drama. Unlike other Jewish members of the central committee, he was not deported to Transnistria and remained in the Caranşebes jail and Tîrgu-Jiu prison camp, where, particularly after 1942, he became one of Gheorghiu-Dej's closest partisans. Convinced that the final victory belonged to Gheorghiu-Dej, Chişinevschi participated in the staging of a plot that resulted in the elimination and assassination of Ştefan Foriş. After August 23, 1944, he became a member of the politburo and played a crucial role in the campaign against the intelligentsia that went along with the Russification of Romanian culture. In 1945, Chişinevschi published several articles and brochures under the pen name Stănculescu. Jesuitical and opportunistic, infinitely subservient to his superiors, and menacing, vindictive, and despotic toward his subordinates, he was the perfect Stalinist.

Chişinevschi and his wife Liuba, also a member of the central committee, as well as a vice president of both the party control committee and the Grand National Assembly and one of Gheorghe Apostol's deputies at the central trade union council, controlled many spheres of social and political life. Chişinevschi participated in all the important meetings with Soviet representatives and delegates from other Eastern European countries. Not only was he responsible for the indoctrination of the Romanian people, he also coordinated the international relations of the RWP and supervised cadre policy. However, Stalin's death and the "thaw" in the USSR led this very skillful opportunist to jump into different boat.

For Chişinevschi, one's attitude toward the USSR was the most important criterion of Leninist orthodoxy. Once the Soviet leaders decided to denounce Stalin, Chişinevschi followed the new line with the same zeal he had once applied Stalin's directives. His own role in Pătrăşcanu's murder and his very close friendship with Dej no longer mattered: the Soviet Union had changed course, so this veteran Comintern and Cominform hack did likewise. Immediately after the Twentieth Congress, he started to spread insidious rumors about Gheorghiu-Dej with a view to covering up his own criminal past. After March 1956, in spite of his renewed declarations of faith to Gheorghiu-Dej, there was no chance of Chişinevschi's political survival; Gheorghiu-Dej surpassed him in ability and duplicity. In June 1957, he was excluded from the politburo, and the Third Congress of the RWP in 1960 did not reelect him to the central committee. At the November–December 1961 plenum, none of his former comrades hesitated to humiliate Chişinevschi just as cruelly as he had once humiliated others in the name of the cause: Gheorghiu-Dej, Ceauşescu, Maurer, Răutu, Borilă, Moghioroş, Sencovici, and Valter Roman all condemned the man they had once celebrated as the "brain of the party," now reduced to being merely the director of the "Casa Scînteii" printing office.⁴¹ When he died in 1963, not even the shortest obituary was published. In April 1968, Nicolae Ceauşescu took special pleasure in denouncing him once again as responsible, along with Gheorghiu-Dej and Drăghici, for Pătrăşcanu's judicial murder.

The other member of the central committee who confronted Gheorghiu-Dej was Miron Constantinescu, one of the very few authentic intellectuals accepted in the hegemonic group of Romanian communism. Born in 1917, Constantinescu had acquired a passion for history in general, and for the cultural history of Transylvania in particular, while at school in Arad, an important Transylvanian city. Later, as a student of lit-

erature and philosophy at Bucharest University in the 1930s, he had come into direct contact with the cultural elite of the day and audited the lectures of P. P. Negulescu, Mircea Florian, Tudor Vianu, and especially Dimitrie Gusti, who had the greatest influence on him (Gusti's sociology seminar was also attended by H. H. Stahl, Traian Herseni, and Mircea Vulcănescu).⁴² Ideological differences did not then exclude mutual respect; people were interested in the opposite point of view, and the literature and philosophy faculty included professors with very different political and cultural loyalties: Nae Ionescu and Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, Mircea Eliade and H. H. Stahl, Traian Herseni and Mihail Ralea.

In 1935, convinced that the communists were the core of resistance to fascism, Constantinescu joined the underground Communist Youth Union (UTC). After a year, when this organization was dissolved on the pretext of purging of real and potential "agents," he was among the very few former members who enrolled in the Communist Party. Along with Grigore Preoteasa, Mihail Dragomirescu, Gheorghe Rădulescu, Constanța Crăciun, Petre Năvodaru, Ilie Zaharia, and Silvian Iosifescu, Constantinescu belonged to the radical nucleus of the Romanian leftist students, and when the politburo decided to reorganize the UTC in 1938, he was the leader of the group charged with this mission. Nicolae Ceaușescu's historiographers would later attribute this role, not to Constantinescu, but to Ceaușescu himself, and at the central committee plenum in November–December 1961, the latter asserted that Constantinescu lacked authentic Marxist political training. It is almost comical that one of the very few Romanian intellectuals with a solid Marxist background should have been indicted by Ceaușescu, an ideological pauper, for having as a young student gone into a monastery to study Karl Marx's *Capital*.⁴³

Constantinescu spent the war years imprisoned in the Țirgu-Jiu camp for communist activity. In this period, together with Athanasie Joja, he played the role of the intellectual in the group dominated by Gheorghiu-Dej and became one of the future general secretary's indispensable collaborators. The psychological relationship between Constantinescu and Gheorghiu-Dej was extremely complicated and controversial; very often it was influenced by the former's fascination with Ana Pauker or the ability of Chișinevschi to manipulate his well-known self-admiration. After August 23, 1944, Constantinescu became the youngest member of the politburo and editor in chief of the communist daily newspaper *Scînteia*. As president of the state committee for central planning

between 1949 and 1955, Constantinescu also accumulated a great deal of experience in economics, which made him think that he was an economist. As we saw in the previous chapter, Constantinescu was one of those who orchestrated and unmasked the so-called right-wing deviation, and he contributed substantially to the ideological documentation for the March and May–June 1952 CC plenums. Nevertheless, at the CC plenum in November–December 1961, he was accused of being Ana Pauker’s puppet. In fact, he was no more devoted to her than Alexandru Moghioroș or Emil Bodnăraș, and unlike them, Constantinescu believed in his own political destiny.

Constantinescu saw the chance of a lifetime in the de-Stalinization process started by Khrushchev, and after 1954, he began to cultivate his image as a fighter for liberalization in the party intensely. He initiated a series of meetings with some of the outstanding intellectuals of the inter-war period, especially after he was appointed minister of education and culture on November 18, 1956.⁴⁴ No less significant was his meeting in February 1956 in Moscow with the leader of Italian communism, Palmiro Togliatti, whose heretical opinions were disclosed in the following months. Associated with liberalizing tendencies in the party and caught in the snares of Gheorghiu-Dej and Răutu, Constantinescu was ousted from the politburo at the June plenum in 1957 along with Chișinevschi for their “attempt to orient the party toward the liberalist and revisionist anarchy.” In June 1958, Constantinescu was made a scapegoat for Gheorghiu-Dej’s final purge and politically and culturally marginalized. He was subsequently a lecturer first at the Institute for Specialized Teaching Staff and then at the Academy’s History Institute under Andrei Oțetea, a well-known historian rehabilitated after the decline of Mihail Roller. After 1965, in a struggle with the phantom legacy of Gheorghiu-Dej, Nicolae Ceaușescu availed himself of Constantinescu’s services. He was again a member of the nomenklatura, first as deputy minister, then as minister of education, secretary of the central committee, candidate member of the political executive committee, and, toward the end of his life, president of the Grand National Assembly.

Constantinescu also had to endure a painful family life: early in the 1950s, his son Horia died of appendicitis; in 1968, his wife, Sulamita Bloch-Constantinescu, an old communist too, was killed by her own daughter; and finally, another son, also named Horia, died of frostbite during a trip to the Bucegi Mountains. Although without any special value, Constantinescu’s work is relevant because it relaunched sociology as a discipline in Romania after 1965. Thirsty for power, solemn, monu-

mental, and ritualistic, he had neither the profundity of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu nor the ethical candor of the Marxist philosopher Tudor Bugnariu, Lucian Blaga's son-in-law. Nevertheless, he supported some young researchers who tried in the 1970s to rehabilitate social inquiry and eschew the imperatives of an increasingly virulent Stalinism.

To return to the plenum in which Constantinescu and Chișinevschi were "unmasked," it is interesting to note that it was held in two separate sessions, June 28–29 and July 1–3. Around the same time, on July 4, the purge of the "antiparty group" of Malenkov, Kaganovich, Molotov, and Shepilov, who opposed Khrushchev's policies, was announced in Moscow. It is not clear yet whether the purges in the RWP were linked to the purges in the CPSU. Ghiță Ionescu observes in this respect: "The Romanian purge, which could only have been linked with the Russian one if news of the Russian purge had leaked out before the *Pravda* announcement of July 4, may well have represented an attempt to take more positive action on de-Stalinization, but there may also have been a special need to get rid of these two powerful figures, and in particular Miron Constantinescu."⁴⁵

As shown before, Gheorghiu-Dej, who personally was threatened by Khrushchev's new line at the Twentieth CPSU Congress, skillfully temporized over the debates in the RWP, so that this plenum took place almost a year and five months after the Twentieth Congress, and a year and a half after the Second Congress of the RWP. Leonte Răutu explained the delay to the plenum in terms of the necessity of avoiding "improvised judgments." In fact, the delay was crucial for Gheorghiu-Dej's political survival. Served wonderfully by the 1956 events in Poland and Hungary, the Romanian communist hierarchy paid lip service to the "practical teachings of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU," displayed a hypocritical respect for the reformist course initiated by Khrushchev, and, finally, retreated to conservative and dogmatic positions around their leader, Gheorghiu-Dej.

One of the most interesting speeches delivered to the plenum was that of Ceaușescu, who proved to be not only a loyal disciple of Gheorghiu-Dej but also an unreformed Stalinist. Ceaușescu's speech thus deserves a closer analysis, since it provides the crucial elements for an in-depth understanding of his mind-set in relation to Stalin and Stalinism. Although he conceded that Stalin had made some mistakes, Stalin's merits had to be recognized and his works were worth studying, Ceaușescu said. "In fact, we did not do as did others, who threw Stalin's works out of their houses," he added bluntly.⁴⁶ This was a direct refer-

ence to Constantinescu, who had expressed doubts about many of Stalin's theses. However, Ceaușescu was not alone in praising Stalin's legacy: both Răutu and Moghioroș referred in their speeches to conversations they had had with workers and old-time members of the party respectively, who had allegedly asked them not to exaggerate Stalin's mistakes.⁴⁷ Ceaușescu justified Gheorghiu-Dej's retaliation against Chișinevschi and Constantinescu by saying that they had constituted antiparty elements who exaggerated the party's shortcomings, misrepresented its activity and its leadership, cited things out of context, and tried to depict Gheorghiu-Dej as solely responsible for the terror unleashed in the party and the country after the communist takeover.⁴⁸

The crucial elements of Ceaușescu's party politics can be identified in his 1957 speech, and it is no exaggeration to say that these remained constants of his political mind-set until his final hours in power, in December 1989: preoccupation with the unity and leading role of the party; fear of factionalism; rejection of liberalization; fascination with Stalin; contempt for intellectuals; and no mercy for "petit bourgeois elements" that infiltrated the party and attacked it from within. In fact, the last element epitomized Ceaușescu's disgust for dialogue and free exchange of ideas: "We know comrades, what Stalin said on this problem, that all these little petit bourgeois groups penetrate the party in a way or another and introduce the sentiment of vacillation, the opportunism, the mistrust that leads to factionalism, the source of party's undermining. . . . Therefore, the struggle against these elements represents the condition that ensures the success of the struggle against imperialism."⁴⁹

Furthermore, in his analysis of the 1956 events in Hungary and their influence on Romania, Ceaușescu pointed out that there were "negative manifestations" among students in Timișoara, Cluj, and the Hungarian Autonomous Region, as well as, on a smaller scale, in Bucharest, and stressed that there were serious shortcomings to the "patriotic education" of the younger generation. More important, Ceaușescu said that the influence of the 1956 Hungarian uprising had been felt in Transylvania, where, prior to October 23, 1956, "excursionists" (i.e., Hungarian revolutionaries on mission) had sought to persuade Romanian students and intellectuals to follow the Hungarian path. Ceaușescu would react similarly when the population of Timișoara rose against his rule in December 1989.

The election of Grigore Preoteasa, one of the few party intellectuals, as central committee secretary and candidate politburo member at the June 1957 plenum is noteworthy. Preoteasa, who had a degree in litera-

ture and philosophy, had spent several years as a political prisoner in the Tîrgu-Jiu camp, from which he escaped with his then good friend Nicolae Ceaușescu.⁵⁰ After the war, he worked as editor in chief of *România Liberă*, then as Ana Pauker's deputy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Gheorghiu-Dej liked him personally, because Preoteasa's father had been a worker at Grivița Railroad Workshops (Gheorghiu-Dej's original fiefdom). After 1955, Preoteasa demonstrated total loyalty to Gheorghiu-Dej, in spite of his earlier admiration for Pauker, and he was appointed Romania's minister of foreign affairs (he headed the Romanian delegation to the United Nations in 1955, after the country's admission into this world forum). Elected to the central committee in December 1955 at the Second RWP Congress, Preoteasa was clearly bound to climb the party's hierarchical ladder. His promotion in 1957 was an extraordinary leap in his career: he became the new head of the party's ideological directorate, with Răutu moving to international affairs. In November 1957, however, Preoteasa died in a plane crash at Vnukovo airport in Moscow.⁵¹ Whether Gheorghiu-Dej truly intended to groom him as a successor is hard to know: what is sure is that both Ceaușescu and Răutu (survivors of the same plane crash) thus found themselves rid of a very dangerous rival and a mounting star in the party leadership.⁵²

The June 1958 Plenum

The purge of the so-called Chișinevschi–Constantinescu group carried out by the 1957 plenum of the RWP was followed by a purge of a group of old-time party members in the summer of the following year. The June 9–13 plenum in 1958 made use of a scenario similar to that employed by the 1957 plenum in inventing the “Chișinevschi–Constantinescu group” to invent the so-called Doncea group. In his speech to the plenum, Nicolae Ceaușescu “unmasked” Constantin Doncea, Grigore Răceanu, Ovidiu Șandru, Eugen Genad, Heinrich Genad, Ion Drancă, Constantin Moflic, Ștefan Pavel, Vasile Bîgu, Vasile Negoită, and Iacob Coțoveanu as members of the alleged group. Doncea and Bîgu had been among the party members who organized the 1933 strikes at the Grivița railroad repair shops.

At the 1958 plenum, Gheorghiu-Dej and Vasilichi (supported among others by Vasile Vilcu, Simion Bughici, Mihai Burcă, Ștefan Voicu, Barbu Zaharescu, Ofelia Manole, and even Răceanu's wife, Ileana Răceanu),⁵³ charged Constantin Doncea and the rest of antiparty activi-

ties, factionalism, revisionism, and “anarchical conceptions.” Dumitru Petrescu, the other important organizer of the Grivița strikes besides Doncea, had already been accused of antiparty attitudes by a special commission appointed in June 1955 to investigate the nature of discussions among some party members outside the official meetings. The commission recommended Petrescu’s dismissal from vice premiership and from the central committee, as well as his punishment as a party member with the highest sanction short of complete expulsion.⁵⁴

Again, as in the case of the 1957 plenum, it was Ceaușescu who delivered the speech that contained the main accusations against Doncea and the other old-timers. In spite of Ceaușescu’s efforts to convey the image of a well-organized antiparty faction, reading between the lines, what the “group” of old-timers were guilty of was criticizing the RWP’s leadership for abandoning the communist ideals of the clandestine movement, for its estrangement from the masses, and for the marginalization of veteran party members from the clandestine period. In his contribution to the proceedings, Răutu provided another main reason of the purge: Doncea, Răceanu, and the other old-timers had advocated a revisionist turn by the party and expressed their sympathy for Yugoslav-style communism.⁵⁵

The June 1958 plenum showed that no real debating of the party line would be permitted and gave Gheorghiu-Dej and his comrades full control of the party. Adamantly opposed to economic reform or any ideological relaxation, the Dejites were, however, haunted by the specter of a mass uprising like that in Hungary, and Gheorghiu-Dej sought as a precaution to tighten his control even further by purging the party yet again. In his capacity as secretary of the central committee responsible for cadre policy, Ceaușescu once again demonstrated his loyalty by organizing a massive purge of party members who had voiced doubts about Gheorghiu-Dej’s policies in 1956–57, which resulted in tens of thousands of expulsions from the party and coincided with vicious anti-intellectual and antisemitic campaigns. Ceaușescu was also responsible for youth organizations, and he worked closely with both Minister of the Interior Alexandru Drăghici and the leaders of the UTC and the Union of Romanian Students’ Associations (Virgil Trofin, Ion Iliescu, Ștefan Andrei, Cornel Burtică, Cornel Pacoste, Ștefan Bârlea, and Mircea Angelescu) to “restore order” in the universities. Drăghici’s Securitate lashed out at rebellious students in Timișoara, Cluj, Tîrgu-Mureș, Bucharest, and Iași, the most radical of whom were jailed after sham trials.

After the Hungarian revolution, Gheorghiu-Dej's leadership attempted to frighten the party and the population into believing that any challenge to Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy or even advocacy of modestly liberal policies would bring about Soviet reprisals. Gheorghiu-Dej criticized the Hungarian revolution, expressed his support for the Soviet military intervention, and displayed absolute loyalty toward Soviet Union. Consequently, in July 1958, Khrushchev made the unexpected decision to withdraw the Soviet troops stationed in Romania.⁵⁶ Gheorghiu-Dej and his supporters demonstrated remarkable acumen in outsmarting Khrushchev by simulating a unique form of de-Stalinization, playing for time in order to fortify their own control over the party and the country.

With Khrushchev at the peak of his international and domestic authority after the launching of Russia's sputnik in 1957, which astonished the whole world, and a widely publicized trip to the United States in 1959, the Romanian leaders still obediently followed the Soviet line within world communism. Domestically, the post-1958 repressions ensured Gheorghiu-Dej of widespread conformity among the intelligentsia. There were indications of an increased living standard for the population, the industrial base was expanding, and the collectivization campaigns were continuing. The main tasks were summed up as "completing the building of the material and technical base of the socialist formation." Romania entered the new decade as an apparently trustworthy Soviet ally, run by a cohesive oligarchy tightly united around a leader for whom personal power prevailed over any moral considerations. After Moscow launched a new anti-Stalin campaign in 1961, however, Gheorghiu-Dej felt his authority had become strong enough: he challenged and surprised the Kremlin, his own party, and the West by deciding to precipitate a bitter divorce from the USSR. In less than five years, Romania, once the Soviet Union's most loyal satellite, became a maverick, even irritating, ally.

CHAPTER 6

Opposing Khrushchevism

*Gheorghiu-Dej and the Emergence
of National Communism, 1960–1965*

This organizational milieu is, in particular, favorable for the emergence in leadership positions of individuals of a type that may be called the “warfare personality.”

Robert C. Tucker, *The Soviet Political Mind*

Worried by Khrushchev’s “second thaw,” the Dejites tried to resist de-Stalinization by devising a nationalist strategy to entice the intelligentsia and bridge the gap between the party elite and the population. In fact, the Romanian communist leadership proved to be extremely successful in constructing a platform for anti-de-Stalinization around the concepts of industrialization, autonomy, sovereignty, and national pride. The point for Gheorghiu-Dej was to maintain close relations with the Soviet leaders without emulating their efforts to demolish Stalin’s myth. The struggle against the “personality cult” amounted for the Romanians to emphasizing their impeccable internationalist credentials while fostering the image of the leading party nucleus as a stronghold of Leninist orthodoxy. The two main events that took place in the RWP at the beginning of the 1960s, its Third Congress (June 20–28, 1960) and the central committee plenum (November 30–December 5, 1961), emphasized rapid industrialization to create mass support for the party and strengthen the Dej team’s “antihegemonic” patriotic claims. This emphasis on the leaders’ commitment to national interests became a key element of party’s strategy for wooing both the intelligentsia and the masses.

Gheorghiu-Dej made sure at the outset that this emerging domestic line would not irritate the Kremlin. In major international communist conferences and symposia, Romanian delegates sounded more pro-Soviet than their Hungarian and Polish peers. When, in the summer of 1958, under Chinese pressure, Moscow criticized the Yugoslav Communist League's new program as "revisionist," the Romanians completely endorsed the Kremlin's stance. At least officially, relations between the leaderships of the RWP and the CPSU had never been warmer. Based on documents from the RCP archives, it appears, however, that this was far from being the complete truth: on various occasions, Gheorghiu-Dej insisted in private discussions that his party had matured, and that relations between socialist countries should be governed by the principles of complete equality and national independence. At the same time, as the conflict between Moscow and the Albanian communists worsened, Dej lent his full support to Moscow. Implicitly, as he knew very well, this meant that Bucharest was ready to back the Kremlin in the imminent clash with the Chinese communists, the patrons of the Albanian leader Enver Hoxha. Moscow regarded the Romanian party as the most loyal and decided to use a Bucharest-based event in June 1960 as a dress rehearsal for an attack on Albania (and, obliquely, on Mao's party) at the world communist conference in November.

Nikita Khrushchev—first secretary of the CPSU's central committee and chairman of USSR's council of ministers—attended the Third RWP Congress in person, as did numerous other key figures in world communism. The congress proved that the RWP's leadership was united and that Gheorghiu-Dej was in full control of the party; moreover, it did not institute major changes in RCP policies. Ghiță Ionescu notes the dullness of the speeches and the absence of any examination of the dramatic events of the previous decade—the shock waves following CPSU's Twentieth Congress, the Hungarian revolution, the major intraparty purges of 1957–58, and the campaigns against and trials of Romanian intellectuals and students: "In the speeches at the Congress a broad series of successes were claimed on every front, but there were no references to any progress in de-Stalinization. Nor did the elections to the Central Committee and Politburo show any changes of personnel, which might herald any change in policy. The results seemed the same mixture as before, but rather more of it."¹

Nevertheless, the effects of the failed attempt of the so-called Chișinevschi–Constantinescu faction to question Gheorghiu-Dej's responsibility for misdeeds in the Stalinist's period were felt once again: Con-

stantin Pîrvulescu, one of the party old-timers, lost his membership of the politburo and the central committee, as well as his position as chairman of the party control commission (he was replaced by the veteran Comintern hard-liner Dumitru Coliu). Clearly, Pîrvulescu's expulsion was related to his stance vis-à-vis the attempt by Chişinevschi and Constantinescu to unseat Gheorghiu-Dej, whose close friend Ion Gheorghe Maurer, then nominal head of state, took his place in the politburo. A year later, Maurer replaced the notoriously mediocre Chivu Stoica as chairman of the council of ministers, a position he held until his retirement in 1974.

The importance of the Third RWP Congress lies, however, in the launching of a long-term economic program (extending to the year 1965) aimed at the sweeping industrialization of the country, with special emphasis on the metallurgical and machine-building industries. The congress discussed the results of the previous five-year plan and approved the draft of the new six-year plan. The key priority of both plans was the building of a huge steel plant in Galaţi. With regard to the agriculture, Gheorghiu-Dej reported to the congress that 680,000 peasant families, owning 1.8 million hectares, were not yet included into the socialist sector; however, he affirmed that the collectivization of Romanian agriculture would be completed in 1965. (The completion of the collectivization process would in fact be announced in April 1962.)

At the same time, the congress approved an unprecedented mass mobilization for the fulfillment of the economic objectives of the party.² For the Romanians, developing their own industrial potential in addition to the agricultural sector was a matter of dignity, and Romania's economic policy was the *casus belli* of the violent polemic between Bucharest and Moscow that came to a head in April 1964, when the Romanians published a bold "declaration" on the crisis in world communism, proudly defying the Soviet claim to supremacy in the bloc. The seeds of this conflict were still unnoted, however, by both the delegates to the Third Congress and foreign observers, who were convinced that relations between Moscow and Bucharest were closer than ever.

A most important event during the Congress was Khrushchev's surprise attack on the Albanian Workers' Party delegation, headed by the politburo member Hysni Kapo. As has been noted, the Romanian party congress served Khrushchev as a venue for a full-fledged onslaught on the Albanian Stalinist diehards and their Chinese protectors. During the Bucharest clash between Khrushchev and the Albanians, the Chinese delegate, Peng Chen, head of the Beijing party organization and a mem-

ber of the standing presidium of the politburo of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), expressed strong reservations regarding the Soviet attempt to excommunicate Albania on charges of Stalinist dogmatism, suppression of intraparty democracy, and refusal to join the other Leninist parties in the historic reconciliation with Tito's Yugoslavia. Asked by Khrushchev to preside over a closed meeting of foreign delegations, Gheorghiu-Dej warmly supported the Soviet onslaught on the Albanians. Later, after the relations between Bucharest and Moscow went sour, during the preparations of the 1964 declaration, Gheorghiu-Dej confessed to his associates that he had practically been compelled by Khrushchev to take this anti-Albanian (and implicitly anti-Chinese stand). This may have been more of a retroactive grudge against Khrushchev rather than the genuine attitude of the Romanians in 1960.

As a matter of fact, at the November 1960 world conference of eighty-one communist and workers' parties in Moscow, the Romanian delegates were among the most enthusiastic in supporting the Kremlin against the Albanians and the Chinese. For Gheorghiu-Dej, Hoxha's and Mao's attempt to disunite not only world communism but also individual communist parties amounted to a dangerous attack on the sacrosanct principles of socialist internationalism. Although personally inclined to disapprove of Khrushchev's unyielding criticism of Stalin, he nevertheless favored the Twentieth CPSU Congress's line on the vital need for peaceful coexistence between different social-political systems. No less important, Gheorghiu-Dej disliked the fierce Albanian-Chinese attacks on Tito's Yugoslavia. Having been Stalin's point man in the Cominform's anti-Tito campaigns of 1948-49, Gheorghiu-Dej did his utmost after 1956 to mend relations with Yugoslavia. True, he disapproved of the Titoist rhetoric of self-management and other theoretical innovations in the field of socialist construction, but this did not mean that he saw the Yugoslavs as either renegades or traitors. Had it not been for the worsening of personal relations between Gheorghiu-Dej and Khrushchev, directly linked to the new de-Stalinization wave after 1961 and the plans to transform the Council of Mutual Economic Aid (CMEA, also known as Comecon) into a supranational organism, it was hard to believe that the Romanian attitude to China or Albania would have significantly differed from that of other Soviet bloc countries.

Until early 1962, and clearly during 1960-61, Gheorghiu-Dej continued loyally to support Moscow's hegemonic status within the bloc and the international communist movement in every way. Romanian party apparatchiks continued to be sent to Moscow to attend courses at

CPSU party schools, the Russian language remained compulsory in high schools and colleges, and ritualistic references to the Soviet Union's decisive role in the country's "liberation from the fascist yoke" were made on every important occasion. In other words, the Third Congress signaled continuity with Romania's traditional pro-Soviet position within world communism and confirmed the will of the RWP leaders to stick to their highly orthodox vision of socialist construction. All heretical propensities, especially those linked to refusal to accept Soviet plans for the supranational economic integration of Eastern Europe, were still carefully camouflaged under the rhetoric of bloc unity and proletarian internationalism.

In October 1961, world communism experienced a major event: the Twenty-second CPSU Congress, at which Khrushchev embarked on a new anti-Stalin campaign and publicly attacked the Albanians for their "schismatic, factionalist, and seditious activities" in the world communist movement. Zhou Enlai, as head of the Chinese delegation, spelled out China's discontent with the Soviet policies, including some of the theoretical points included in the CPSU new program. Hard-core Stalinists resented Khrushchev's renunciation of the dogma of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and announcement that the CPSU would be transformed into a "party of the whole people" and the Soviet Union into a "state of the whole people." World communism had entered a stage of intense convulsions, and the ultimate break between its two competing centers, Moscow and Beijing, appeared ominously imminent. Communist parties throughout the whole world, and particularly in the "socialist camp" engaged in soul-searching analyses of their historical traditions and took sides in the growing polemics between Moscow and the pro-Chinese Albanians. The Romanian leaders realized that the earth-shattering decisions taken in Moscow, including the expulsion of Stalin's body from Lenin's Mausoleum, would have tremendous consequences for all the countries in the region. While perfunctorily applauding the CPSU's Leninist course under Khrushchev, Gheorghiu-Dej cautiously prepared the intraparty debates on the lessons of the Twenty-second CPSU Congress. The last thing he needed was to allow these debates to turn into attempts to revisit his own role in the Stalinist purges. With acumen, patience, and cynicism, the Romanian leaders organized the struggle against the "consequences of the personality cult" in such a way as to make them seem genuine de-Stalinizers *avant la lettre*.

A crucial event was the November 30–December 5, 1961, plenum of the central committee, when Gheorghiu-Dej again displayed his uncon-

ditional support for Khrushchev's international line, lambasting the Albanian deviation. Simply put, Gheorghiu-Dej was ready to back Moscow in its conflict with Enver Hoxha (i.e., with Mao Zedong), as long as he was not pushed into self-criticism with respect to the Romanian Stalinist past. The main themes to be addressed at the plenum were gone over at a meeting of the politburo on November 29, 1961.³ In his speech to the plenum, Gheorghiu-Dej adopted an unexpectedly harsh tone toward Enver Hoxha and his comrades:

The Central Committee informed the party in time of the anti-Leninist secessionist (schismatic) line adopted by the leaders of the Albanian Party of Labor headed by Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, which was manifest in the stand taken by the representatives of the Albanian Party of Labor at the Bucharest Conference and then burst out with particular intensity at the 1960 meeting. The leaders of the Albanian Party of Labor fiercely attacked the line and the decisions of the 20th and 22nd Congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the open and resolute exposure of the cult of Stalin's person and of its nefarious consequences. Why do they rise so fiercely against the criticism of the personality cult, why do they defend the grave infringements perpetrated by Stalin in his activity? Because they themselves have set up and maintained in Albania for many years situations identical with those against which the Congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union have risen—practicing throughout the Party and state life methods peculiar to the personality cult, with its whole paraphernalia of abuses.⁴

The plenum offered Gheorghiu-Dej a magnificent opportunity to engage in pseudo-liberalization. Whatever was wrong in party history, he claimed serenely, had happened either before he joined the top leadership or against his will. Pretending to be the true defender of Leninist principles of collective leadership and "healthy norms of party life," Gheorghiu-Dej denounced the Pauker–Luca–Georgescu and Chișinevschi–Constantinescu factions as responsible for the Stalinist horrors in Romania. In the same vein, according to Dej, had it not been for him and his close associates, traitors like Ștefan Foriș and Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu would have destroyed the party in the 1940s. In Gheorghiu-Dej's Orwellian scenario, control over the past was an essential method to control the present and the future. In this self-serving Manichean construct, the whole of party history appeared as a continuous struggle between the healthy, patriotic proletarian nucleus headed by Gheorghiu-Dej and successive gangs of factious villains. A plenum supposed to carry out de-Stalinization became an exercise in reinforcing a highly Stalinist approach to party history. Celebrated as the providential savior of the party's very existence, Gheor-

ghiu-Dej condemned the “right-wing deviators” Pauker, Luca, and Georgescu for acting as “a separate group above and beyond the party’s elected institutions, ignoring the central committee and the secretariat (which they dominated) and replacing the politburo, which functioned almost as a committee.”⁵ In fact, in his speech, Gheorghiu-Dej codified the new official version of the RWP’s history that stressed the abominable actions of the “factional antiparty group” and therefore exonerated the Dejites:

Returning to the country in September 1944 from the Soviet Union, where they had emigrated, the factional anti-party group Pauker-Luca, later joined by Teohari Georgescu, and actively assisted by Iosif Chişinevschi and Miron Constantinescu, promoted the cult of Stalin’s person with great intensity, and consistently tried—and unfortunately succeeded to a certain extent—to introduce into Party and state life the methods and practices, alien to Leninism, generated by this cult. Violation of the Leninist standards of Party life, of the principle of collective work in the leading bodies, defiance of the democratic rules of party and state construction, creation of an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion against valuable Party and state cadres, their intimidation and persecution, abuse of power and encroachment of people’s legality characterized the activity of this factional, anti-Party group.⁶

At the same 1961 plenum, Dej’s minister of the interior and Securitate commander Alexandru Drăghici declared that “the factionalist groups (Pauker, Luca, and others) turned the ministries they controlled into veritable fiefs, isolating them from the party and removing them from its control.”⁷ Ana Pauker (dead since 1960) and the other purged members of the leadership were accused of having used their powerful positions in 1944–48 to admit (and even invite) former Iron Guard members into the party, as well as many opportunists and careerists. Gheorghiu-Dej’s main address, as well as the speeches of other participants, including Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer, the politburo members Petre Borilă, Emil Bodnăraş, Nicolae Ceauşescu, Alexandru Drăghici, Alexandru Moghioroş, and Leonte Răutu, and numerous party old-timers, denounced the “longtime émigrés to USSR,” “alienated from domestic realities,” for adopting criminal Stalinist methods and practices. Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, and Teohari Georgescu were depicted as having been solely responsible for the Stalinist policies previously pursued, as opposed to the “national,” “patriotic,” and implicitly “anti-Stalinist” line epitomized by Gheorghiu-Dej and his close comrades. Among those who most vocally advocated this emerging nationalist approach were former militants of the Moscow Émigré Bureau and

Pauker's once faithful collaborators like Petre Borilă (former Spanish Civil War political commissar and Comintern bureaucrat), Leonte Răutu, Dumitru Coliu, and, even more vituperative than others, Valter Roman. The latter, albeit not a member of the central committee, was invited by Gheorghiu-Dej to attend and speak at this decisive plenum. Roman owed his special status in Gheorghiu-Dej's entourage to his role in denouncing Ana Pauker's alleged deviation in 1952 and his claim that he personally was indebted to Dej for having survived the Stalinist witch-hunt against former International Brigades fighters. No less aggressive was Ana Toma, a party veteran who as deputy minister of foreign affairs had been Ana Pauker's alter ego.

Skillfully propagated, the myth of this struggle between Gheorghiu-Dej's loyal communists and Pauker's "Muscovites" served as an ideological prop for the new turn in Bucharest's relations with Moscow. It was thus without exaggeration, from his point of view, that Gheorghiu-Dej declared at a politburo meeting on December 7, 1961, that the 1961 plenum, which had just ended on December 5, was perhaps "the most beautiful [plenum] ever held." At the same politburo meeting, Gheorghiu-Dej praised Valter Roman, Gheorghe Vasilichi, Gheorghe Gaston Marin, Petre Borilă, and Nicolae Ceaușescu for their speeches at the plenum. Moreover, Gheorghiu-Dej stressed that he liked the way Ceaușescu had spoken freely and said "very nice things."⁸ It was thus not by chance that Gheorghiu-Dej insisted on the publication of all the speeches prepared for the plenum, and not only of those actually delivered. In his view, the newly concocted party hagiography (and of course, its counterpart, the revamped demonology) had to become a "public good." As Maurer and Valter Roman had emphasized, it was important for the whole party to know that it was first and foremost thanks to Gheorghiu-Dej that the healthy cadres had been protected from persecution and that there was no need to engage in any posthumous rehabilitations.

The party propaganda apparatus, led by Răutu, promptly made use of the theses developed by the 1961 CC plenum and constructed a new version of the RCP's history, imbued with the myth of the "national roots" of the Dejites and their merits in exposing the vicious enemies of the Romanian working class. It is important to stress Răutu's leading role in the creation of the RWP's mythology. Răutu, together with Silviu Brucan, Ștefan Voicu, Sorin Toma, Nestor Ignat, Nicolae Moraru, Mihail Roller, and Traian Șelmaru, had been among the most virulent critics of pluralist democracy and the multiparty system. An expert in

political adjustment and survival, Răutu was in fact the dictator of Romanian culture until the death of Gheorghiu-Dej. During the Zhdanovite campaigns of the late 1940s and early 1950s, he led the unmasking of “estheticizing” and “decadent bourgeois” critics and poets. Later, especially after 1961, when the RWP tried to enlarge its intellectual constituency, Răutu presided over “the reconsideration of the cultural heritage.” His well-engineered maneuvers to manipulate the RCP’s history and invent a “national” strategy for it proved successful. His deputy and trustworthy collaborator was Paul Niculescu-Mizil, head of the propaganda department, who after 1965 succeeded Răutu as the party’s chief ideologue.

Within this framework, Ceaușescu became one of the most ardent advocates of Romania’s burgeoning “independent line.” In his speech at the November–December 1961 plenum, the address Gheorghiu-Dej enjoyed so much, Ceaușescu had attacked Pauker, Luca, and Georgescu for “right-wing deviationism.” He also vehemently criticized Marcel Pauker (Luximin) for his allegedly criminal activities during the 1928–29 intra-party struggle. (Luximin had, of course, been murdered long before, in the Soviet purges of the 1930s, and Ceaușescu, then aged forty-three, had never known him personally). This speech helped Ceaușescu to ingratiate himself even further with Gheorghiu-Dej. Ceaușescu already had a following in the party by reason of his involvement in the day-to-day running of the party apparatus, which grew accustomed to his style and habits. After 1961, Gheorghiu-Dej made Ceaușescu chief of the organizational directorate, which included the central committee’s section for party organization and the section that supervised the “special organs,” that is, the security apparatus, the military, and justice. It is important to insist on Ceaușescu’s direct association with Gheorghiu-Dej between 1956 and 1965, since otherwise his triumph over such powerful adversaries as Gheorghe Apostol and Alexandru Drăghici would be incomprehensible. For Gheorghiu-Dej, Ceaușescu was the perfect embodiment of the Stalinist apparatchik. Gheorghiu-Dej viewed him as a modest, dedicated, self-effacing, hard-working, and profoundly loyal lieutenant. Having successfully dealt with some of the most cumbersome issues that had worried Gheorghiu-Dej over the years—including the forced collectivization of agriculture, the continuous purges, and the harassment of critical intellectuals—the youngest politburo member maintained a deferential attitude toward the general secretary and other senior politburo members (Emil Bodnăraș and Ion Gheorghe Maurer). Certainly, Ceaușescu had criticized Drăghici for “indulgence in abuses”

and “infringements on socialist legality,” but that had occurred during the hectic months that followed the Twentieth CPSU Congress. Dissent, disobedience, and critical thought had never been a temptation for him. On the contrary, his indictment of Constantinescu at the CC plenum in December 1961 played upon the party’s deeply entrenched anti-intellectual prejudices. A few years earlier, following the 1957 and 1958 CC plenums, together with the former Comintern activist Dumitru Coliu (Dimitar Colev), the then chairman of the party control commission, Ceaușescu had carefully orchestrated purges that, apart from the expulsion of thousands of important cadres from the party, had a particularly debilitating effect on the members of the RCP’s old guard. Unlike Constantinescu, who in private conversation used to deplore Gheorghiu-Dej’s pivotal role in the “Byzantinization” of party life,⁹ it seems that Ceaușescu took special pleasure in complying with and cultivating Gheorghiu-Dej’s passion for secrecy and intrigue.¹⁰ However, Ceaușescu avoided any deviation from what he perceived to be classic Leninist dogma.¹¹

Gheorghiu-Dej decided to celebrate the completion of the collectivization process by holding a special plenum of the central committee of RWP on April 23–25, 1962, and a special session of the Grand National Assembly in Bucharest on April 27–30, 1962, attended by 11,000 peasants, the number being a direct allusion to the number of peasant victims of a 1907 agrarian uprising.¹² From the ideological viewpoint, Gheorghiu-Dej insisted, this event signified the completion of the construction of the material base of the new order and the transition to the fulfillment of socialist construction (*desăvârșirea construcției socialiste în România*).

The outbreak in 1962–63 of open hostile polemics between the Soviet and Chinese parties,¹³ and Khrushchev’s difficulties following the Cuban missile crisis, enabled the Romanian communists to escape Moscow’s domination. In Romanian politburo meetings, as well as in personal correspondence with Khrushchev, Gheorghiu-Dej criticized the Soviet leadership for not informing the Romanian communists of his intention to install Soviet missiles in Cuba. During his official visit to Bucharest in June 24–25, 1963, Khrushchev acknowledged the criticism as follows: “Comrade Dej, you have criticized me for sending missiles to Cuba and not telling you. It is true, we should have told you. I have explained to Comrade Ceaușescu how it happened. Everybody knew about this except you.” (Ceaușescu went to the Soviet Union before Khrushchev’s trip to prepare the visit of the Soviet supreme leader.)¹⁴

Gheorghiu-Dej also voiced Romanian fears about a nuclear war as a result of the Cuban crisis during Khrushchev's next visit to Romania, October 3–7, 1963: "I have to tell you, Nikita Sergeevich, that I have never since the [August 1944] liberation felt the way I did during the period of crisis in the Caribbean Sea, when it seemed that we were on the brink of the abyss and that everything hung in the balance and only a thread separated us from nuclear catastrophe. When I heard about the decision to withdraw the missiles from Cuba, I was relieved. We have to do everything we can to preserve peace."¹⁵

As the Sino-Soviet schism deepened, Gheorghiu-Dej cast himself as mediator between the two competing communist centers. Rather than following Moscow's lead in relations with other communist parties and other states, Gheorghiu-Dej began to develop independent ties to them. Ceaușescu also became involved in Gheorghiu-Dej's world communist movement diplomacy. Together with Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer, he went to China, North Korea, and the Soviet Union in 1963 and 1964 for talks with Mao, Kim Il Sung, and Khrushchev. Simultaneously, the RCP endorsed the Italian communist leader Palmiro Togliatti's polycentric, antihegemonic vision of world communism as formulated in theses the Italian communist leader had written shortly before his death in August 1964. Regarding the role played by Romanian communists during the fierce polemics between the Soviet and Chinese communist parties, J. F. Brown perceptively argued in the mid 1960s that: "Mao and the whole Sino-Soviet dispute have provided a tremendous boost to the prestige and self-respect of the Romanian Communist Party. Always considered one of the weakest in the bloc, it has now assumed an importance second only to that of the Soviet and Chinese parties. By its spectacular efforts at mediation and by its defiance of Moscow it gained considerable admiration and respect."¹⁶

The Romanian "deviation"—a self-styled version of national communism—resulted in a successful attempt by the ruling group to restructure the official ideology and assimilate populist and nationalist values. "The background of the Soviet-Romanian tensions of the 1960s lies in the grievances and aspirations generated by expectations of change within a context of political backwardness," Joseph Rothschild has aptly observed of the origins of the Romanian-Soviet dispute.¹⁷

The dispute became overt in 1962–63 as a result of differences over long-term strategies for the integration of Eastern European and Soviet economies, including Khrushchev's attempts to transform Romania into the agricultural base for the industrially more developed CMEA

countries and the interpretation of such notions as “national sovereignty,” “economic independence,” “mutual assistance,” and “socialist internationalism.” Gheorghiu-Dej and his comrades mounted a successful propaganda campaign against Soviet economic pressures on Romania and consequently managed to generate a new image for the RCP as the champion of Romanian national interests against Moscow’s plans to transform Romania into the agricultural hinterland of the Soviet bloc. The dispute between Bucharest and Moscow was primarily economic; it arose from proposals for the “division and specialization of production within the socialist camp” under a supranational “planning council” by Khrushchev, strongly supported by the Polish, East German, and Czechoslovak leaders (Władysław Gomułka, Walter Ulbricht, and Antonin Novotny). All the long-accumulated inferiority complexes of the Romanian leaders exploded in this confrontation: benefiting from Khrushchev’s weakened position within world communism and in his own party, Gheorghiu-Dej decided, for the first time in his political career, to openly confront a Soviet diktat. Not without reason, the Romanian communists objected to the lack of support from Moscow in their efforts to speed up their country’s industrialization by further developing its chemical and electric power industries. Gheorghiu-Dej and his team profoundly resented the idea of Romania (perhaps along with Bulgaria) being treated as a kind of agricultural hinterland of the integrated Soviet-led economic system.

In June 1962, the CMEA adopted a document entitled “Principles for the International Division of Labor,” drafted by, among others, the Soviet economic geographer E. B. Valev, which reaffirmed the idea of “socialist economic collaboration” in the sense of a division of labor within the socialist bloc between the industrialized north and the agrarian south.¹⁸ The idea was strongly supported by Czechoslovakia and German Democratic Republic, the most industrialized “fraternal” countries.¹⁹ But the Romanian communists did not share this viewpoint. “Gheorghiu-Dej was placed in a state of intense dissonance,” Ken Jowitt observes. “The direct defense of the industrialization program. . . mediated a response of increasing opposition to the Soviet Union, and the initiation of a policy stressing the goals of Party and State sovereignty.”²⁰

A statement in April 1964 that is regarded as the Romanian communists’ “declaration of autonomy” indicated that the debate on the Valev plan had convinced the Romanian ruling elite that the program of comprehensive industrialization could be secured only through party-state independence from the Soviet Union.²¹ As Michael Shafir puts it, the

Romanian ruling elite decided to “become not only the embodiment of industrial development, but also of national aspirations for independence.”²² This independence coincided with the de-Stalinization under way in most Soviet bloc countries, including the publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in the USSR and a Kafka symposium in Czechoslovakia. In other words, it was not only a disassociation from Moscow’s hegemony that the Romanians sought to achieve but also a strategy of isolating their party (and country) from the contagious effects of the anti-Stalin campaigns pursued in other Leninist states in the aftermath of the Twenty-second CPSU Congress. Rejecting Khrushchevism as Stalinist imperialism was a way for Gheorghiu-Dej and his cohorts to oppose an opening of the political system. National unity around the party leadership headed by Gheorghiu-Dej was the ideological counterpart to the repudiation of Moscow’s claim to the leading role in the bloc. In other words, breaking ranks internationally meant complete uniformity and unflinchingly closing the ranks domestically.

Romania’s program of comprehensive industrialization was advocated fiercely by the Romanian delegation to the CMEA. A leading role was played by Romania’s permanent delegate to the CMEA, the Bessarabian-born Alexandru Bîrlădeanu, a former political émigré in the USSR who was thoroughly fluent in Russian. Bîrlădeanu, trained as an economist, had served in the 1950s as minister of foreign trade and after 1960 as deputy prime minister. He had been involved in direct clashes with Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders before. Addressing the CMEA’s executive committee on February 15, 1963, he challenged Soviet tutelage and defended the Romanian economic policy established by the Third RWP Congress of 1960.²³ Incensed by Bîrlădeanu’s defense of Romanian economic interests, Khrushchev demanded his expulsion from the Romanian government. Instead, Gheorghiu-Dej promoted Bîrlădeanu as a candidate politburo member. The plenum of the central committee of the RWP on March 5–8, 1963, approved Bîrlădeanu’s attitude at the CMEA session. There were also rumors that Gheorghiu-Dej had written a letter to Khrushchev informing him that the RWP would not modify its economic plans, and that any pressure to do so would force Romania to leave the CMEA.²⁴

Since a harsh polemic was developing, Moscow decided to send an official delegation to Bucharest. On May 24, 1963, a Soviet delegation led by Nikolai Podgorny, a member of the presidium and secretary of the central committee of the CPSU, arrived in Bucharest, but an agree-

ment could not be reached. Further developments in the Sino-Soviet conflict served Bucharest's independent line. Consequently, on June 22, 1963, the Romanian communists offered a new proof of independence from Moscow by publishing a summary of a letter sent by the Chinese Communist Party to the Soviet central committee on June 14, 1963, which no other communist country of Eastern Europe dared publish, except for Albania. Meanwhile, tensions with the USSR intensified at the editorial board of the Prague-based *World Marxist Review*, to which the Romanian leaders Ion Gheorghe Maurer and Nicolae Ceaușescu contributed articles advocating their party's autonomist and "neutralist" course. On various occasions, the RWP's representative, Barbu Zaharescu, opposed efforts by pro-Moscow parties to transform the journal into an anti-Chinese tribune.

However, as H. Gordon Skilling notes, the Romanian communists continued to back Moscow in the Sino-Soviet dispute for some time.²⁵ Their divergences did not mean that they endorsed the bellicose Maoist line in international affairs. Rather, they simply rejected Khrushchev's efforts to restore complete Soviet domination of the world communist movement.²⁶

Since they felt that they had come of age and could rely on a growing domestic political base for their economic and foreign policy initiatives, the Romanians staunchly opposed the practice of stigmatizing other parties as "anti-Leninist," "deviationist," and so on. During the fall of 1963, RCP leaders briefed closed gatherings of party members about their growing differences with Moscow. The tone of the discussions was reserved, but the meaning of the speeches was unambiguous: Gheorghiu-Dej was preparing the party for a direct clash with the Soviet attempt to impose complete alignment in the struggle against Beijing. Among the politburo leaders who took the floor in these secret meetings, the most outspoken in his criticism of Khrushchev was Prime Minister Maurer. Soviet agents immediately informed the Kremlin that the Romanian leaders were waging an anti-Moscow campaign. The topic of the agents' network (*agentura*) in Romania was frequently mentioned in high-level discussions between the two parties in 1964, with the Romanians expressing indignation about Soviet distrust and the Kremlin's representatives reproaching Gheorghiu-Dej and his comrades for their lack of communist internationalism.

The April 1964 RCP declaration on the main problems of world communist movement summed up the RCP's new philosophy of intrabloc, world communist, and international relations in general. In this funda-

mental document, the Romanian communists broke with the Soviet concept of socialist internationalism and emphasized their commitment to the principles of national independence and sovereignty, full equality, noninterference in the domestic affairs of other states and parties, and cooperation based on mutual advantage. Bîrlădeanu, who, as Romania's permanent delegate to the CMEA, had been directly involved in disputes with the Soviet leaders, was particularly influential in drafting this trail-blazing document, which squarely rejected Moscow's privileged status in the world communist movement:

Bearing in mind the diversity of the conditions of socialist construction, there are not and there can be no unique patterns and recipes; no one can decide what is and what is not correct for other countries or parties. It is up to every Marxist-Leninist party; it is a sovereign right of each socialist state, to elaborate, choose, or change the forms and methods of socialist construction. . . . It is the exclusive right of each party independently to work out its political line, its concrete objectives, and the ways and means of attaining them, by creatively applying the general truths of Marxism-Leninism and the conclusions it arrives at from an attentive analysis of the experience of the other Communist and workers' parties. . . . There is not and cannot be a "parent" party and a "son" party, parties that are "superior" and parties that are "subordinate"; rather there is the great family of Communist and workers' parties which have equal rights. . . . No party has or can have a privileged place, or can impose its line or opinions on other parties. Each party makes its own contribution to the development of the common treasure store of Marxist-Leninist teaching, to enriching the forms and practical methods of revolutionary struggle for winning power and building socialist society.²⁷

Simultaneously, Romania showed growing interest in improving relations with the West. One of Gheorghiu-Dej's confidants, Gheorghe Gaston Marin (Grossman), vice-premier and president of the state planning committee, visited the United States in 1963 and 1964,²⁸ and Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer went to France in 1964, accompanied by Alexandru Bîrlădeanu.²⁹

In the summer of 1964, the RCP had gained both national and international recognition for its opposition to Soviet interference and dedication to fostering Romania's political and economic autonomy. "The pursuit of independence and a national renaissance by the Communist leadership of Romania appears to be developing with the precision and confidence of a well-made symphony," a *New York Times* correspondent wrote in July 1964. "The leitmotif remains the determination of the Government of President [*sic*] Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej to expand the

country's economy on Romanian terms, regardless the wishes of the neighboring Soviet Union and its East European allies."³⁰

At the August 23, 1964, celebrations of the anniversary of the anti-fascist coup twenty years earlier that had allegedly led to the founding of the Romanian People's Republic, the Soviet delegation, led by Anastas Mikoyan, president of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet, was compelled to accept the presence of the Chinese delegation headed by Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, as well as that of an Albanian governmental and party delegation headed by Vice-Premier Hysni Kapo, at a time when communist Albania had practically broken off official relations with the USSR.³¹ Romania had resumed diplomatic relations with Albania more than a year earlier, sending an ambassador to Tirana in March 1963.

"Ideological nationalization," to use a concept coined by Zbigniew Brzezinski, permitted the Romanian communists to recoup long-dormant social energies and develop a sense of political legitimacy for the first time in their history.³² Regarding the RWP's strategy of seeking popular support for Romania's "independent path towards communism," Ronald H. Linden noted: "Romanian leaders have successfully capitalized upon the non-Slavic identity of the population. Both Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceaușescu have sought to negotiate the narrow ground between constructive, supportive Romanian nationalism, e.g., pride in Romanian culture, history, accomplishments and international role, and destructive, dangerous anti-Russian expressions."³³

The rehabilitation of prominent figures of the national intelligentsia greatly contributed to domestic political and cultural relaxation. This co-optation strategy, implemented by Leonte Răutu, permitted the publication of previously banned works by major Romanian writers such as Tudor Arghezi, George Bacovia, Lucian Blaga, Octavian Goga, Nicolae Iorga, Liviu Rebreanu, and Tudor Vianu. Among the intellectuals who endorsed the party's national communist platform, albeit with different degrees of enthusiasm, were respected prerevolutionary figures such as the historians Andrei Oțetea, Constantin C. Giurescu, and Constantin Daicoviciu; the literary critics George Călinescu, Șerban Cioculescu, and Vladimir Streinu; the philosophers D. D. Roșca and Lucian Blaga; and the sociologists Mihail Ralea, Traian Herseni, and H. H. Stahl. Gheorghiu-Dej was praised in literary journals by authors like George Călinescu, Eugen Barbu, Mihnea Gheorghiu, Demostene Botez, and the supremely subservient chairman of the Writers' Union, Mihai Beniuc, a symbol of the Stalinization of Romanian cultural life, who remained the head of the Writers' Union until February 1965.³⁴

The party, which in August 1944 had counted no more than 1,000 members, experienced a political transfiguration after 1960 into a forceful movement championing long-repressed national grievances. There is no doubt that things changed tremendously and that the numerical strengthening of the party was a reality: in June 1960, Gheorghiu-Dej announced that the party had reached 834,600 members, of whom 148,000 were candidate members.³⁵

Gone were the times of Stalinist hacks like Mihail Roller, former deputy chief of the Agitprop Department, who in 1948–49 published a history of the Romanian People's Republic glorifying the "traditional fraternal bonds" between Romania and Russia.³⁶ Self-confident and increasingly convinced of his popularity among Romanians, Gheorghiu-Dej could afford to relinquish some of his most outrageous repressive policies. In 1964, he even felt secure enough to sign a series of decrees releasing thousands of political prisoners from jails and deportation sites. Nonetheless, the ideological relaxation had strictly observed limits. The ubiquitous portraits of the nine politburo oligarchs during the celebrations on August 23 that year reminded Romanians that power was still in the same hands. Moreover, Gheorghiu-Dej and his comrades never acknowledged any personal responsibility for their crucial role in the country's satellitization in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the party newspaper *Scinteia* continued to reiterate the same hackneyed slogans about the "betrayal" perpetrated by Foriș, Pătrășcanu, and other purged leaders.

On the surface, Romania seemed interested in emulating Tito by engaging in a sweeping de-Sovietization, which could have resulted in domestic liberalization. At the same time, it was difficult to overlook the fact that instead of loosening its control over society, the RWP leadership had further tightened its grip and refused to allow even a minimal de-Stalinization. Hence, from its very inception, Romanian national communism contained an ambiguous potential: in accordance with the inclinations and interests of the leading team and the international circumstances, it could have led either to Yugoslavization—that is, de-Sovietization coupled with de-Stalinization—or to Albanization—that is, de-Sovietization strengthened by radical domestic Stalinism. The dual nature of RWP's divorce from the Kremlin stemmed from the contrast between its patriotic claims and its refusal to overhaul the Soviet-imposed Leninist model of socialism. The ambivalence of the RWP's "independent line" was deeply rooted in the anxiety of the Romanian communist elite that reforms would unleash political unrest and jeopardize the party's monopoly on power.

After attending a Warsaw Pact summit conference in Poland in February 1965, Gheorghiu-Dej was stricken with lung cancer. A thorough checkup in the fall of 1964 had failed to reveal the disease that would kill him within a matter of months. The gravity of his illness was kept secret. Prime Minister Maurer and Ceaușescu even emphatically forbade Dej's personal doctor, Leon Bercu, to inform Gheorghiu-Dej's favorite daughter, the movie actress Lica Gheorghiu-Rădoi, of her father's imminent demise. It seems that Gheorghiu-Dej had not thought to designate who would take his place, but a few days after his death on March 19, 1965, Ceaușescu became the party's general secretary, and Chivu Stoica, one of Gheorghiu-Dej's closest collaborators since the war years, became chairman of the council of state.³⁷

Maurer and Bîrlădeanu have provided detailed accounts of the succession struggle. According to Maurer, in the terminal phase of his illness, Gheorghiu-Dej asked him to be his successor. Maurer refused, however, and Gheorghiu-Dej then decided to support Apostol. However, Maurer continues, the proposal to name Apostol secretary of the central committee and first secretary when Gheorghiu-Dej died was strongly opposed by Drăghici and Ceaușescu and was not backed by the other members of the politburo. Maurer therefore decided to support Ceaușescu, who had stood up to Khrushchev, taking into consideration that the other option was Drăghici, perceived as the "Soviets' man."³⁸ According to Bîrlădeanu, it was Ceaușescu who announced at a politburo meeting in January–February 1965 that Gheorghiu-Dej was dying, saying that a team of French doctors brought to Bucharest for consultation had confirmed the prognosis. Bîrlădeanu insists, moreover, that Ceaușescu restricted the other politburo members' access to Gheorghiu-Dej and created his own support group, composed of Drăghici and Chivu Stoica (the other faction in the politburo consisting of Apostol, Bodnăraș, and Maurer).

According to Bîrlădeanu, Maurer's betrayal of Apostol was decisive in bringing Ceaușescu to power.³⁹ However, Bîrlădeanu's version seems to be less plausible since it does not take into account the fierce rivalry between Drăghici and Ceaușescu. In a personal communication to me, however, Sorin Toma said that Drăghici had very little chance of becoming RWP leader.⁴⁰

Since Gheorghiu-Dej did not have the time to name his successor, the decision was made by the members of the politburo, of whom the most influential were Maurer and Bodnăraș, and as far as can now be determined, they decided to support Ceaușescu and not Drăghici, the bru-

tal and merciless head of the Securitate, or the mediocre and dogmatic Stalinist Apostol. Maurer and Bodnăraş also persuaded Chivu Stoica to support their candidate. Undoubtedly, Maurer mistakenly believed that Ceauşescu, the youngest member of the politburo, who lacked any impressive credentials in his revolutionary biography and seemed modest and obedient, would be the perfect figurehead.⁴¹

CHAPTER 7

Ceaușescu's Dynastic Communism, 1965–1989

My brother Evgeni Yakovlevich used to say that the decisive part in the subjugation of the intelligentsia was played not by terror and bribery (though, God knows, there was enough of both), but by the word “Revolution,” which none of them could bear to give up. It is a word to which whole nations have succumbed, and its force was such that one wonders why our rulers still needed prisons and capital punishment.

Nadezhda Mandel'shtam, *Hope against Hope: A Memoir*

In the late 1960s and 1970s, Nicolae Ceaușescu, the general secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party and Romania's president, was described by Western media as something of a maverick. It was fashionable in the late 1960s, to discover Ceaușescu's “autonomy” in foreign policy and credit him with a genuine commitment to Romanian national values. The myth of a Romanian “national communism” was hastily shaped, with Ceaușescu presented as the symbol of this challenge to Moscow's domination of East-Central Europe.¹ The Romanian leader's disenchantment with the USSR had started with Khrushchev's attack on Stalin. For Ceaușescu, as for Gheorghiu-Dej, Enver Hoxha, Matyás Rákosi, Mao Zedong, Walter Ulbricht, Maurice Thorez, and many other seasoned Stalinists, Khrushchev's de-Stalinization amounted to shattering communist unity. These people craved an idol and abhorred Khrushchev's iconoclasm. Compelled to choose between the USSR and Stalin, Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceaușescu willingly chose the latter. Ceau-

șescu thus adamantly pursued a national Stalinist orientation after his master's passing away in March 1965. He imprinted on it the marks of his personality, notably a tremendous interest in self-promotion and international recognition. Often his demagoguery was taken at face value, with scant attention paid to the preservation of a rigid internal Stalinist system and the enduring predicament of the population. Many Western analysts were tempted to interpret Romania's future, following Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's death in 1965, along very optimistic lines: "Ceaușescu has continued this [i.e., Dej's post-1960] policy and in some respects even accelerated it," J.F. Brown wrote, for example, in the mid 1960s. "Relaxation in the cultural and academic fields became more pronounced, and in June 1965, the new 'socialist' constitution introduced more safeguards for the liberty of the individual.... When he gathers confidence and strength, it is possible that reform will be pressed more quickly. A comprehensive reform program would immeasurably strengthen the popular support the regime had already gained by its nationalist policy."²

Certainly, Ceaușescu's regime was increasingly perceived as preserving and fostering several salient features of Stalinist political culture, but foreign policy's "unorthodox" initiatives helped to obfuscate Western awareness of the growing internal repression. As for Ceaușescu's Yugoslav proclivities, they had more to do with Tito's nonaligned policy than with any interest in developing a Romanian version of "self-management." However, most of the Conducător's undertakings were still extolled in the early 1970s as the price to be paid for Romania's semi-Titoist foreign policy. Even Ceaușescu's conspicuous cult of personality was attributed to the need to cement an image of unity and cohesion against possible Soviet attempts to violate Romania's alleged independence. Indeed, in order to preserve his image as an intransigent fighter for national independence, Ceaușescu often disagreed with Soviet interventions in the international arena, while internally his own regime remained as repressive and autocratic as possible. In fact, for Ceaușescu, Brezhnev was quite a comfortable partner; although there were crises in Romanian-Soviet relations, they never reached the point of an open clash.

The aggravation of the economic situation after 1975 and the regime's failure to cope with the challenges of modernization accelerated the maturing of a sociopolitical crisis in Romania. By 1985, Ceaușescu, who had once managed to fool Western journalists and posture as the champion of an "open-minded Marxism," was being stigmatized as the "sick man

of communism” and depicted as an embarrassment to the increasingly reform-oriented new Soviet leadership under Mikhail Gorbachev: “The present state of Romania is a fearful illustration of Marxism’s central weakness: too much power in too few hands, and the economic incompetence that it leads to,” said the *Economist*. “If Mr. Gorbachev wants to impress West Europeans, he cannot afford so rotten an advertisement for his side.”³ Ceaușescu’s obsession with industrialization, the austerity policies linked to his decision in the 1980s to pay off Romania’s foreign debt in order to immediately obtain absolute financial independence, and his attachment to an obsolete, rigid hypercentralized planning system and deep hostility to market-oriented reforms resulted in dramatically declining living standards and growing popular discontent.⁴

Romania’s Conducător had been cast in a hard Stalinist mold, and his political style was overwhelmingly indebted to the values and methods of Stalinist political culture. Far from having tried to become a “de-Stalinizer,” Ceaușescu was loyally attached to the most compromised Leninist-Stalinist dogmas and had attempted to simulate a “mass movement regime” through steady infusions of zeal and political fervor.⁵ In Romania, no decision was reached, no initiative proposed, without Ceaușescu’s endorsement or consent. He had acquired the status of a communist pharaoh, an infallible demigod, whose vanity seemed boundless. To Ceaușescu’s misfortune, this cult proved bogus, a propaganda figment concocted by the ideological nomenklatura and propped up by the ubiquitous Securitate.

A Crisis of Legitimacy

Ceaușescu’s personal tragedy was determined by the tragedy of his party, a political movement totally bereft of historical legitimacy. Romanian communism (and its leaders) were never able to resolve an inferiority complex engendered by the party’s marginality in Romania’s political and intellectual life between the two wars. Romanian communists failed to generate mass political action and were generally perceived as alienated elements whose rebellion against the existing order was motivated mostly by ethnic and psychological resentments. They formed a tiny messianic minority—never exceeding a thousand members before August 23, 1944—unwaveringly committed to the Stalinist Comintern. During the underground period, moreover, the RCP scornfully disregarded national values and particularly commitment to

the defense of the nation's post-1918 borders. The central issue of Soviet-Romanian relations, the Bessarabian question, was presented in RCP documents in total accord with Stalinist imperialist claims. Irrespective of ex post facto rationalizations—and they were expert at twisting and altering meanings—there is no doubt that Romanian communists emerged from the clandestine phase with their credibility as patriots severely tarnished.⁶ During its first years in power, the RCP maneuvered desperately to extend its mass base, but without managing to get anything but simulated support and faked adherence from the social strata it claimed to represent.

Ironically, after 1962–63, and more stridently after Ceaușescu's ascent to power in March 1965, this same party did not hesitate to embark upon flaming nationalist campaigns, capitalizing on the repressed patriotic yearnings of Romania's intellectuals and feigning to incarnate the most sacred national values. In this fraudulent quid pro quo, Nicolae Ceaușescu asserted himself as a master manipulator and outreached his Stalinist mentors in cynical astuteness and hypocrisy. The man who had remorselessly accepted the Comintern's anti-Romanian policy, who had obediently carried out the most repellent Stalinist campaigns between 1948–65 (forced collectivization of agriculture, successive purges of the party and the army, and persecution of intellectuals and students, to name only a few of his party's "achievements") postured after his appointment as general secretary in 1965 as the apostle of Romanianism and attempted to invent a self-styled national communism. There was a significant degree of self-righteousness in this usurpation of patriotic symbols: histrionics were a prominent feature of Romanian communist practice.⁷

Some of Gheorghiu-Dej's actions after 1960 foreshadowed the "break" with Moscow: first, the reinterpretation of party history with special emphasis on the struggle between the "domestic" communists and the "Muscovites," Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, and Iosif Chișinevschi, with the latter accused of all the evils perpetrated during the Stalinist years; then the gradual de-Russification of Romanian culture and a certain relaxation in domestic policy; then the April 1964 declaration voicing the RWP's discontent with Khrushchev's infringements on Romania's autonomous status within Comecon and the Warsaw Pact. All these, initiated by Gheorghiu-Dej's group—to which Ceaușescu naturally belonged—suggested less a deviation from the Stalinist pattern than a shrewd attempt on the part of the Romanian communist elite to shun even a moderate de-Stalinization.⁸

Stalinist economic, political, and cultural institutions and methods were jealously conserved in both Gheorghiu-Dej's and Ceaușescu's Romania. A "reformist" heresy could not have sprung from these practitioners of an unyielding monolithism, programmatically hostile to any form of genuine democracy. Ceaușescu himself never demonstrated any such dangerous propensity, so breaking ranks with his Stalinist fellows never tempted him. For more than two decades (1940–65), his career had been guaranteed by Gheorghiu-Dej's protection, but, unlike his predecessor, Ceaușescu lacked any impressive credentials in his revolutionary biography. Once "elected" general secretary, he engaged in a feverish creation and consolidation of his own myth. Party history had thus to be rewritten—George Orwell noted that nothing is more unpredictable within a communist system than the past—for the benefit of the new leader. Since heroic deeds were conspicuously absent from his past, Ceaușescu founded a cult of personality aimed at linking his doings with those of medieval Romanian princes and Thracian-Dacian rulers who defied the Roman empire. To foster the myth of the unified, homogeneous socialist nation and enhance the party's controls over the private sphere, Ceaușescu enacted Draconian anti-abortion measures. Romanians were expected to behave like true-blue (or should we say true red?) sons and daughter of the socialist motherland: the body politic fully invaded the private sphere, including its most intimate fibers.⁹ A historical-political show was played in Bucharest until 1989, and gullible Western observers often failed to discriminate between narcissistic histrionics and genuine patriotism.

The Agony of the Party

The rise of the Ceaușescu clan, the incessant political promotion of both immediate and distant members of the presidential family, intensified the sociopolitical crisis. The party was exhausted, the apparatus was demoralized, and the intelligentsia were depressed. Romanian culture was deeply affected by an exodus to the West of well-known intellectuals aware of the regime's disastrous course. Poets and mathematicians, chemists and physicians, historians and painters were forced into exile in a veritable diaspora, a historical phenomenon generally provoked by social cataclysms, with sorry consequences for the future of Romanian culture. Ceaușescu's compulsive pattern of leadership hindered any attempts to modernize, and reforms were postponed indefinitely. Advancement in

the party hierarchy was granted only for unflinching loyalty to Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu and their youngest son, Nicu, who had practically been anointed heir-apparent. During Ceaușescu's final years in power, there were rumors that he had a fatal disease and talk of a succession crisis, reflecting the confusion in the party's upper circles.¹⁰

From his predecessor, Gheorghiu-Dej, Ceaușescu inherited a dynamic economy, an embryonic national consensus, and a growing international prestige. Ceaușescu also inherited Gheorghiu-Dej's political capital, accumulated during the conflict with Khrushchev. Moreover, unlike his predecessor, he had not been directly involved in the Stalinist purges of the early 1950s. Consequently, he was able to simulate a lukewarm de-Stalinization without fear of undermining his own status in the party. During the first stage of his rule (1965–71), the new general secretary aimed at an original synthesis of desatellitization and de-Stalinization. To guarantee its success, he demanded and received total support from the middle-range party apparatus, a social group aspiring to replace Gheorghiu-Dej's cohorts.

At the same time, Ceaușescu sought to consolidate his authority and power by stressing the values of national independence and patriotic consciousness. Shortly after his election, he organized meetings with representatives of the creative unions at which he lambasted the Zhdanovite dogma of socialist realism and acknowledged the right to cultural diversity. At meetings with the Union of Writers in the spring of 1965, for example, he took a firm stand against "vulgar sociologism" and "socialist realism." Furthermore, he encouraged critics of Zhdanovist aesthetics and supported their outspoken criticisms of the Russification of Romanian culture. What followed was the first genuine thaw in post-war Romania, with the party encouraging intellectual de-Stalinization and temporarily renouncing bureaucratic-administrative methods in cultural matters. Moreover, during the period of consolidation of his power (1965–70), Ceaușescu used the strategy of visits to industrial, agricultural, and academic entities throughout Romania, creating the image of a popular leader always ready to consult with the people, especially with the workers and peasants.¹¹ In the early 1970s, after coming to power in Poland, Edward Gierek followed a similar strategy in an attempt to restore the party's working-class roots through "consultations."¹² Ceaușescu also summoned the effectives of the Ministry of the Interior—that is to say, the secret police—and criticized the excesses of the Stalinist period. He promised full observance of socialist legality by the party and state apparatus. The invocation of internal democracy in

the party was, however, an expression, not of Ceaușescu's tendency toward liberalization, but of his aim to undermine the traditional leading group. A faction in the RCP directly connected with the new general secretary was on its way up, and Gheorghiu-Dej's elite was gradually marginalized and neutralized.

Throughout this period (1965–70), apparatchiks whose careers under Gheorghiu-Dej had been linked with his own influential position as secretary of the central committee charged with organizational affairs (cadres) formed Ceaușescu's power base in the party. This "party apparatus group" ensured Ceaușescu's triumph over the remnants of Gheorghiu-Dej's politburo, Stalinist barons who had thought that the new general secretary would obsequiously follow their suggestions and abide by the rules of a "collective leadership." Ceaușescu acted quickly, however, to impose his own style on the party.

The demagogy of "political innovation," cloaked in the dialectical jargon of "the struggle between the old and the new in social development," permeated Ceaușescu's first major statement, his political report to the party's Ninth Congress (July 19–24, 1965). The preparations for this congress had started in the summer of 1964, when Gheorghiu-Dej assigned Ceaușescu, Gheorghe Apostol, Alexandru Bîrlădeanu, and Leonte Răutu to work out the most important documents. Dej intended the Fourth RWP Congress to celebrate the absolute triumph of the national Stalinist faction, the irrevocable cutting of the umbilical cord with Moscow, the declaration of Romanian autonomy in the CMEA and the Warsaw Pact, the opening toward Yugoslavia, France, and even the United States—and, of course, the decisive role of the first secretary in all this.

In 1964, restructuring the party's leadership was not on the agenda, let alone renaming the party. The deterioration of Gheorghiu-Dej's health in the first months of 1965 dramatically changed things. Gheorghiu-Dej died on March 19, 1965, without designating a political heir. Ceaușescu promised the Dejites barons that he would let them keep their crucial positions in the party, and as one important executive committee member told me in 1994, it can be said that he kept his word. Emil Bodnăraș died in office, and Ion Gheorghe Maurer retired in 1974 at his request and on his own terms. Maurer said in several interviews after 1990 that he had supported the new leader without reserve because of his respectful attitude and "passion for reading."

Immediately after Gheorghiu-Dej's funeral, Ceaușescu started a campaign for supremacy in the party. Meetings in various ministries, working visits to plants and collective farms, and contacts with foreign com-

minist delegations all suggested an energy that clearly distinguished the style of the new leader from that of his predecessor. In this series of meetings, those with the leaderships of the Securitate and the Writers' Union—the secret police and the ideologues—were the most important. In May and June of 1965, Ceaușescu was already talking about the need to strengthen socialist legality and allow greater diversity in artistic creation, and *Scînteia* printed some of these remarks. The neutralization of the two most prominent figures associated with the political repression and the cultural dogmatism of Gheorghiu-Dej's epoch, Alexandru Drăghici of the Securitate and the propaganda czar Leonte Răutu, was predictable. As a matter of fact, immediately after Gheorghiu-Dej's death, Răutu's position was seriously weakened: he had been elected secretary of the central committee, but now he shared the management of propaganda and culture with his former deputy, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, who also became a secretary.

Just before the Ninth Congress, a central committee plenum announced that former members of the Romanian Social Democratic Party who had subsequently joined the communists would be considered veteran members of the party. No less significant, Ceaușescu's proposal that the name "Romanian Workers' Party" be changed to "Romanian Communist Party" was accepted.¹³ This was more than a simple change of title: Ceaușescu wanted to affirm the historical continuity of the revolutionary movement in Romania and the role of the RCP in the synthesis of all the country's anticapitalist traditions. Logically, the modification of the party's name also implied a renumbering of the former congresses: the Fourth RWP Congress, for example, became the Ninth RCP Congress. Until the national conference of October 1945, when Ceaușescu had been elected to the central committee for the first time, the name of the party had been the Communist Party of Romania, and its central objective was the fulfillment of the tasks assigned by the Comintern and the Soviet agencies that succeeded it.

The myth of Ceaușescu rested from the start on the presumed continuity of a heroic, and consistently autonomous nucleus in the party. The embarrassing moments in the party's history were conveniently ignored. Only in 1966, on the forty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Communist Party of Romania, would Ceaușescu touch on these issues, insisting more or less explicitly on the fact that all the essential errors in the underground communist strategy had arisen first and foremost from the fact that there were many individuals from other ethnic groups in the leadership of the party.

The declaration of April 1964 was formally mentioned in Ceaușescu's report to the Ninth Congress. The central idea stressed was that now that Gheorghiu-Dej was dead and Ceaușescu had assumed the reins of government, a new epoch had begun for both the party and the country. The presence at this congress of some top leaders of the great parties of the "socialist world system," such as Leonid Brezhnev, first secretary of the CPSU since Khrushchev's ouster in October 1964, and Deng Xiaoping, number four, after Mao Zedong, Liu Shaochi, and Zhou Enlai, in the Chinese Communist Party, strengthened the international legitimacy of the relatively young new leader. In opening the congress, Ceaușescu proposed a moment of silence to honor Gheorghiu-Dej, "our comrade in [our] fight and work, faithful son and prominent leader of the Romanian party and people, eminent militant of the international communist and workers' movement."¹⁴

A select group of ideologues that included Paul Niculescu-Mizil and Dumitru Popescu (in the meantime the latter had become editor in chief of *Scînteia*) prepared Ceaușescu's report to the congress. Unlike Gheorghiu-Dej, who had left the preparation of such documents in the hands of the commissions, Ceaușescu participated directly in the formulation of the theses. Gheorghe Apostol had the mission of presenting the report regarding a new party statute.¹⁵ Analysis of the text presented by Apostol shows that the struggle at the top regarding the new leadership structure continued until the last day of the congress. Apostol's report noted that the politburo conducted the party's activity between the central committee plenums. In the final day of the congress, Apostol had the humiliating "pleasure" of announcing that the plenum of the new central committee had unanimously elected Ceaușescu general secretary, a clear distinction from Dej's official position of first secretary. It is possible that Brezhnev liked this Romanian initiative returning to the traditional Stalinist title of the absolute leader, because, only a year later, at the Twenty-third Congress of the CPSU, he adopted the same title to make clear his supreme status within the party hierarchy.

What happened was, in fact, a party coup. Ignoring what had been discussed two days earlier, and without offering any explanation, Ceaușescu announced that the old politburo was to be replaced by two new bodies: a permanent (standing) presidium and an executive committee. The resemblance to the Chinese model of a large politburo with a small inner circle called the standing committee was striking. The presidium's role was unclear; it was to deal with current matters, while the executive committee was to run the party between plenums.

Even experts in the obscure details of party structure had trouble distinguishing between these two assignments. The primary aim, however, was to eliminate Alexandru Moghioroș and Petre Borilă from the top of the pyramid—that is, the permanent presidium—although they remained members of the executive committee. Enlargement of the leading group by the inclusion on the executive committee of Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Gheorghe (Gogu) Rădulescu, and Constantin Drăgan, who were directly connected with Ceaușescu, was also an aim, as, especially, was the appointment of Iosif Banc, Maxim Berghianu, Petre Blajovici, Mihai Gere, Petre Lupu (Lupu Pressman), and Ilie Verdeț, former subordinates of Ceaușescu's in the organizational branch of the central committee, as candidate members of the executive committee and the secretariat. The immovable fixtures of the Gheorghiu-Dej era were thus replaced by new figures, who rose quickly and inexorably under the patronage of General Secretary Ceaușescu.

Ceaușescu had a formidable influence on the composition of the secretariat, an omnipotent body in Leninist parties. Alexandru Drăghici, a dear and much hated friend of the new leader, was number two, first in line after the general secretary, but in reality, the appointment to the secretariat of Drăghici, who had headed the secret police since 1952, was the beginning of the end of his political career.¹⁶ A few days after the congress ended, Drăghici lost his positions as vice president of the council of ministries and minister of the interior. The new minister of the interior was Cornel Onescu, former head of section in the organizational branch of the central committee supervised by Ceaușescu. The other new members of the secretariat were either Ceaușescu's henchmen, like Manea Mănescu, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Vasile Patilineț, and Virgil Trofin, extras like Alexandru Moghioroș, who was seriously ill, or political finaglers like Leonte Răutu. All these glorified Ceaușescu as a visionary leader, champion of independence, inspired strategist of economic central planning, promoter of the "new agrarian revolution," and "architect of the national destiny."¹⁷

In late 1965 or early 1966, Ceaușescu secretly assigned Vasile Patilineț, a great specialist in political files, the task of launching an inquiry into repression in the party during the 1950s.¹⁸ This idea related to the gathering of documents concerning Alexandru Drăghici's direct involvement in the murder of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu. It is hard to estimate how much of this was foreseen by Drăghici. One thing is sure: in the summer of 1966, after being inaccessible to them for many years, the Drăghici family resumed connections with various friends from the un-

derground period, with an astonishing display of modesty, cordiality, and outspokenness.

The Ninth RCP Congress became one of the founding myths of the Ceaușescu's cult. Beyond the empty slogans and sycophantic exaggerations, there was a kernel of truth in the idea that this congress had changed important elements in the social, economic, and cultural life in Romania. For a couple of years, newspapers became readable, literary life amazingly relaxed, and there was a real opening toward the West, including the importation of movies, book translations, and theater repertory. The Ninth Congress created the myth that Ceaușescu was a political reformer, a reasonable man, representative of the thawing of the dogmatism and obscurantism of the Gheorghiu-Dej era. Moreover, skillfully manipulating passions, animosities, and confidential information from the secret archives of the party, Ceaușescu reconfigured the supreme political structure to strengthen the group of activists who owed him everything and were ready to support him without any hesitation.

No less important, because he succeeded in bringing important figures of the world communism to Bucharest, including the leaders of the parties in acerbic ideological competition—not only Brezhnev and Deng attended the congress, but also Ramiz Alia, then number two in Albania; Walter Ulbricht, the East German first secretary and state council president; Todor Zhivkov, the Bulgarian leader; Edvard Kardelj, the ideologue of Titoism; Dipa Nusantara Aidit, the Indonesian party leader; and Dolores Ibárruri, who chaired the Spanish Communist Party in exile—Ceaușescu imposed himself as an influential player in these increasingly acute conflicts. One year and a couple of months after the declaration of April 1964, Bucharest once again defined itself as an autonomous center in the debates within the communist movement, refusing to follow either the Soviet line or the Chinese one.

The Ninth RCP Congress represented the point at which the most important ideological and political options of Nicolae Ceaușescu's socialism were defined, including the thesis of the social and ethnic homogenization of the Romanian nation; the stress on industrialization and the maximum use of domestic resources; the view of the party leader as a symbol of monolithic unity of the party and the people; active neutrality inside the world communist movement; reestablishment of cordial relations with some Western communist parties, especially the Spanish and Italian ones, in the effort to solidify a joint line in opposition to Moscow's hegemonic maneuvers; and the rhetoric of internal

democracy, associated with the image of Ceaușescu as the champion of legality, justice, ethics, and socialist equity. Obviously, many of these themes suffered reformulations and reconsideration in the following years, so that the Ninth Congress became no more than a subject of reverential reference for those nostalgic for the unfulfilled promises of relaxation and innovation.¹⁹

At the same time, it would be interesting to determine to what extent the new “freeze,” the re-Stalinization or, more precisely, the re-radicalization that took place after 1968 was a blueprint, or, in other words, why the line of moderate but real reforms was not continued. The personality of the leader provides a partial answer, and the nature of the Romanian communist elite was responsible for the rest: its lack of moral and intellectual dimensions, opportunistic use of nationalism for personal ends, and arrogant, narcissistic isolation from the real debates of the European Left. In hindsight, it is clear that there were reasons for anxiety in July 1965. The pathetic-patriotic tone of Ceaușescu’s report; the Byzantine backstage games played in total contempt for the delegates at the congress; and the excessive laudation of the leader—a disquieting taste of what was to be increasingly suffocating idolatry—were all cause for concern, even taking into account the temptation of what Timothy Garton Ash calls retrospective determinism.²⁰ There also were reasons for hope, however, and in 1965, more than a few saw in the new leader and his line the promise of greater mercy, less obtuseness, and less repression than during Gheorghiu-Dej’s reign.

On May 7, 1966, Ceaușescu delivered a significant speech on the occasion of the forty-fifth anniversary of the party’s foundation. Many of its previously sacrosanct dogmas were being questioned directly by the young and, at that point, reformist—almost iconoclastic—general secretary. One of Ceaușescu’s most important theses was that the RCP was carrying on Romanians’ secular struggle for independence, the creation of a unitary Romanian nation-state, social progress, and civilization.²¹

The year 1968 was perhaps crucial in determining the future of Romanian national communism and its evolution into the “dynastic socialism” that Ceaușescuism eventually became. The prologue to this transformation was the national party conference in December 1967 (the first such gathering since October 1945), at which Ceaușescu rejected the suggestions of the reformers at the top that the role of market relations under socialism be recognized and defended the traditional Stalinist tenets of the preeminent role of heavy industry and the need to further develop the command economy. Even more important, at the confer-

ence, the veteran party militant Chivu Stoica resigned from his position as chairman of the state council and was replaced by Ceaușescu. Less than three years after Gheorghiu-Dej's demise, his successor had become the unchallenged head of both party and state.

In April 1968, with the help of his faithful followers in the party apparatus, Ceaușescu unleashed a major myth-substitution operation. The April 22–25, 1968, plenum of the central committee further revealed Ceaușescu's intention of strengthening his legitimacy through a drastic indictment of his predecessor's abuses. By exposing Gheorghiu-Dej's role in the Stalinist atrocities of the 1950s, Ceaușescu fostered his own image as the restorer of legality. The rehabilitation of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu and other communist leaders executed or imprisoned under Gheorghiu-Dej enhanced the general secretary's posture as a custodian of socialist legality and advocate of democratization.²² Not only Gheorghiu-Dej but also his immediate acolytes became targets of attack: Alexandru Drăghici, the former minister of the interior, was expelled from the party, and Ceaușescu also singled out former members of Gheorghiu-Dej's politburo as to blame for the criminal abuses of the 1950s. Drăghici, the perpetrator, and Gheorghiu-Dej, his inspirer, were lambasted for the misdeeds of the Stalinist period, while Ceaușescu postured as the incarnation of innocence, whose involvement in the now recognized and deplored crimes was emphatically denied.²³

Apart from Pătrășcanu and Foriș, who were practically proclaimed martyrs of the communist cause, other prominent communist militants were rehabilitated, including victims of Stalin's Great Purge, as well as Miron Constantinescu, Constantin Doncea, and Dumitru Petrescu. Ceaușescu's simulated de-Stalinization in fact followed Novotny's or Zhivkov's reluctant path, however, rather than Gomulka's less compromising approach.²⁴ Furthermore, Ceaușescu tried to ingratiate himself with survivors of the clandestine party (1924–44), who were asked to produce "memoirs" aiming at (1) Gheorghiu-Dej's exposure as no more than a peripheral member of the underground party, and (2) the enhancement of Ceaușescu's own role in the history of the revolutionary movement. The commission charged with Patrașcanu's rehabilitation was headed by the veteran underground and Comintern apparatchik Gheorghe Stoica, secretary of the central committee responsible for the Securitate, Vasile Patilineț, and Lieutenant General Grigore Răduică, a Securitate vice chairman. Although the commission discussed and even recommended Ana Pauker's political rehabilitation, no public announcement was made on this thorny issue. In September 1968, a com-

muniqué of the Supreme Tribunal announced the judicial rehabilitation of Vasile Luca and his associates, condemned on trumped-up charges in 1954. Pictures of Ana Pauker, Luca, and Teohari Georgescu were put on display in the permanent exhibition at the Party History Museum.

In April 1968, too, Charles de Gaulle visited Romania and congratulated Ceaușescu on his alleged independence.²⁵ Moreover, Ceaușescu's independent line in foreign policy illustrated his version of reform communism. He distanced his country from the Soviet Union by maintaining diplomatic relations with Israel after 1967 and, in a spectacular move, by vehemently condemning the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968.

Ceaușescu's courageous condemnation of the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia deserves closer analysis, although more than thirty years later, it is easy to see the Prague Spring as no more than a political illusion. However, in a historical-genetic perspective, to use the historian François Furet's term, in 1968, the project of humanist reform of socialism and, consequently, the transcendence of the hypercentralized one-party state model promoted by Lenin and his disciples was still perceived as having a future. After the events of 1989, it appeared quite clear that there was no reformist solution within the limits of the system, but this was not as simple for participants in the Prague Spring in 1968.

The Prague Spring was one of the succession of crises in world communism inaugurated by the Hungarian revolution in 1956. The Hungarian lesson, as Alexander Dubček wrote in his memoirs, essentially influenced the conceptualization of the Czechoslovak leaders' tactics and the decisions made by the Warsaw Pact countries. The power structures taking shape in Bucharest, the limits of the reforms initiated by Ceaușescu, and the extent to which Romanian communists agreed to the idea of a gradual abandonment of the Jacobin-Bolshevik model, in favor of a more democratic one, were the key factors that led to Romanian exceptionalism, as compared with the Czechoslovak experiment.

In order to reconstruct the historical background of the Prague Spring, it must be noted that there were important events that preceded it: Khrushchev's ouster in October 1964 and the rise of the Brezhnev-Kosygin team—in other words, the abandonment of reforms plus partial re-Stalinization in the USSR; the persecution of intellectual dissent in Moscow, culminating in the famous Andrei Sinyavsky-Yuli Daniel trial in 1966; the genesis of Eurocommunism in the "memorial note" of the Italian communist leader Palmiro Togliatti, written in Yalta in the USSR shortly before his death in the summer of

1964; the intensification of the Sino-Soviet polemic; and the inevitable split in the communist world. In Romania, the Ninth Congress marked the ambivalence of the period: on the one hand, a Tito-style opening and external autonomy; on the other, concentration of power in the hands of Ceaușescu and his unconditional supporters. Therefore, the paradox that fueled Ceaușescu's claim to be recognized as an exponent of the line based on national sovereignty and dignity became evident especially after 1968. The dialectics of de-Stalinization and de-Sovietization unfolded, and only after August 1968 was it clear that the balance was in favor of the latter.

What was happening in Czechoslovakia during that period? After the conservative group led by Novotny blocked the de-Stalinization process, the political, social, and cultural crisis deepened. The Conference of the Writers' Union in the spring of 1967 highlighted the divorce between intellectuals and the party leadership. Then the conflict between the Czech and the Slovak communists led to a split at the top. In January 1968, Dubček became first secretary, and in only a couple of months, the timid program of rationalization of state socialism was transformed into a daring strategy of radical institutional reform.²⁶ The Polish and East German leaders panicked and pressed Moscow to act. All the archival documents support the idea that the Warsaw Pact troops intervened in order to interrupt this experiment in the implementation of a democratic socialism. In other words, the intervention was based on the fear of the ossified Leninist bureaucracies that the Czechoslovak model was contagious and would contribute to the dissolution of the communist empire as a whole.

In Romania, Ceaușescu continued to wield absolute control, notwithstanding friendly declarations addressed to the new leadership in Prague. The dogma of the communist party's "leading role" was proclaimed without letup. The Action Program of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, adopted in April 1968, was published only in fragments, avoiding any mention of the abolition of censorship and the establishment of independent political and cultural associations. Ceaușescu used the rehabilitation of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu and other persecutees in the Gheorghiu-Dej years to consolidate his own position in the party and not for a broad indictment of the secret police. The party leadership's role in allowing (and even masterminding) the Stalinist terror was conveniently limited to Dej and Drăghici. Stalinism in general was never examined seriously in a self-critical way in pre-1989 Romania. None of Romania's leading democratic figures who had died

victims of Stalinist repression were rehabilitated under Ceaușescu. Instead, the party's ideological apparatus insidiously manipulated expectations of change. The national communist contract sketched in the declaration of April 1964 functioned as a shock absorber, discouraging any thought of emulating the Czechoslovak experiment.

Far from recognizing the role of the market in the economy, the Romanian communists persisted in calling for an absurd rate of industrial growth based on an anachronistic model of economic self-reliance. Their solidarity with Dubček was based on common rejection of the imperialist claims of the USSR and not on similarities in domestic politics. When a group of intellectuals in Prague published the famous "Two Thousand Word Manifesto" in June 1968, the closely supervised press in Bucharest completely ignored this appeal for a far-reaching pluralization of the system. Similarly, in May 1968, when the Czech communist ideologue Cestmir Cisař took the opportunity of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Karl Marx's birth to distance himself from the Bolshevik tradition, there was complete silence in Bucharest.²⁷ Ideological debate in the Ceaușescu years amounted to a collection of platitudes about "creative Marxism." Abandoning Leninism as the party's ideology was not on the agenda in Bucharest.

This period saw the emergence of what later become known as the Brezhnev Doctrine of limited sovereignty, on the basis of which the intervention of Warsaw Pact forces in Czechoslovakia in August 1968 was justified. (In reality, this was merely a reformulation of the older dogma of unconditional solidarity with the Soviet Union.) In the Prague Spring, Ceaușescu skillfully played the card of independence and anti-Sovietism. His opposition to Moscow's intervention in Czechoslovakia did not, however, mean support for democratic socialism, only rejection of the Kremlin's desire to control the whole bloc—in other words, of the right of the Warsaw Pact nations to intervene in the internal affairs of member states. As in the Solidarity era in Poland and the Gorbachev period, Ceaușescu dismissed any real reform as "treason to socialist principles." Defying Soviet hegemony simply helped him construct an international image for himself, which he later exploited relentlessly. The "balcony scene" in August 21, 1968, when Ceaușescu addressed a crowd of over 100,000 from the balcony of the Central Committee building in one of Bucharest's main squares and angrily condemned the Warsaw Pact intervention a few hours after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, which became a national-communist legend, was nothing but a masquerade, but it worked: a power-mad neo-Stalinist leader without the

slightest democratic inclinations succeeded overnight in awakening genuine popular enthusiasm and winning unlimited credit from a population convinced that Romania would follow the line of liberalization and rapprochement with the West. All this notwithstanding, by saying "No" to the Soviet invasion of another socialist country, Romanian communists reasserted their opposition to any effort to restore the Kremlin's hegemony within the bloc and the world revolutionary movement.²⁸

For Ceaușescu and his supporters, the Prague Spring's failure served to justify the dogma of the indestructible unity of party, leader, and nation. The slogan "Partidul, Ceaușescu, România" ("The Party, Ceaușescu, Romania") was ubiquitous at the time and would be deployed extensively until the very end. Anyone who opposed Ceaușescu was guilty of undermining this unity and accused of serving the Kremlin's interests. A fictitious solidarity with Czechoslovakia's "socialism with a human face" justified the perpetuation of an obtuse and ultra-authoritarian model of personal dictatorship. The attempt to reproduce the balcony scene of the summer of 1968 in December 1989 was the farcical sequel.²⁹

In August 1969, Richard Nixon went to Bucharest, where an increasingly self-enamored Ceaușescu triumphantly received him. Glossing over his growing dictatorial propensities, many Western analysts naïvely bought the myth of Ceaușescu as a maverick supernegotiator and the only trustworthy communist leader, which later helped him portray dissidents as traitors.

At the same time, party propaganda put special emphasis on the RCP's "internationalist traditions," and former members of the International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War (such as Petre Borilă, Valter Roman, Mihai Burcă, Gheorghe Stoica, and Vida Geza) and the French *maquis* (Mihail Florescu, Gheorghe Gaston Marin, and Gheorghe Vasilichi) were elected (in some cases reelected) to the central committee at the Ninth Congress.³⁰ Ceaușescu subsequently expressed dissatisfaction with the veterans' grudging positions, especially after the Twelfth Congress (November 1979), when Constantin Pîrvulescu, himself a former general secretary (in 1944) and a veteran of the international communist movement, accused the Supreme Leader of having transformed the party into his personal fief, an instrument for the conservation of his clan's power. Simultaneously, Ceaușescu launched a purge of Gheorghiu-Dej "barons." The most affected of these were Gheorghe Apostol (Gheorghiu-Dej's faithful lieutenant and first secretary of the party in 1954–55); Chivu Stoica (prime minister in the 1950s); and Petre Borilă (who had been a political officer sent by the Comintern

to supervise the International Brigades in Spain). Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer, who had been a victim of Ana Pauker's hostility to the "domestic" communists, supported Ceaușescu's purge of Gheorghiu-Dej's henchmen. Emil Bodnăraș, an expert in Comintern intrigues and former agent of Soviet military intelligence, took the same attitude.³¹ These champions of Romanian Stalinism had witnessed Ceaușescu's rise to prominence and could well have debunked his pretence of being a well-intentioned liberalizer had they chosen to.

Gradually, Ceaușescu managed to eliminate all survivors of Gheorghiu-Dej's politburo politically, although he avoided the outdated Stalinist method of the bloody purge. To take only one example, once expelled from the central committee at the Tenth Congress in 1969, Apostol was initially given a relatively high government job, then a substantial personal pension, and was later appointed Romania's ambassador to Argentina. As for Prime Minister Maurer, after he retired in 1974, he continued to be invited to various solemn ceremonies as living confirmation of the generational continuity of the RCP elite.

The members of the party apparatus group (Ilie Verdeț, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Virgil Trofin, Ion Stănescu, Ion Iliescu, Gheorghe Pană, Dumitru Popescu, János Fazekás, and Ion Ioniță) had been impressed by the general secretary's ability to purge Gheorghiu-Dej's cronies. Most of these people had joined the RCP during its first legal postwar years (1944–46) and had graduated in the 1950s from the CPSU's High Party School in Moscow. Moreover, they were solid national communists and endorsed Ceaușescu's preeminent status in the leadership.

No one contributed more to the implementation of the Ceaușescu myth than Dumitru Popescu, an arrogant apparatchik who for almost fifteen years was secretary of the central committee in charge of cultural-ideological affairs. Popescu claimed to be a novelist, but his publications were ludicrous experiments in party apologetics. Demoted in 1981 from secretariat membership, he was appointed rector of the "Ștefan Gheorghiu" Party School (bombastically called "the Academy").³² Paul Niculescu-Mizil, once portrayed as the regime's main ideologist, was appointed president of the obscure Council of Consumers' Cooperatives.³³

The political emasculation of the party apparatus coincided with two major processes: (a) Elena Ceaușescu's ascension to the highest party echelons, following the RCP national conference in 1972, and (b) Ceaușescu's increasing reliance on activists directly and personally linked to and promoted by him. New criteria for the promotions of cadres were

devised to allow the general secretary's wife to become the party's second in command.

Elena Ceaușescu, née Petrescu, managed to oust and harass members of the party apparatus and acquire a personal court of hagiographers (Emil Bobu, central committee secretary in charge of army, police, and security affairs; Ion Dincă, first vice prime minister; and Lina Ciobanu and Alexandrina Găinușe, who had become members of the political executive committee on Elena Ceaușescu's recommendation). Under Gheorghiu-Dej and during the first years of Ceaușescu's leadership, Elena kept a low profile. As director of the Institute for Chemical Research (ICECHIM) in Bucharest, she belonged only to local party organizations such as the "16 Februarie" *raion* (district), and, later, after 1965, to the Bucharest municipal party committee. The Polytechnical Institute in Bucharest granted her scientific titles under Gheorghiu-Dej, despite the opposition of prominent Romanian chemists like Costin D. Nenițescu. Her relations with Gheorghiu-Dej's daughter, the once all-powerful Lica Gheorghiu-Rădoi, were strained, and Elena sought to establish close connections with the wives (or ex-wives) of other members of Gheorghiu-Dej's politburo, such as Stela Moghioroș, Natalia Răutu, Sanda Rangheț, and Ecaterina Micu-Chivu (Klein).

Immediately after Ceaușescu's coming to power, Elena insisted on granting privileges to several women who had been active in the communist underground: Stela Moghioroș, Ghizela Vass, Ecaterina Micu-Chivu, Sanda Rangheț, Ana Toma (who was married to Pintilie Bodnarenko, the former chief of the political police under Gheorghiu-Dej), Eugenia Rădăceanu (the widow of Lothar Rădăceanu, a prominent social democratic fellow traveler), Tatiana Bulan (who had been married to Leonte Răutu and Ștefan Foriș before her marriage to Iakov Bulan, a Soviet officer who became the rector of the Military Academy in Bucharest in the 1950s), Sanda Rangheț, and Ofelia Manole. Elena Ceaușescu's purpose was to set up a constellation of relations to strengthen her authority within the party's old guard. Since personal elements have played such an amazing role in the history of communist sects and regimes, it is worth noting that Elena deeply disliked Marta Drăghici, Alexandru Drăghici's wife, whose career in the illegal party was by far more impressive than her own.³⁴ While trying to create political prestige, Elena Ceaușescu received generous help from Mihail Florescu (Mihail Iacobi), then minister of chemical industry and a former fighter in the French Resistance (southern zone), in acquiring a leading position in Romanian chemical research. At the end of the 1960s, all Ro-

manian chemical research institutes were subordinated to Elena's, and she became a member of the ministry's college, the "collective" leading body. The pensioning off of the veteran party economist Alexandru Bîrlădeanu in 1969 was a major defeat for the forces of reform in scientific and technological research in Romania, and the appointment of colorless apparatchiks to supervisory positions favored Elena's rise in the hierarchy, initially as chairman of the National Council for Science and Technology, then as deputy prime minister and member of the party's executive committee.

In his report to the RCP's Tenth Congress, held August 6–12, 1969, Ceaușescu stressed that the fundamental goal of the party's policy was the economic development of the country and the creation of a "multilaterally developed socialist society."³⁵ Furthermore, Ceaușescu insisted that this "multilaterally developed socialist society" would be superior to capitalist society from all perspectives. At the same congress, Ceaușescu lauded the creation of the Socialist Unity Front (Frontul Unității Socialiste), an all-encompassing political organization that included the trade unions and women's and youth organizations; practically every citizen above the age of eighteen became a member of the Socialist Unity Front. The official line was that the new organization allowed everyone to express their opinions about the advance toward communism. In reality, it was just another instrument for controlling the Romanian society by mimicking the concept of political participation and inducing apathy among the population.³⁶

Ceaușescu's Stalinist inclinations were catalyzed by a trip he made in May 1971 to China and North Korea. He appears to have considered the possibility of importing the methods of indoctrination used during Mao's Cultural Revolution to Romania. This was not just a matter of personal preference: Ceaușescu was trying to contain the liberalization movement in Romania, curb intellectual unrest, and deter students from emulating their rebellious peers in other communist states. He was also trying to consolidate his personal power and get rid of those in the apparatus who might be dreaming of "socialism with a human face." Thus, in July 1971, he published his "proposal for the improvement of ideological activity," a monument of Zhdanovist obscurantism. What followed was a radical re-Stalinization and the emergence of an unprecedented cult of personality surrounding, first, himself and then, after 1974, his closest political partner, his wife Elena.

At the RCP's Eleventh Congress, held November 25–28, 1974, Ceaușescu began to focus on the problems of socialism in developing coun-

tries in an attempt to establish his reputation as a fighter for a “new international economic and political order,” calls for the establishment of which became a regular feature of Romanian foreign policy statements.³⁷ Romania was an “invited guest” at the Nonaligned Movement’s Colombo Conference in 1976, and it was quite obvious that Ceaușescu had ambitions to become a second Tito in the Nonaligned Movement. According to Ceaușescu, nonaligned countries had to challenge the superpowers’ domination of the world and band together to provide solutions to international conflicts. However, Romania proved to be much less influential than Yugoslavia, which was a founding member of the Nonaligned Movement.

The Eleventh Congress approved the Romanian Communist Party Program (RCP),³⁸ the founding document of Romanian national communism, which opened with a 35-page history of Romania. The RCP was intended to provide the party and state strategy for the coming twenty to twenty-five years; it did not last that long. More important, the RCP illustrates Ceaușescu’s fascination with “national” history as a whole and not only with the RCP’s history (the “elaboration” of which he had called important in his report to the Ninth Congress in 1965).³⁹ After 1974, the RCP became the model for all historical writing officially published in Romania. Two main ideas that became sacred themes of “national” historiography emerged from the RCP: (1) the idea of Romanians’ territorial continuity since ancient times, and (2) the idea of the unity of the Romanian people.

The RCP’s Twelfth Congress (November 19–23, 1979) visibly established the Ceaușescu clan and its cult.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the active promotion by the Ceaușescus of their youngest son Nicu’s political career dated from the Twelfth Congress, when Nicu became a candidate member of the RCP’s central committee. During the Congress, Constantin Pîrvulescu, an old-time member of the party’s elite until demoted by Gheorghiu-Dej in 1960, dared to challenge Ceaușescu’s monopolization of power. Pîrvulescu, then aged eighty-four, protested against not being granted permission to address the congress. When he was finally allowed to speak, he accused Ceaușescu of putting his personal interests above those of the country. Although he was rapidly silenced, reports of this reached Western media. After the congress, Pîrvulescu disappeared from public life, but he was not killed, notwithstanding rumors to that effect.⁴¹ Despite Pîrvulescu’s intervention, the congress ended with an adulatory ceremony focusing on the presidential couple.

At the Thirteenth Congress of the RCP, November 19–22, 1984, an incredible deluge of praise was showered on the general secretary and his wife.⁴² Petru Enache, the central committee secretary in charge of ideology, said:

In the years that have elapsed since the Twelfth Party Congress, the party and the Central Committee led by Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu personally have carried out an extensive and multifaceted activity. At a time when, as the General Secretary of our party has so tellingly stressed, the world is like a sea with “huge boulders [*sic*] caused by earthquakes, storms, and economic, political, and military hurricanes,” the party has adopted the most realistic solutions and has led the country to new victories with great prospects for our homeland in terms of time and space leading up to a new national epic. Romania has successfully traveled a long, important stretch on the bright road to socialism and communism. The unprecedented achievements in the economy, education, and culture lend our time the image of an impressive renaissance. The great victories won in these years have been possible due to the fact that our bold ship that bears the wonderful name of Socialist Romania has always had as watchman at the tricolor mast a competent and wise steersman, an experienced leader, namely Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, the politician who, constantly concerned with fervent patriotism, with the destiny of his people, and acting toward the constant progress of the homeland, has also asserted himself as a great thinker and present-day strategist.⁴³

In her speech, Ana Mureșan, a candidate member of the executive committee and minister of domestic trade, referred to Elena Ceaușescu's accomplishments as follows:

With feelings of great esteem and love we want to convey our appreciation and recognition to Comrade Elena Ceaușescu for the extensive activity she is carrying out in the party and state leadership in drafting and implementing the domestic and foreign policy promoted by Socialist Romania, in developing scientific research, education, and culture; for the valuable guidance granted to the National Women's Council; for the generosity and devotion with which she acts toward the country's progress, the people's well-being, toward strengthening and protecting the family, and toward raising and educating the young generation.⁴⁴

The Ceaușescu personality cult is evocative of Romania's ambiguous Byzantine heritage. Stalinism and Byzantinism culminated in a synthesis of exacerbated ambition, megalomaniac tyranny, and apocryphal nationalism.⁴⁵ An increasing (and ineluctable) incompetence smothered the decision-making process, while the general secretary urged his underlings “to do their best” to implement his “precious indications.” Trond Gilberg notes that in the end “such a concentration of power means that a few individuals must deal with extremely complicated problems in an

increasingly differentiated society. It is beyond the capacity of even the smartest and best intentioned individual to accomplish this task."⁴⁶ However, the system practiced in Romania was more than an oligarchic "dictatorship over needs" (a term coined by György Lukács's disciples known as the Budapest School), since it entailed a systematic assault on the human mind and annihilation of critical intelligence.⁴⁷

Although it remained intact, the party apparatus was increasingly threatened and humiliated. Even the former vice prime minister Cornel Burtică, a stalwart of the Ceaușescu clan, was expelled from the party, apparently because of his failure to carry out the Conducător's economic directives.⁴⁸ Servile executors of Ceaușescu's orders replaced most members of the party apparatus group, such as Constantin Dăscălescu, Romania's prime minister, a former secretary of the Galați County party committee, whose only merit consisted of serving as the whip for Ceaușescu's idiosyncrasies and rancor.⁴⁹ Emil Bobu, Iosif Banc, Cornel Păcoste, and Petru Enache were all subjugated by the ruling clique too. Among the few old-timers who survived in prestigious positions were Gheorghe Rădulescu, Manea Mănescu, and Mihail Florescu. Although he remained a member of the party's executive committee and vice-president of the state council, Rădulescu had no real influence in the decision-making process. Mănescu, who reemerged after 1982 as a member of the executive committee, was thought to be one of Elena Ceaușescu's confidants and a loyal follower of the general secretary. Florescu, a former fighter in the International Brigades and the last Jewish member of the central committee (he was reelected at the Fourteenth Congress in November 1989) was Elena's right-hand man at the National Council for Science and Technology, owing his survival to her, since she relied on his expertise in chemical industry.⁵⁰

The few remaining intellectuals of stature were dropped from the central committee at the RCP's Thirteenth Congress in 1984. Among them were Eugen Jebeleanu, a distinguished poet and one of the leaders of the liberal wing of the Union of Writers; George Macovescu, formerly foreign minister and until 1982 president of the Union of Writers; and Mihnea Gheorghiu, president of the Academy of Social and Political Sciences.

In the meantime, the couple's favorite offspring, Nicu, increasingly became prominent. Born in September 1951, Nicu was the only one of the presidential couple's children interested in politics. He was made leader of the Union of Communist Students' Associations of Romania in 1972; and in 1983, he became the first secretary of the Communist Youth Union (UTC). At the RCP's Twelfth Congress, Nicu became a

candidate member of the central committee and secretary of the Grand National Assembly; at the RCP's national conference in 1982, a full member of the central committee; and at the Thirteenth Congress, in November 1984, a candidate member of the executive committee. Nicu's wife, Poliana Cristescu, was the head of the Pioneer Organization and secretary of the Union of Communist Youth; and at the Thirteenth Congress, she was elected a full member of the central committee.

Although he did not receive praise similar to that showered on his parents, Nicu's international contacts and initiatives, particularly as chairman of the United Nations Youth Year Commission, were publicized in the Romanian press. Moreover, he succeeded in promoting his friends as members of the central committee. Cornel Pacoste, the former secretary of the party committee of the Bucharest University center became a candidate member of the party's executive committee and first secretary of the Timiș County committee. Pantelimon Găvănescu, Nicu's predecessor as leader of the UTC, and Eugen Florescu, former editor in chief of the UTC's official newspaper, *Scînteia tineretului*, became members of the central committee. Other protégés of Nicu's, such as Tudor Mohora, Constantin Boștină, Ion Traian Ștefănescu, Ion Sasu, and Nicolae Croitoru—who were associated with him in the secretariat of the Communist Youth Organization—became influential members of the nomenklatura as secretaries of RCP county committees or in similar, no less significant, capacities.

In fact, after the Thirteenth Congress of the RCP, no one was left in the party who could challenge or correct the policies of Romania's ruling family. Quite logically, the official resolution adopted at the congress accurately mirrored the prevailing political system:

In the comprehensive work of building the new system, the great achievements in the period opened by the Ninth Party Congress are particularly noticeable, achievements which are indestructibly linked to the extensive activity carried out with clear-sightedness and in a profound, creative spirit, with revolutionary devotion and fervent patriotism by Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, party General Secretary and president of the Republic, founder of modern Romania, the national hero who with boundless devotion serves the supreme interests of all our people, and under whose wise leadership the Romanian people have registered the richest accomplishments—in their entire history—in the past 20 years, a period that has definitely entered our nation's awareness as the "Ceaușescu era."⁵¹

Some analysts regarded Virgil Trofin as a main contender for power in the event of a succession crisis. A member of the group that had ensured

Ceaușescu's victory over his rivals in Gheorghiu-Dej's politburo, and appointed a central committee secretary in charge of cadres after the Ninth Congress, Trofin provoked the Supreme Leader's animosity and fell into disgrace after 1970. He was finally demoted from the position of minister of mines, oil, and geology as a result of an open confrontation with the general secretary. Appointed chairman of the Central Council of Artisans' Cooperatives, Trofin further offended Ceaușescu's vainglory, thus ending his career; his expulsion from the RCP's central committee was confirmed on November 25–26, 1981.⁵² Ceaușescu brooked no criticism.

Suppressing Dissent, Celebrating the Leader

Dissent in Romania, a country where "revisionist" Marxism never came to maturity, was reduced to quixotic stances, all the more heroic since those who voiced unorthodox views could not count on solidarity or support from colleagues. Michael Shafir quotes a Western specialist in Eastern European affairs who told him in the early 1980s that "Romanian dissent lives in Paris and his name is Paul Goma."⁵³ In January 1977, Goma sent a letter of solidarity to Pavel Kohout, one of the leaders of the Czechoslovak Charter 77 group. Goma also wrote an appeal to the Belgrade conference, demanding that the provisions of the Helsinki Conference of 1975 regarding human rights to be observed by the Ceaușescu regime. However, apart from his fellow writer Ion Negoïtescu and the psychiatrist Ion Vianu, no Romanian intellectuals supported Goma. On the contrary, in the pages of the xenophobic magazine *Săptămîna*, Goma's Bessarabian family background was cited as an explanation for his refusal to submit to the imperatives of "national unanimity" around the general secretary. Eventually, some 200 people signed Goma's appeal, but the overwhelming majority of these were seeking a passport—the so-called "Goma passport"—in order to emigrate. Goma was arrested on April 1, 1977, but released on May 6, 1977, as the result of an international campaign; in November 1977, he left Romania for Paris, together with his wife and son.⁵⁴

Other Romanian dissidents, such as Dorin Tudoran, Doina Cornea, Dan Petrescu, Liviu Cangeopol, Mircea Dinescu, Gabriel Andreescu, and Radu Filipescu, experienced similar isolation and lack of support. The regime managed to inculcate fear and a feeling of historical pessimism. The party responded to civil disobedience with draconian measures, and religious and national minorities were harassed. Radu

Filipescu, Amnesty International's Prisoner of the Month for December 1984, received a ten-year prison term for "propaganda against the socialist order." A young Romanian electronics engineer (born in 1956), Filipescu was charged with having written and distributed leaflets indicting Ceaușescu's economic mismanagement and dictatorial rule.⁵⁵

Until the 1989 collapse, "living in truth" was not an option for a majority of the Romanian intellectual elite.⁵⁶ Furthermore, a cross-class alliance, in the sense of intellectuals' support for the Jiu Valley miners' strike of August 1977 or for the Brașov protest of November 1987, did not develop. Until the 1987 Brașov workers revolt, the Romanian working class was more likely to espouse various forms of "muddling through" than to raise its voice against the regime.⁵⁷ Between 1964 and 1977, owing to the regime's skillful association of industrialization and nationalism, the "new social contract" functioned well. Not even after the 1987 Brașov workers' revolt did a cross-class alliance between critical intellectuals and discontented workers develop.⁵⁸

To add insult to injury, collaborators recruited from among minority ethnic groups were handpicked by Ceaușescu to endorse his claim to have discovered the most appropriate Marxist-Leninist solution to the national question. Thus, according to Mihai Gere, a candidate member of the RCP's executive committee and chairman of the Council of Working People of Hungarian Nationality in Romania, the national question was solved in a "highly humanistic way." Any criticism of Ceaușescu's xenophobia was perfidious, anti-Romanian propaganda: "We have learned of late of increasingly frequent positions, conceptions and stands abroad that distort the history of the Romanian people [and] realities in present-day Socialist Romania, the way the national question was solved; all this is a slander and gross interference in our life and domestic affairs."⁵⁹

Hostility toward any nucleus of independent thought is, of course, a feature of totalitarianism. The very principle of otherness has to be uprooted to accomplish perfect conditioning of the mind, the sine qua non of the totalitarian logic of domination. No centers (real or potential) of dissent or of pluralism can be allowed to surface. Truth is pragmatically defined according to political criteria.

The "helmsman of national destiny" was also a clear-minded theorist and the author of breathtaking ideological discoveries, among them the enigmatic "multilaterally developed socialist society." Party flacks portrayed Ceaușescu as the founder of a new socialism: "The election of Nicolae Ceaușescu, a brilliant political thinker and revolutionary leader, an implacable foe of routine and isolation, and consistent promoter of

the new, as head of the party was a political act of overwhelming importance to the future of socialist and communist construction in Romania," one proclaimed. "Under the impetus of his revolutionary thought and action, the Ninth Party Congress as well as the subsequent congresses and national conferences made extensive innovations in the conception and practice of building the new order."⁶⁰ A vast accumulation of power in Ceaușescu's hands opened the way to arbitrariness, subjectivism, and personalist excesses. He was aptly described as a "latter-day Caesar."⁶¹ More than anything else, he seemed to relish Byzantine pageantry and monarchic symbols: the presidential scepter, which was introduced on March 28, 1974, at Ceaușescu's inauguration as the first president of Romania was perhaps the first palpable sign of an unfolding dynastic scenario.⁶²

The cult of the Conducător, the main ingredient of what might be called the "Romanian ideology" (to echo the title of the French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy's book *L'Idéologie française*) permeated Romanian social and cultural life.⁶³ One of the earliest expressions of Ceaușescu's cult was an oversized volume entitled *Omagiu* (Homage) published in 1973 on the occasion of Ceaușescu's fifty-fifth birthday, which inter alia declared: "We gaze with esteem, with respect, at the harmony of his family life. We attach special ethical significance to the fact that his life—together with that of his life comrade, the former textile worker and UTC militant, member of the Party since the days of illegality, today Hero of Socialist Labor, scientist, member of the Central Committee of the RCP, comrade Elena Ceaușescu—offers an exemplary image of the destinies of two communists."⁶⁴

By the mid 1980s, the cult had developed unprecedented, unbelievable forms, far outdoing its relatively benign expressions in the early 1970s. The twentieth anniversary of Ceaușescu's election as general secretary unleashed an avalanche of dithyrambic hymns and odes bound to titillate the Supreme Leader's insatiable appetite for glory. The servile praise of Corneliu Vadim Tudor, not only an indefatigable presidential minstrel but the author of vicious antisemitic pamphlets, bordered on deification: "We rejoice in the providential existence of this man, so deeply attached to our ancestral soil, we should rejoice in his eternal youth, we should be grateful for being his contemporaries and thank him for all this. It is only through his will that we are now really masters in the house of our souls."⁶⁵

Every January 26—Ceaușescu's birthday—was an occasion of solemn ceremonies and slavish tributes to his "genius." All Romanian media

hailed his “exceptional merits,” and no hyperbole was too generous when it came to exalting the president’s accomplishments. Similarly, Elena Ceaușescu’s merits in the field of science, technology, and culture were ceaselessly underscored in party propaganda. From among a thousand examples, here is a masterpiece of spineless subservience, the letter addressed to her by the RPC’s executive committee on her birthday in 1986:

The entire country highly appreciates the outstanding activity you carry out in the field of science and technology. . . . Your valuable work—crowned by the high distinctions and titles awarded to you by some of the most prestigious scientific, cultural and educational institutions from around the world—represents, much to the pride of all our people, a greatly important contribution to ensure the flourishing of the national and universal science and culture, as a brilliant example of revolutionary abnegation and deep concern with the cause of Socialist Romania’s flourishing and the cause of all the nation’s progress and civilization.⁶⁶

According to reliable sources, Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu personally supervised the content of the slogans and chants expressing the allegedly spontaneous enthusiasm for them of the masses. Once unleashed, the mechanism of the cult acquired its own dynamic and was a springboard for intellectual parvenus and professional careerists pandering to the general secretary’s lust for glory. Narcissistic self-delusions became a social norm of behavior, and traditional commonsense criteria lost their validity. Jovan Raskovic, a Yugoslav professor of social psychiatry and neurophysiology, summarized Eastern European communist leaders’ vainglorious hunger for fame and power as follows:

People surrounding the leader know very well what would gratify his narcissism; this is what they are serving him from day to day. This succumbing of the leader (to such flattery) not only maintains the emotional composure of the leader, but also the whole social network and the whole system. By catering to other people’s narcissism, one strengthens one’s own hand and therefore one’s own narcissism. This is why narcissism comes to apply no longer to an individual but to the whole group, the whole political movement, with which the leader shares his fate, glory, wisdom, and power.⁶⁷

The Romanian case epitomized the malignant outgrowth of narcissism, with the entire population subjected to an erratic Stalinist dictator’s dreams of imperial grandeur.

On January 26, 1986, *Scinteia* devoted almost an entire issue to the president’s birthday. On the front page, a red border surrounded Ceaușescu’s picture and a 700-word editorial, “The Entire Nation Honors

the Country's Great Hero."⁶⁸ The same issue carried numerous poems and articles by university professors, with such titles as "The Great Architect," "The Golden Age," and "The Precious Hour in January," expressing the people's "feelings of esteem and appreciation."⁶⁹ On January 24, 1986, under the rubric "Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu's Work and Activity," *Scinteia* published an article entitled "Forceful Ideas of the Concept Regarding the Revolutionary Process of Romania's Socioeconomic Development," written by Gheorghe Rădulescu, a member of the RPC's executive committee, vice president of the state council, and one of the few old-timers still holding high rank in the RCP hierarchy. Rădulescu, who privately liked to posture as a closet liberal, proudly confessed: "I will never forget the boldness with which he [Ceaușescu] led the anti-fascist and anti-war manifestation on May Day 1939, attended by various anti-fascist students."⁷⁰ At the time of the "manifestation" in question, the twenty-one-year-old Nicolae Ceaușescu did not, of course, belong to the central committee of the underground RCP.

Why Ceaușescu Succeeded for So Long

Power and ideology were deeply intertwined in the functioning of Ceaușescu's personal dictatorship. The ideology of the Romanian communist regime commingled nationalist populism, social demagoguery, and adamant attachment to basic Stalinist tenets. This conglomerate was pervaded by an ambiguity primarily rooted in Ceaușescu's ambition to pose as an open-minded diplomat, immune to dogmatic or sectarian interpretations of international life. Furthermore, the general secretary challenged the Soviet Union on certain issues (for example the Middle East, the Czechoslovak crisis in August 1968, and relations with China), and his controversial views on these topics were codified as official party doctrine.⁷¹ Within world communism, Ceaușescu applied the concepts of national sovereignty and equality to interstate and communist party relations. He consistently rebuffed Moscow's attempts in the late 1960s and 1970s to enlist Romania in its anti-Chinese campaigns. In 1968, he supported the Greek communists who founded the breakaway Greek Communist Party (Interior) in exile in Romania and expelled the pro-Soviet KKE Kostas Kolliyannis faction from the country, and he had regular consultations with the Yugoslav leadership. Furthermore, primarily because he needed good relations with parties outspokenly critical of Soviet expansionism, Ceaușescu expressed qualified support for Eurocommu-

nism and defended the leaders of the Spanish and Italian communist parties against Soviet attacks. First, Enrico Berlinguer, then Alessandro Natta often visited Bucharest to meet Ceaușescu. Furthermore, Santiago Carrillo was publicly described as Ceaușescu's personal friend.

The numerous publications signed by Nicolae Ceaușescu reveal the sterility of his rudimentary ideological approach. The style is peremptory and exhortatory, and there are no personal references to contemporary politicians. No trace of even a modest sense of humor humanizes these aseptic texts. The harangues of the general secretary were a chain of verbal incantations, and it seems as though Ceaușescu found something like a source of self-confidence in this monotonous repetition. His dogmatic arrogance prohibited intellectual competence. Ignoring the elitism of his own leadership, he incessantly attacked the very idea of elites. Enconced in their pyramids of privilege, the Romanian communist autocrats could not abide meritocracy, which they rightly perceived as a mortal threat to their power. In an illuminating essay on the predicament of the Romanian intelligentsia, Dorin Tudoran pointed precisely to the systematic imposition of false elites in order to maintain control over society: "Political power in Romania does not repudiate elites, but only *the natural elite, that of values*. . . . The latter has been replaced by an ersatz elite, whose governing principle is not value, but politics, ideology, obedience, the whims of those at the summit, their utmost personal interest in the preservation of power."⁷²

In Romania, the command economy was the basis of a vertical, rigidly authoritarian political system, with a whole cohort of aberrant social effects. The party—that is, Ceaușescu—conceived of societal development along military lines, with fronts, campaigns, flanks, and avant- and rearguard. Ironically, the euphemism "fulfillment of socialist democracy" was bestowed on this military-hierarchical pattern.⁷³ No attention was paid to real political feedback, and political communication as a mechanism of societal self-correction was severely restricted. Despite all the propagandistic fireworks, Ceaușescu's Romania was a closed society, characterized by repression in all areas of human existence: property restrictions, hard labor and low wages, lack of freedom of movement, bureaucratic hurdles against emigration, violations of national minorities' rights, contempt for religious beliefs and persecution of religious practices, dramatic economic austerity, consistent cultural censorship, a crackdown on all dissenting views, and an all-embracing cult surrounding the president and his family that took its toll on the population's morale.⁷⁴

In Stalinist logic, ideology and power cannot be dissociated: they influence, infuse, and penetrate each other. As a consequence, exponents of neo-Stalinist regimes (or, as Leszek Kolakowski once called them, “ailing Stalinist societies”) have to stick to their ideological orthodoxy to preserve the main source of their legitimacy. In Ceaușescu’s case, ideological and political constraints were incessantly reinforced and reform was perpetually delayed by institutional reorganizations. Confronted with increasing repression, outrageous economic mismanagement, and social and political paralysis, Romanians had to choose between internal exile—silent survival in their homeland—and emigration.

National Communism Romanian-style?

The RCP’s old guard had been neutralized or died off, and the “second generation” was bereft of institutional underpinnings. Ultranationalist claims were exacerbated, and Marxist-Leninist ideology was nothing but a hollow ritual. A Third World view of development colored Ceaușescu’s triumphalist, crazily optimistic belief in economic growth. The Achilles’ heel of the regime was, however, its anemic legitimacy—it lacked genuine political authority. The allegedly charismatic leadership was not, in fact, charismatic. Far from being the “national hero” celebrated by the official media, Ceaușescu was an apparatchik—indeed, the incarnation of the communist apparatus and its main defender.⁷⁵

Ceaușescu was a prisoner of his own myth. Like Stalin, he was led by a chain of psycho-emotional identifications to believe that he embodied historical rationality. He regarded himself as the living symbol of the party’s strength and continuity, and he expected others to do the same. As we have seen, he had grown up in the spirit of “revolution from above,” willingly participated in the most extreme Stalinist excesses in Romania, and certainly did not retreat when confronted with popular discontent. Since it relied primarily on the supremacy of the party nomenklatura, guaranteed by political police terror, Ceaușescu’s regime cannot be described as a deviation from the Marxist-Leninist pattern, although there were *narodnik* overtones to Romanian communist political terminology. First and foremost, this ideology played upon nationalistic biases, exploited and cultivated anti-Hungarian and antisemitic prejudices, capitalized on deeply entrenched anti-Russian resentments, and encouraged absurd attempts to demonstrate Romanian superiority over the Western world in certain areas of science and culture (the

themes of so-called Romanian protochronism).⁷⁶ Whether these shrill campaigns were the result of an unavowed inferiority complex or of nostalgia for the Zhdanovite witch-hunts of years gone by against “rootless cosmopolites” (i.e., Jews) is debatable.

The Whole and the Parts

As a political philosophy, Stalinism emphasized the superiority of the whole over the parts, the preeminence of the society over the individual.⁷⁷ For the Romanian regime—as for the Soviet one, for that matter—the individual was a mere term of abstract reference. Stalinism cannot be reduced to the preeminence of political power and mass terror, however, without the risk of underrating other features no less structural in Soviet-types regimes, and there is a large dose of wishful thinking in the following statement from Tom Bottomore’s *Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, notwithstanding that it reflects a frequent interpretation of communist realities: “Stalin’s successors did not fundamentally transform the main structures of the regime they inherited from him. But they did bring mass repression and terror to an end; and it is in this sense that Stalinism may be said to have come to a close with the death of Stalin.”⁷⁸

The source of power in Romania was the monolithic party apparatus, the collective dictates of the RCP’s bureaucracy as embodied in the pronouncements of the Conducător. To frustrate any member of the nomenklatura who might seek to carve out a personal political fief, Ceaușescu accelerated the rotation of bureaucrats. Like Stalin, he did not allow the emergence of rival centers of authority, and those who ignored this paid dearly for their halting attempts to introduce a little debate into the party’s decision-making.

Although the Leninist theoretical legacy was less invoked in Romania than in other communist countries, Ceaușescu never departed from the despotic rules instituted by the Bolsheviks after 1921: elimination of any form of intraparty democracy, bureaucratic centralism, and the omnipotence of the general secretary. He could not accept factional struggles and had a militaristic view of the party’s role and structure. Since party and leader were identical in his mind, the cult of the party implied the deification of the leader.⁷⁹ Byzantine rituals of glorification were interspersed with claims to Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, while humble underlings competed in eulogizing the Conducător’s valor and “clear-

sightedness." Enver Hoxha apart, no other Eastern European leader in the post-Stalin era managed to engineer such a systematic, theatrical cult of personality. This all-encompassing cult of personality likely will immortalize Ceaușescu in the history of Marxism.

In November 1985, at Romania's first Congress of Science and Instruction, Elena Ceaușescu was "appointed unanimously" (not elected) as chair of the new Council for Science and Instruction. She benefited from a parallel cult of personality, with volumes of pseudo-poetry published to worship her "tremendous scientific achievements" and "warm generosity." At the same congress, Nicolae Ceaușescu was said to be the strategist of Romania's overall economic policy, whereas Elena was celebrated as the chief executor of this policy and the guarantor of its implementation in the future.⁸⁰ In 1986, Elena's birthday anniversary ceremonies reached a climax in terms of public adulation. Elena and Nicolae Ceaușescu were portrayed as "the historic couple whose existence merges with the country's destiny."⁸¹ The poet Ion Gheorghe made ecstatic references to the "trinity" and the "three dimensions" of the "sacred unity" formed by Nicolae Ceaușescu, Elena Ceaușescu, and the fatherland.⁸² This sycophantic elephantiasis culminated in the journalist Ilie Purcaru's entranced description of Elena Ceaușescu, "The woman who today, side by side with the man at the country's helm, is taking upon her shoulders—fragile as any woman's shoulders but strong and unswerving through her strong and unwavering beliefs—overwhelming missions and responsibilities, serving the nation with a devotion that none of our women has attained before."⁸³

The Romanian writer Ana Blandiana offered an accurate image of the general malaise in Ceaușescu's Romania in a poem entitled "Everything":

... Leaves, words, tears,
 Cans, cats,
 Infrequently a tram, lines for flour,
 Grain moths, empty bottles, speeches,
 Protracted images on television,
 Colorado beetles, gasoline,
 Tiny flags, the European Champions' Cup,
 Trucks with gas cylinders, *well-known portraits*,
 ... Rumors,
 The television serial every Saturday, coffee substitute,
 People struggling for peace, choirs,
 The output per hectare,
 Gerovital,⁸⁴ cops in plain clothes on Victory Street,

The "Hymn to Romania" festival, Adidas shoes,
 Bulgarian canned fruit, anecdotes, ocean fish,
Everything.⁸⁵ [Emphasis added.]

In this somber cultural-political climate, Ceaușescu's delirious cult came to full blossom. His son Nicu seemed predestined to inherit the father's mantle, and chants foreshadowing this event were heard at the so-called "Flacăra Cenacle of Revolutionary Youth" ("Ceaușescu Junior/Our Next Conducător"). Following his mother's example, the first secretary of the UTC became a "scientist of international reputation" and the alleged author of several volumes on nuclear physics.⁸⁶

The language of the Ceaușescu cult was strongly reminiscent of the Iron Guard deification of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the Căpitân, who sought to turn Romania into a paradise, a country "like the sacred sun in the sky." Thus it is legitimate to ask: Was the Romanian regime a mere pathological distortion of a somewhat "healthier," more benign, or at least less indecent, "really existing socialism"? The answer must include (a) the traditions (moral, political, axiological) of the RCP; (b) the faithful conservation of the Stalinist legacy; (c) the estrangement of the intelligentsia; (d) the emergence of technocratic groups ("experts") dissatisfied with Ceaușescu's adventurous and embarrassing course; and (e) the Soviet interest in preserving the internal stability of the Romanian regime.⁸⁷

Via Nicolae Ceaușescu, Byzantinism triumphed in the Romanian communist political culture: intrigues, elimination of enemies through behind-the-scene conspiracies, indulgence in doublethink and doubletalk, demagogy as a national disease, dismissal of genuine ethical concerns, manipulation, and deception, all these repellent features of the Eastern Empire heritage, recaptured and enforced under Stalin, reached a pinnacle in the Ceaușescu personality cult. The members of the party apparatus may have been irritated sometimes by this pageantry, by the attribution of all historical merit to Ceaușescu himself, but they nevertheless enjoyed the psychological effects of the cult, namely, the cauterization of all critical thought. They had only to obey the Conducător's exhortations blindly, and, as long as they did not offend him, they were allowed to keep all (or at least most) of their perquisites. In this respect, the Romanian regime was only a genre of what has been described as the dictatorship of the nomenklatura.⁸⁸

Ceaușescu's interest in ideology depended on shifts in his foreign and domestic policy. The underlying myth of his doctrine may be described

as “socialist Romanianism,” with special emphasis on the national specifics of Romanians’ (a) historical past and traditions, (b) interests, and (c) professed values.⁸⁹ Internationalism was sporadically (and instrumentally) invoked. The general secretary saw himself as an oracle of a coming Third World revolutionary explosion, not as a mere communist leader integrated into the Soviet-dominated “community of socialist states.” In all likelihood, this was the main source of Ceaușescu’s perfunctory rebellion against direct Soviet tutelage. For such an ambitious personality, it was impossible to get along with a higher authority, to endorse the legitimacy of another instance of wisdom and power. He therefore staked his all on an Albanian-style autarchy rather than become an ordinary communist leader like Honecker, Zhivkov, or Husák. Internal party reports in Romania, usually delivered by high-ranking apparatchiks, reveal a certain contempt for the inferior status of other Warsaw Pact leaders in their relations with Moscow. This view was implanted in the party in 1963–64 under Gheorghiu-Dej, then intensified under Ceaușescu, who apparently took pride in rejecting the claims of the Soviet hegemony.

In order to preserve his image as an intransigent fighter for national independence, Ceaușescu often disagreed with Soviet interventions in the international arena. Ion Mihai Pacepa, who was his personal adviser and deputy director of the Romanian Foreign Intelligence Service until 1978, when Pacepa was granted political asylum in the United States, provided fascinating details about Ceaușescu’s ambiguous relations with Moscow. Pacepa was the highest-ranking communist intelligence officer ever to defect to the West. “For all of his economic bungle, Mr. Ceaușescu still delivers valuable exports to the Soviet Union and serves as a conduit for the transmission of Western technology to Moscow,” he said, and, even more telling: “secret bilateral agreements with Moscow, such as those between the two intelligence services for the procurement of Western technology, are sacred obligations for Mr. Ceaușescu.”⁹⁰

Romania exemplified the enduring nature of the crucial contradiction of Stalinism, namely, that between the accumulation of all political power in the leader’s hands and his failure (inability) to ensure a competent decision-making process. An aggravating circumstance was Ceaușescu’s belief that what might be called political magic, or ideological shamanism, could replace common sense, that both human will and reality were infinitely flexible, ready to be molded according to his own utopian blueprints.

Caught in a perpetual tension between his overweening political aspirations and more limited ideological commitments, Ceaușescu tried to fuse a strict Stalinist domestic policy with a simulacrum of “radical Titoism” in foreign affairs. Certainly, it was not the Yugoslav experiment of “workers’ self-management” that he emulated, but the single-minded nationalism that inspired Tito’s rejection of the Cominform ultimatum in 1948–49. Unlike Tito, however, Ceaușescu had no real following of his own country. In order to build one up, all possible dissenting claims were silenced, and the party leader was depicted as the mouthpiece of “national consciousness.” This terrible hoax was reinforced by vociferous national Stalinist writers eager to enjoy Ceaușescu’s confidence and acquire prominent cultural positions. The rampant cult of personality was a grand experiment in Pavlovian reflexes. There is a question as to whether Ceaușescu himself was spellbound by his own legend or a victim of those who cynically manipulated it. Isolated, alienated from the apparatus, and prone to fruitless outbursts, he complained publicly about what he termed “signs of dishonor”—namely, hiding realities from the party leadership. The targets of his attack were county-level apparatchiks and members of the party’s executive committee:

Speaking honestly, sometimes I have the impression that some activists believe that once appointed to a leading position, they can take the liberty to disregard the country’s decisions and laws. . . . I personally have always known that to be a minister or hold some other leading position means great responsibility, and it means to act with even greater determination and exactingness to implement decisions and not to accept any infringement or violation of the state laws and the party’s decisions. This is an elementary requirement for each party member and all the more so for a party leader! Those who do not understand this place themselves on their own outside the party. We are not a discussion club; we are a revolutionary party struggling for socialism, for communism.⁹¹

There was something both hilarious and pathetic in this man’s attempt to posture as a benefactor of the nation, while actually haunted by imperial dreams and incapable of making elementary distinctions between ritualized propaganda clichés and real political processes. It is tempting to discover suggestions for the interpretation of Ceaușescu’s tragicomic performances in Marx’s indictment of Louis Bonaparte: “Only when he eliminates his solemn opponent, when he himself now takes his imperial role seriously, and under the Napoleonic mask imagines that he is the real Napoleon, does he become the victim of his own conception of the world, the serious buffoon who no longer takes world history for a comedy, but his comedy for world history.”⁹²

Structural Crisis and Ideological Decay

Besides Nicolae, Elena, and Nicu, other members of the presidential "tribe" were placed in key positions: one of the general secretary's brothers, Lieutenant General Ilie Ceaușescu, was appointed deputy minister of defense and head of the Higher Political Council of the Romanian army in 1983; another brother, Nicolae A. Ceaușescu, was a lieutenant general in the Ministry of the Interior and head of the Cadres Department (one should not forget that Elena Ceaușescu was the chair of the RCP central committee's Cadres Commission); a third brother, Ion Ceaușescu was minister-secretary of state of the State Planning Commission; Marin, another brother, held a post in foreign trade; Florea, a brother also, was a member of the staff of *Scînteia*; a sister was deputy minister of education until her husband, Vasile Bărbulescu, also a central committee member, became party first secretary in Olt County in 1983. Elena Ceaușescu's brother, Gheorghe Petrescu, was deputy chairman of the General Union of Trade Unions, a member of the central committee, the council of state, and the executive bureau of the Socialist Democracy and Unity Front.⁹³ Furthermore, it was well known at the time that Ceaușescu promoted people from his native village, Scornicești, in Olt County.

Exhortations, threats, and attempts to cajole the working class overshadowed a syndrome of decline that strikingly resembled Matyás Rákosi's last years in power in neighboring Hungary in 1955–56. Rather than enhancing the party's authority, Ceaușescu's mythological legitimacy and faked charisma were a matter of contempt. The Securitate (or "party police," as it was called in Romania) one of the strongest political police forces in the communist world, countered any opposition, but there were signs of centrifugal trends even within this praetorian guard.⁹⁴ Securitate leaders were too well informed about the explosive potential that had built up within the population to stake their all on the ruling family. In analyzing Ceaușescu's endgame, it should not be overlooked that it was the former KGB chairman Aleksandr Shelepin, one of Khrushchev's own protégés, who played the leading role in the October 1964 intraparty coup in the USSR.⁹⁵

Ideological conformity was a smokescreen rather than a genuine substratum of Romanian cultural life. Although the intelligentsia failed to develop a critical consciousness and galvanize an antitotalitarian struggle, it is a mistake to indict the Romanian intelligentsia for its passivity without considering (a) its historical and social background; (b) its sac-

rifices in the aftermath of the communist takeover; and (c) its psychosocial profile.⁹⁶

Making a virtue of necessity, many Romanian intellectuals rationalized their obedience by pretending that political submission was the tribute paid for greater artistic freedom and self-servingly invoking “political realism.” Enthralled and corrupted by pseudo-involvement in the political game, the intelligentsia was naïve enough to hope that the Conducător would share power with it. Once again, they were duped (as they had been in 1956, when they failed to follow the lead of reformist intellectuals in Hungary and Poland).⁹⁷ Moreover, it is fair to say that at least until Ceaușescu’s July 1971 “theses,” inspired by the Chinese Cultural Revolution, nationalism and what was perceived as an exhilarating patriotic revival blocked any serious settlement of accounts with the Stalinists. Disenchantment with the post-1971 neo-Stalinist offensive was, moreover, an individual matter: overall, Romanian intellectuals were bankrupt. Too few of them had dared to call for integral reform of the system. Intellectuals’ protests fell on deaf ears in any case, since hopelessness and anguish tended to thwart any seditious temptation. Party propaganda venomously accused all forms of dissent and protest of bringing grist to the mill of the country’s “enemies”: Western “imperialists,” Hungarian and Soviet anti-Romanian ideologues, exiled politicians of the *ancien régime*. Chauvinism was a favorite device employed by aficionados of the “Romanian ideology” to compromise and render impotent vocal critics of the dictatorship.

The plight of the entire Romanian population—and not only of certain ethnic, religious, and professional groups—was related directly to Ceaușescu’s unrepentant absolutism and reliance upon an anachronistic political and economic model. The poisonous dialectic of chauvinism and irredentism was exacerbated by Ceaușescu’s failure to tackle any really sensitive political issues. As a true Stalinist, he perhaps dreamed of the time under the Georgian dictator when whole “embarrassing” nations could be deported overnight.

Ceaușescu’s August 1983 meeting with party workers and intellectuals in the resort city of Mangalia on the Black Sea was widely perceived as a bewildering twilight syndrome, with the president and his wife bypassing and discarding traditional party channels. The general secretary’s “visionary” directives were prescribed as the sacrosanct view of the party, the ultimate truth. Survivors of the party apparatus group clung to their dubious nomenklatura positions, phantoms of their defunct glory, both actors and spectators in this fateful national neurosis. Intellectuals were

summoned to comply with the resurrected dogmas of “socialist realism,” because reality was not what the artist perceived, but what the party decided it had to be: “We need art, we need to have the movie industry and theaters depict the essence and the model of the man we have to shape! Even if we must sometimes spruce up a hero, it is good to have him become a paragon, so that young people will understand and know that that is how they should be!”⁹⁸ In this ocean of mendacious panegyrics, decency amounted to heresy. Moreover, the debased nationalism preferred by the regime, the basis of Ceașescuism,⁹⁹ could not be attacked without the risk of venomous accusations of “antipatriotism.”

Propaganda asphyxiated reality, and vicious slanders ruined the noblest endeavors to debunk the official imposture. In fact, the cultural situation resembled that in Poland in 1967–68, with Ceașescu and his supporters from the “traditionalist-authoritarian” faction (Eugen Barbu, Ion Lăncrăjan, Adrian Păunescu, Dan Zamfirescu, Nicolae Dragoș, Eugen Florescu, et al.) using the same obscene jingoistic jargon once employed by General Mieczyslaw Moczar and his “partisans.” A single quotation from Moczar suffices to show this: “Everything that our nation did during the years of the last war must be remembered and conveyed to the young generation. . . . These problems must be dealt with by people who understand it, *who feel the breath of the nation* [emphasis added].”¹⁰⁰

The nepotocracy that characterized the Ceașescu regime was the first European experiment in dynastic socialism. In fact, Ceașescu’s dynastic socialism—officially the “multilaterally developed socialist society”—was a combination of Byzantine political rites, Stalinist methodology of deception and manipulation, and resentful fantasies evocative of some Third World tyranny. To the dismay of other communist leaders in the Soviet bloc, no doubt, the Conducător practiced his own version of socialism, in which the individual was sacrificed not only for the benefit of the party but also to the all-consuming appetite for power and Neronian extravaganzas of the universally detested ruling family.

The 1989 Revolution

The more megalomaniac and authoritarian Ceașescu became, the less inclined he was to accept any form of collective leadership. As already mentioned, during the 1970s, he completely dislodged the political faction that had helped him to establish himself as the absolute leader of the

party. Elena Ceaușescu and Central Committee Secretary Emil Bobu decided all significant personnel appointments.¹⁰¹ The couple's youngest son, Nicu, became a candidate member of the RPC's executive committee and head of the party organization in Sibiu County in Transylvania. Although notorious for his egregious lifestyle, Nicu was apparently being groomed to succeed his father.

With the party paralyzed, there was no support for the general secretary other than the Securitate, which carried out Ceaușescu's draconian orders under the command of General Iulian Vlad, a professional policeman apparently without ideological convictions.¹⁰² In retrospect, it appears that the chiefs of the secret police were aware of the prospects for a popular explosion. The clearest indication that the proverbial patience of the Romanians had come to an end appeared in Brașov, the country's second-largest city, in November 1987, when thousands of workers protested plummeting living standards, ransacked the party headquarters, and chanted anti-Ceaușescu and anticommunist slogans.¹⁰³

The coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev and the launching of his domestic perestroika staggered the communist regimes of Eastern Europe. "The first thing to say about perestroika is to stress its supreme importance," Ernest Gellner wrote perceptively. "It is not simply a Soviet or Russian event. It does clearly seem to be one of the major events in world history, like the Reformation, like the French Revolution, like the Industrial Revolution, like the Scientific Revolution. . . . It has rewritten the great historic text, and it will take us a long time to think out the full implications."¹⁰⁴ With Gorbachev speeding up the rhythm of restructuring in the Soviet Union, Ceaușescu became increasingly vociferous in his opposition to any economic and political reforms. Moreover, Gorbachev's political reforms and their impact on the other bloc countries made the Romanian dictator and his clique extremely nervous. On various occasions, Ceaușescu proffered undisguised criticism of perestroika, which he called "a right-wing deviation" in world communism.¹⁰⁵

Speaking on January 26, 1987, on the occasion of his sixty-ninth birthday, Ceaușescu excoriated unspecified attempts at "socialist renewals." The target of his remarks was, undoubtedly, Gorbachev's glasnost policy. For Ceaușescu, Gorbachev's insistence on democratization was an embarrassing reminder of his own vulnerability, and in retaliation he reiterated some of the most anachronistic dogmas of "scientific socialism":

Speaking about the need to improve and develop socialism, in my opinion, our basis should be the lessons, experience, and practice of socialist construction, as

well as the invincible principles of scientific socialism, of communism. One cannot speak about socialist renewal, about perfecting socialism, unless one starts from these principles. . . . There is no way of speaking about socialist perfection and [at the same time] about so-called market socialism and free competition—and all this in the name of objective laws. . . . We must distinguish between the general truths and laws of socialist development and laws specific to bourgeois-capitalist society. Capitalist property is capitalist property, be it small or large. One cannot speak of a socialist economy and not assume the socialist ownership of the means of production as its basis.¹⁰⁶

For Ceaușescu, the best Soviet leadership was a petrified one, with predictable reactions and no interest in the rejuvenation of elites in other countries of the bloc. After Brezhnev's death in November 1982, Ceaușescu reportedly placed his bet on Konstantin Chernenko and against Andropov. Later, after Soviet General Secretary Yury V. Andropov's demise, Ceaușescu visited Moscow and tried to ingratiate himself with his short-lived successor, Chernenko. Gorbachev's coming to power was most unwelcome from the viewpoint of the Romanian leader. As a reformist trend took shape in Eastern Europe, Ceaușescu allied himself with stalwarts of Brezhnevism like Erich Honecker, Todor Zhivkov, and Gustav Husák. These diehard neo-Stalinists understood that Gorbachev had unleashed the winds of change, and that the Soviet policy would affect the precarious status of aging and compromised East European general secretaries.

Gorbachev visited Romania in May 1987 and dropped some hints about Ceaușescu's harsh ethnic minorities policy and the dangers of nepotism. However, no improvement in the social and economic situation in Romania occurred in the aftermath of Gorbachev's visit. On the contrary, new cuts in electricity and gas consumption norms were announced in November 1987. In January 1988, when Ceaușescu turned seventy, Romania was dominated by malaise, anguish, and deep frustration. Ceaușescu realized that unless he intensified his repressive policy, the whole edifice of what he called the "multilaterally developed socialist society" would immediately and ingloriously crumble.

At the same time, emboldened by Gorbachev's policy of glasnost, some Romanians took the risk of criticizing Ceaușescu publicly. In March 1989, six party veterans, Gheorghe Apostol, Alexandru Bîrlădeanu, Silviu Brucan, Corneliu Mănescu, Constantin Pîrvulescu, and Grigore Răceanu, addressed Ceaușescu in an open letter denouncing his excesses, his erratic economic policies, and the general deterioration of Romania's international image. The "Letter of the Six"—as the memo-

randum was referred to both in Romania and abroad—represented more than a scathing indictment of Ceaușescu's calamitous course. In opposition to the excesses of the ruling clan, the authors called for the establishment of a state of law. In fact, the "Letter of the six" was a classic example of intrasystemic dissent and not an expression of radical opposition to the institutions and practices associated with what Gorbachev lambasted as the "command-administrative system." Nevertheless, considering the traditions and patterns of behavior characteristic of Romanian political culture, the memorandum represented a watershed. For the first time in RCP's history, important party activists had dared to challenge the presumed infallibility of the general secretary and had practically constituted themselves into a political faction within a Leninist party, where factionalism had always been considered a mortal sin.

However, the authors were not partisans of Western-style pluralism. Some of them, like Gheorghe Apostol and Constantin Pîrvulescu, had been instrumental in the Stalinist terror of the late 1940s and early 1950s. Corneliu Mănescu had largely contributed to the manufacturing of Ceaușescu's image as the architect of Romania's semi-autonomous foreign policy. Silviu Brucan was a seasoned party propagandist and had served as the regime's ambassador to the United States and the United Nations in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. Bîrlădeanu, who had pushed for moderate economic reforms in the late 1960s, until he was forced to resign from all party and government positions after a clash with Ceaușescu on investment and planning options, was a committed supporter of the command economy and central planning. Pîrvulescu, probably the last survivor of the generation of founding fathers of Romanian communism, was a true believer who served after 1945 as the head of the RCP's control commission. Lastly, Grigore Răceanu was a communist militant from the underground period.¹⁰⁷

None of these figures enjoyed popular support, but they were well known within the party bureaucracy, and that was what mattered. Judging by their biographies, the six militants were neither quixotic, suicidal adventurers mobilized by anguish and despair nor isolated political losers. Ceaușescu's challengers in fact represented at least two revolutionary generations, including the one to which both Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu claimed to belong. Ceaușescu thus reacted furiously to the letter and placed the authors under house arrest. Their refusal to recant showed the limits of Ceaușescu's power.¹⁰⁸ Also in 1989, prominent intellectuals began openly to criticize the regime's obscurantist cultural policy. In November, the dissident writer Dan Petrescu released a public

appeal against Ceaușescu's reelection as general secretary at the Fourteenth RCP Congress.¹⁰⁹

Altogether, Ceaușescu's power—impregnable at first glance—was falling apart. Detested by the population, isolated internationally, and living in fantasies, the aging leader could not understand what was happening to communism. He considered Gorbachev the arch-traitor to Leninist ideals and tried to mobilize an international neo-Stalinist coalition. In August 1989, he was so irritated by the formation of a Solidarity government in Poland that he proposed a Warsaw Pact intervention in that country. Every day the Romanian media highlighted the dangers of reformism and “de-ideologization.” But breathtaking events were occurring in the other Warsaw Pact countries, and Romanians were aware of them. Despite the regime's absolute control of the media, most Romanians were listening to Western broadcasts and watching Bulgarian, Hungarian, Yugoslav, and Soviet TV. Videotapes circulated underground with footage of the revolutionary changes in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria. Young Romanians knew that even the armed-to-the-teeth East German police did not dare to fire on peaceful demonstrators.¹¹⁰ An adamant Stalinist, Ceaușescu returned to his first ideological love, his master Stalin's theory of socialism within one country, and prepared to turn Romania into a closed fortress, immune to the corrupting revisionist ideas that had destroyed the Bolshevik legacy.

In November 1989, the Fourteenth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party took place, and Ceaușescu was enthusiastically, that is, automatically, reelected general secretary.¹¹¹ Conceived of as a demonstration of power and a gesture of defiance to Gorbachev and his followers, the congress showed Ceaușescu's fatal alienation from the Romanian nation he claimed to represent. But instead of accepting any limitation of his power, Ceaușescu was determined to fight on obstinately to carry out what he saw as his mission in Romanian history.¹¹² In the fall of 1989, he was universally regarded as one of the world's last Stalinist dictators, totally obsessed with his grandiose industrial and architectural projects and viscerally hostile to Gorbachev's reforms.¹¹³ Romanians lived in conditions of immense hardship. In winter, the heat was turned down in apartments to freezing temperatures, and standing in endless lines was an everyday ordeal. Food was rationed as if the country were at war. Brazen propaganda ceaselessly extolled the valor of the fearless Great Leader and the scientific genius of his wife. Irritated by Gorbachev's reforms, Ceaușescu stuck to his Stalinist tenets and intensified

the repression. Romania seemed a nightmarish universe totally controlled by the Securitate.

During his last month of life, Ceaușescu's psychological features—an all-consuming sense of predestination, a failure to listen to other viewpoints, an immense vanity that made him blind to otherwise unmistakable signals of social unrest, but also an extreme perseverance, steadfastness, and self-confidence—were more evident than ever. He desperately believed in his own star and refused to admit that a reenactment of his most brilliant performance as a statesman—the August 1968 denunciation of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia—would be absurd. No foreign power was interested in occupying Romania.¹¹⁴ Deprived of either internationalist or nationalist demagogic alibis, Ceaușescu had no cards left to play but violent repression.

Reflecting on the December 1989 events in Romania, Timothy Garton Ash wrote: "Nobody hesitated to call what happened in Romania a revolution. After all, it really looked like one: angry crowds on the streets, tanks, government buildings in flames, the dictator put up against a wall and shot."¹¹⁵ The essential moments of the Romanian revolution are well documented. The revolution began in Timișoara on December 15, sparked by a small group gathered around the house of the Reverend László Tökés, a rebellious Calvinist minister who had been ordered arrested because of his fight for religious rights. Initially, the crowd was composed of members of the Hungarian minority showing their support for their spiritual leader. Subsequently, the demonstration of solidarity with Tökés was joined by the other citizens of Timișoara and turned into a demonstration against the regime. When the protesters refused to disperse, the police and the army opened fire. The next day, thousands took to the streets with slogans against the dictatorship. Bloody repression followed. Western radio stations reported the massacre in Timișoara, and all Romanians realized that Ceaușescu was ready to engage in total warfare against nonviolent, unarmed demonstrators. To accept the demands of the Timișoara protestors would have shown how fragile his power was; instead, he preferred to do what other Soviet-bloc leaders had avoided, namely, use force in an attempt to quell the unrest. The repression of December 17 did not stop the mass protests. The Timișoara uprising continued, and the city had virtually fallen to the protesters by December 20.

Ceaușescu underestimated the danger and left the country for a state visit to Iran (December 18–20) as scheduled. On December 20, when he returned, he delivered an extremely provocative televised speech, and

the next day he ordered a mass rally to endorse his intransigent opposition to reforms, which took place on December 21, in Bucharest. For once, however, Romanians refused to follow their leader's behest. Voices from the crowd booed Ceaușescu in the Palace Square in front of the Central Committee Building, probably a provocation. For once, people abandoned their fear and interrupted the dictator's oratory. Although Ceaușescu tried to accommodate the crowd, it was too late. Television revealed his stupefaction and confusion. People saw that he was losing control. A few minutes later, a panic-stricken crowd tried to leave the square. Intended to support Ceaușescu's rule, the meeting turned into an anti-Ceaușescu demonstration. Gathered in University Square in Bucharest, some demonstrators erected a barricade and continued their protest during the night of December 21. That same night, protesting students were massacred in University Square. In spite of bloody repression, the next day, December 22, 1989, large crowds blocked the streets of Bucharest and assaulted the Central Committee Building. The crowd stormed the building, and Ceaușescu and his wife fled from its roof by helicopter. The same day, December 22, the Ceaușescus were arrested. They were quickly tried, and on December 25, their execution was announced.¹¹⁶

The story of Ceaușescu's flight and his subsequent capture, secret trial, and execution on Christmas Day still requires clarification.¹¹⁷ There are enough puzzling elements in it to make the official explanations provided by Ceaușescu's successors more than a little suspicious. For instance, who selected the judges and who wrote the indictment against Ceaușescu? Why was it necessary to have the leader and his wife executed when it was obvious that no serious threat from their loyalists jeopardized the new power?¹¹⁸ One thing is now clear: once Ceaușescu left the Central Committee Building, a vacuum of power was created that was filled by representatives of the disgruntled party apparatus and army, as well as a few members of the rebellious masses.¹¹⁹ Because no organized underground opposition to Ceaușescu existed, this was not surprising. The postrevolutionary crisis was determined by the growing chasm between the pluralist demands of civil society and the reluctance of the new leaders to accept them. For Ion Iliescu and his supporters, the creation of political parties fully committed to the establishment of a liberal democracy and the elimination of the former apparatchiks from key control positions appeared as a personal threat.

During Ceaușescu's successors' first years in power, they defended their hegemonic positions resorting to manipulation, corruption, and

coercion. This was not, however, an attempt to restore communism. Whatever one thinks of the December 1989 uprising in Romania, there is no doubt that it led to the extinction of the political entity responsible for more than four decades of social and political repression, economic mismanagement, and cultural isolation. In fact, as Romanians entered the 1990s, there was no significant political group ready to publicly declare itself the descendant of the once omnipotent Romanian Communist Party. Ironically, this may be one of the most striking legacies of Ceaușescu's socialism: it abused Leninist rhetoric to such an extent that it made it impossible even for those who remained loyal to the old creed's tenets to admit it without risking contempt and ridicule.

EPILOGUE

The RCP's Afterlife

Where Did All the Members Go? 1989–2000

Curiously enough the moment when people in the West finally thought there was a revolution was when they saw television pictures of Romania: crowds, tanks, shooting, blood in the streets. They said: "That—we know that is a revolution," and of course the joke is that it was the only one that wasn't.

Timothy Garton Ash, March 1999

Immediately after the 1989 revolution, unlike post-Leninist Hungary and Poland, Romania had no enlightened, reform-oriented faction within the party elite to negotiate a transition. The disaffected party and Securitate cadres were isolated, fearful, and with very few exceptions, unable to articulate even a minimal alternative program to Ceaușescu's disastrous course. The Romanian Communist Party, proportionately one of the largest in the world, had no collective leadership, no inner party life, and no genuine feedback from lower to higher echelons. For years, Ceaușescu and his coterie had relied on the ideological claim to autonomy from the neo-Stalinist Soviet Union. Consequently, by the end of his rule, Ceaușescu had isolated Romania from both the East and the West. With exceptions within the Securitate and the military, there were no Ceaușescu loyalists in Romania. The same, however, was not true of support for a Leninist regime, the socialist "welfare" state, and the leading role of the communist party (or, better said, the nomenklatura).

Many Romanians despised, even hated, Ceaușescu and his tyranny, but did not like liberal, Western-style democratic values either. In 1989,

Ion Iliescu, who scorned Ceaușescu but believed in a reformed communist Romania, succeeded Ceaușescu as head of the state bureaucracy.¹ In the opening months of 1990, the self-appointed council of the National Salvation Front (NSF), with Iliescu as its leader, ruled Romania. Political parties, movements, and civic associations emerged. Critical intellectuals called for rapid decommunization and lambasted the Iliescu team's efforts to stay in power, accusing the NSF of hijacking the revolution and establishing a "crypto-communist" regime. Confrontation between the anticommunist and successor-communist groups and movements was fierce, particularly during the miners' raid on Bucharest in June 1990. Nevertheless in 1990 and 1992, Iliescu won popular elections. Eventually, the NSF split between the more reform-oriented group headed by Petre Roman (prime minister between 1990 and 1991) and Iliescu's supporters. The former eventually created the Democratic Party, the latter renamed itself the Party of Romanian Social Democracy (PDSR). The break between the former allies was deep and resulted in Roman's increasing rapprochement with the anticommunist coalition.

The first decade of Romania's postcommunist experience presents scholars of the transition with a striking paradox: the most abrupt break with the old order resulted in the least radical transformation. Many old faces, such as Iliescu, remained in power, after skillfully donning new masks. On the other hand, several old faces not connected to the RCP returned to Romanian politics but did not obtain a share of power. For example, in the early 1990s, the resurrected "historical" National Peasant Christian and Democratic Party (PNȚCD), the "Right" (as opposed to Iliescu's "Left"), initially pursued a confrontational, anticommunist strategy. Later, realizing the failure of extraparliamentary opposition, the "Right" formed its own umbrella coalition, including both full-fledged parties and civic movements. The most powerful personality within this coalition was Corneliu Coposu, a lawyer and former political prisoner who had spent seventeen years in communist jails. Coposu personally selected a university professor, Emil Constantinescu, to run against Iliescu in 1992. In 1996, Constantinescu again campaigned against Iliescu, criticizing the absence of far-reaching economic reforms, the endemic corruption, the ambiguity of the revolution of 1989, and the reluctance to deal with such issues as citizens' access to secret police files and property restitutions. However, Constantinescu won the 1996 election more as a result of mass discontent with the PDSR's failure to generate economic results and the widespread perception that the opposition had the political will and the competence to rescue the country from stagnation.

While the 1996 change was an incomplete *ruptura*, it finally created a culture of political alternation that most Romanians had never before experienced. The November 1996 transformation was an incomplete but genuine breakthrough, akin to December 1989's real but unfinished revolution. The victors of 1996 lost the elections of 2000 in a landslide. The real cause of the defeat was the inconsequential, indecisive, and faltering nature of the reforms undertaken, but not truly implemented, by the three governments formed under the Constantinescu presidency. The 2000 elections consecrated the demise of the old-fashioned, ideologically ossified PNȚCD and the rise of a more dynamic and modern party, the National Liberal Party (PNL). They also indicated a move leftward by the Romanian electorate, of which the main beneficiary turned out to be the PDSR.

In short, the 2000 vote for Iliescu (and for his runoff opponent Corneliu Vadim Tudor) was rooted in dissatisfaction, frustration, and disaffection with the ruling coalition and its failure to deliver what it had promised. The true surprise of the 2000 elections was the rise of Vadim Tudor and his România Mare Party (PRM). A combination of antisystemic nationalist caudillo and self-indulgent buffoon, Tudor managed to transform a marginal entity into a major oppositional party that controlled one-fifth of Romania's parliament and many of the specialized commissions. Tudor was not the Romanian counterpart to the Polish-Canadian-Peruvian Stanislaw Tyminski who challenged Lech Wałesa in the runoff to the Polish elections in the early 1990s. Tudor's strident discourse combined Hungarophobic, antisemitic, anti-Western, antimarket, anticorruption, and anti-establishment themes. He appealed to Romania's resentful youth (who did not know much about his past as a Ceaușescu court poet) and to many pro-Western Romanians who had voted for Constantinescu in 1996 and were disappointed with the blunders and misrule of the Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR).

Vadim Tudor's party is not a traditional extreme right formation or a reincarnation of the interwar mystical-revolutionary fascist Iron Guard: PRM's ideology is neither left-wing nor right-wing, but an elusive conglomerate of communist and fascist nostalgias, hostility to modernity and diversity, and a militaristic, phallocratic cult of the nation (racially defined), the movement, and the leader (*conducător*.) Tudor's idols indicate his mind-set: the medieval prince Vlad Țepeș (the Impaler), the pro-Nazi dictator Marshal Ion Antonescu, and the communist nationalist leader Nicolae Ceaușescu. Historical ignorance and amnesia have been Tudor's main assets in his reinvention of himself as a tribune of Ro-

manianness. For many, Tudor seemed indeed the true voice of the people—an angry prophet speaking on behalf of the “wretched of the earth.” Instead of organizing and mobilizing themselves against both the PDSR’s moderate and Tudor’s radical forms of populism, civil society continued to champion abstract, often nebulous visions and ideals. Never was the gap between the pro-Western intelligentsia and the electorate as deep as in the fall of 2000.

Romanians and Romania-watchers divide between those who highlight the failure of the 1989 revolution and those who think that President Ion Iliescu did his utmost under the circumstances to turn his country into a functioning democracy. The major themes addressed in this epilogue are linked to the widely perceived “exceptional” nature of Romania’s transition from state socialism, a direct result of its Communist Party’s history.

No other Eastern European Leninist regime was overthrown by a violent popular uprising. In no other country of the region did the communist government resort to opening fire on peaceful demonstrators. The continuities with the old regime are more marked in Romania than in other Eastern European countries (except perhaps the former Yugoslavia and Slovakia). Some of these features are linked to the country’s precommunist political culture, but it is not that which makes Romania a unique case. Indeed, populist authoritarianism and other illiberal features can be detected in Albania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovakia, and Russia as well, among other countries, and even to some extent in Hungary and Poland. Furthermore, although changes have taken place slowly in Romania, they cannot be dismissed as a smokescreen for a return to unreconstructed authoritarianism.

During the first decade after the collapse of the Ceaușescu regime, Romania established a protodemocratic institutional framework and reasonably fair electoral procedures. In addition, the country’s civil society, although fragmented and fragile, continued to develop. What was missing was social trust, a civic commitment to the values and institutions of the emerging democracy, a “de-emotionalization” of the public discussion of the country’s future, and a truly liberal political center constituted primarily on the basis of shared values rather than party affiliations.

Advances on the road to an open society in the first post-Ceaușescu period, or Iliescu I (1990–96), were accompanied by disturbing attempts by the ruling elite to marginalize and delegitimize the opposition, maintain tight controls over the national electronic media, and perpetuate its economic and political domination by use of symbolic

manipulation and democratic rhetoric. More than in any other Eastern European country, the secret police continued to play a very significant role in orienting public opinion and influencing political debates and choices.² In general, during this period, there were deep contrasts between pluralist forms and aspirations and lingering authoritarian methods and mentalities. Whenever threatened in its control of political power, the first Iliescu government resorted to populist, often chauvinist demagoguery (rhetoric of the “the fatherland is in danger” type).

Romania thus only took a step away from authoritarianism after the NSF replaced Ceaușescu’s dictatorship in late December 1989. In January and February 1990, Romania’s political life grew polarized and was marked by regular clashes between the newly formed democratic movements and parties and the NSF. The May 1990 elections were succeeded by an NSF-sponsored onslaught on the new parties and civic movements in June 1990. The breakup of the Iliescu–Roman alliance and the fall of the moderately reformist Roman government in September 1991, the February 1992 local elections and the opposition’s success in major cities, and the 1992 parliamentary and presidential elections followed quickly. Between 1992 and 1995, attempts to interrupt the economic and political reforms, stagnation, and further polarization of the political spectrum dominated. The November 1996 elections and the victory of the Democratic Convention marked Romania’s first peaceful transfer of power between ruling parties. The November–December 2000 elections returned Iliescu as the country’s president. Simply put, the first postcommunist decade in Romania can be summed up as the move from Iliescu to Iliescu, with a four-year Constantinescu interlude.

Invisible to analysts who focus only on economic reforms are the political and cultural changes that have taken place in Romania. Although nostalgia for the Ceaușescu era surfaces occasionally, this is a marginal political sentiment. In reality, no major actor in early twenty-first-century Romanian politics claims direct affinities with the deposed dictator. For President Ion Iliescu (who was involved in Ceaușescu’s execution), such a position is logical. So is such a position for the pro-Western, democratic forces; even the Socialist Party of Labor (PSM), a neocommunist formation, has not dared to commit publicly to a full-fledged restoration of the old regime.³

A history of the RCP needs its epilogue to address the aspects of the democratic transition linked to its legacy. Thus, the prime focus here is the impact on pluralism in Romania. These influences are not uniquely Romanian; they epitomize identifiable trends that have occurred in

other postcommunist societies. The return of the “recovering communists” (a term proposed by Ken Jowitt) is not a Romanian peculiarity, as both the November 1996 and September 2001 elections in Poland clearly demonstrated.⁴

Romania’s twenty-first-century future is not preordained. Even in the face of strong reactionary trends, such as the inordinately influential role of the secret police, and the slowdown of privatization from 1992 through 1995, the disappointments linked to the Constantinescu’s presidency’s failure to engage in decisive economic reforms, and the return of Iliescu and his party to power in 2000, the old system of personal dictatorship has been dismantled. The new order nonetheless remains marked by hesitations, paternalist and collectivistic temptations, and resurgent forms of intolerance.

Romanian Civil Society and Its “Proclamation of Independence”

Even under the utterly unfavorable circumstances of the Ceaușescu regime, the germs of Romanian civil society managed to survive. One of these, for instance, was the circle surrounding the philosopher Constantin Noica, whose disciples came into direct conflict with the official Marxist tenets.⁵ Another center of dissent was the “Iași group” of young writers and philosophers, who had all been under continuous police surveillance. In the same vein, it is interesting to note the existence of a group of young writers, art historians, sociologists, and philosophers in Bucharest who engaged in oppositional activities after 1988: Călin Anastasiu, Magda Cârneci, Anca Oroveanu, Stelian Tănase, and Alin Teodorescu. Some of them signed an open letter of solidarity with other persecuted intellectuals in November 1989. By the end of December 1989, these informal nuclei coalesced to form the “Group for Social Dialogue,” an independent association dedicated to monitoring the government’s observance of the democratic process and developing civil society in Romania.

During the first months after the 1989 revolution, the “Group”—as it was usually referred to—became the core of a hectic search for alternatives to the official slide into a Romanian version of “neo-Bolshevism.”⁶ Its weekly publication, *Revista 22*, printed exciting reports of the Group’s meetings with prominent NSF figures.⁷ The major tension within the Group—a tension that later grew and led to its gradual loss

of influence—was between those who saw its role as the backbone of an emerging political party (similar to the Network of Free Initiatives in Hungary that led to the forming of the Alliance of Free Democrats in 1989) and those who believed that such a community should situate itself above the whirlwind and preserve a suprapartisan, neutral status. Initially, the Group played an important role in the crystallization of a critical discourse, the integration of Romania's opposition into the Eastern European dissident community, and the restoration of rational debate as the basis for an open society. Later, however, the Group seemed increasingly self-enclosed, a sectarian community of self-appointed custodians of the country's spiritual values. This shift was linked to the demoralization of Romania's intelligentsia following the successive electoral defeats of the opposition and widespread disgust with reactionary trends in Romanian politics. At the same time, because of its outspokenness and moral authority, the Group became a favorite target for attacks waged by the NSF-controlled media. Members of the Group were continuously smeared as "instigators of instability" or "crypto-Iron Guardists." Its inconsistencies notwithstanding, the Group was a significant catalyst in the awakening of the long dormant civil society. It established contacts with the Students' League, independent unions, and groups in the military interested in the democratization of the army.

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

The first months of the transition were predominantly confrontational. The opposition could barely organize because of logistical debility and lack of experience. Its political discourse was not accessible to the population because of the obstacles created by the NSF-run government to deny official television appearances for Iliescu's critics. But discontent in Romania had deep social roots and was not mitigated easily. The NSF's aggressive warnings and monopolistic conduct further irritated revolutionary forces not tied to the RCP's legacy. It was perhaps Iliescu's major illusion that a Romanian version of perestroika would pacify the

population. To his dismay, instead of decreasing, the radical ferment continued to gather momentum. The students and intelligentsia spearheaded this struggle.

The widespread sentiment that the NSF's hidden agenda was to restore the old regime without the grotesque outgrowths of Ceaușescu's tyranny was not groundless. After all, Romanians knew that the abhorred Securitate had not been disbanded.⁸ A few of Ceaușescu's henchmen were brought to trial, but only for their participation in the December 16–22 slaughter, and not for the role they had played in the functioning of one of Europe's most vicious despotic systems since Stalin's death. Instead of purging the administrative apparatus of the servants of the old regime, the NSF appointed them to key positions. This was well known to Romanians and accounted for the tensions that reached an explosive point in the spring of 1990. Conceived by more or less reconstructed Leninists, the NSF's strategy failed to excite the youth and intelligentsia. It neglected the dynamism of society's self-organization, the force of the collective passions for justice, and the contagious effect of the democratic movements in other Eastern European countries. The NSF lived with the illusion that Romanians would accept a re-vamping of the communist system.

On March 11, 1990, the "Proclamation of Timișoara" articulated the political expectations and the values of those outside Bucharest who had started the revolution. In effect, it was the real charter of the Romanian revolution, emphasizing the unequivocally anticommunist nature of the uprising in December 1989. Article 7 questioned the revolutionary bona fides of those who had emerged as the beneficiaries of the upheaval: "Timișoara started the revolution against the entire Communist regime and its entire nomenklatura, and certainly not in order to give an opportunity to a group of anti-Ceaușescu dissidents within the RCP to take over the reigns of political power. Their presence at the head of the country makes the death of our heroes senseless." This was political dynamite in a country still run by former luminaries of the communist nomenklatura. To give this view even more poignancy, article 8 proposed to set guidelines for the elimination of former communist officials and security police officers from public life for a certain period of time: "We want to propose that the electoral law for the first three consecutive legislatures ban from every list all former Communist activists and Securitate officers. Their presence in the political life of the country is the major source of the tensions and suspicions that currently torment Romanian society. Until the situation has stabilized and

national reconciliation has been achieved, it is absolutely necessary that they remain absent from public life.”⁹

Soon thereafter, the Proclamation became the rallying point for all democratic forces in Romania: the statement was endorsed by hundreds of independent groups and associations, including the Group for Social Dialogue, the Independent Group for Democracy, and the December 21 Association. Even more emphatically, the document opposed the right of those who had served the communist regime to run as candidates for the presidency. The Proclamation hit its target: the outraged nomenclatura reacted with its traditional weapons, including slander, innuendo, and intimidation. The pro-NSF newspapers and “free” Romanian Television tried to dismiss the relevance of the Proclamation, calling it an unrealistic and potentially disruptive document.

The Resurgence of Multiparty and Factional Politics

After the revolutionary upheaval that swept away the Ceaușescu dictatorship in December 1989, Romanians rapidly discovered the flavor of democratic politics. For the first time in forty-five years, people enjoyed unfettered freedom of expression, criticized leaders, and organized independent associations and parties. But neither the bureaucracy nor the new NSF was ready to capitulate, and they engineered an astute survivalist strategy. The NSF’s first statement announced its commitment to democratic principles, including a multiparty system and the need to organize free elections as soon as possible. The NSF claimed to represent a decisive break with the detested communist regime.¹⁰ The RCP had disappeared without apparent trace from the country’s political life. Most of the 3.8 million party members lacked any emotional or ideological identification with the leadership. The NSF’s announcement of the transition to a pluralist system was therefore welcomed and trusted. This was precisely one of the sources of the political tensions that followed: the contrast between the NSF’s official pluralist pledges and its practical authoritarian actions. Many Romanian intellectuals saw the NSF’s rhetoric and practice as shockingly divergent. Although allegedly transideological, the NSF was in reality a movement of bureaucratic retrenchment, whose initial main ideologue, Silviu Brucan, insisted on its integrative function. For Brucan, as long as the NSF allowed internal factionalism, there was no need for competition from political parties.

The ambiguous legitimacy of the NSF was also linked to the troubled circumstances of its birth. During the Ceaușescu's trial, they had challenged their judges and accused Romania's new leaders of treason and of an anticonstitutional putsch. The NSF council justified the summary execution for reasons of revolutionary expediency. But many Romanians doubted this explanation and suspected that the purpose, with defense lawyers being more vituperative of their clients than the prosecutor, was to eliminate the dictator and his wife as potentially embarrassing witnesses in an inevitable trial of the Romanian Communist Party. Mock justice summarily done forestalled true political justice.¹¹ The organizers of the secret trial preferred to transfer all the guilt to the two defendants and silence them as soon as possible, because anything else would have involved an indictment of the very system that made possible the Ceaușescu phenomenon. In this sense, Romania's new leaders chose the worst of all alternatives: tyrannicide pretending to be law. By attempting to keep the revolution pure, they sullied it.¹² With the benefit of hindsight, the summary execution of Ceaușescu had allowed the bureaucratic apparatus to maintain its position.

As for the composition of the new leadership, informed analysts were immediately struck by the reemergence of communist veterans and apparatchiks in prominent positions.¹³ The NSF's president, then sixty-year-old Ion Iliescu, had served under Ceaușescu in the late 1960s as the first secretary of the party-controlled UTC and minister of youth.¹⁴ Between 1970 and 1971, he had been the RCP central committee's secretary in charge of ideology and an alternate executive committee member. In 1971, Iliescu had opposed Ceaușescu's "mini cultural revolution" and was criticized for "intellectualism and petit bourgeois liberalism." Following this incident, Ceaușescu humiliated Iliescu by assigning him menial party and state jobs. In 1984, Iliescu lost his central committee seat and was appointed director of the Technical Publishing House in Bucharest. Until the revolution, he kept a low profile and did not engage in any daring anti-Ceaușescu activity. Although he was not among the signatories of the "Letter of the Six," Romanians knew about his political divergences with Ceaușescu. In the years that preceded the December explosion, he was widely perceived as a Gorbachevite whose arrival in power would permit Romania to embark on long-delayed reforms. But the violence of the revolution, the exponential rise in political expectations, and Iliescu's refusal to abjure his communist creed made him unsuited for the role of radical tribune.

Given his career, Iliescu could not be turned into a symbol of the antitotalitarian revolutionary fervor. Somebody else had to play that role. Born in 1946, the new prime minister, Petre Roman, a professor at the Bucharest Polytechnical University and son of the late Valter Roman, an RCP veteran, former central committee member, and director of the party publishing house Editura Politică, had no revolutionary credentials except that together with thousands of other Romanians, he had participated in the seizure of the Central Committee Building on December 22, 1989.¹⁵ The young Roman could not invoke a single moment of his past when he had raised his voice in solidarity with harassed dissidents. Fluent in French, English, and Spanish, holding a doctoral degree from the Polytechnic School in Toulouse, Roman was supposed to provide new leadership with a European veneer. Unlike Iliescu and Roman, the seasoned propagandist Silviu Brucan (born in 1916) could invoke a dissident past. The same was true of Dumitru Mazilu, the fourth most visible member of the NSF leadership. A former international law professor, he had criticized the abysmal human rights record of Ceaușescu's government in a special report prepared in 1988 for the UN Human Rights Commission.¹⁶

To placate charges of a communist plot to seize the still inchoate power, the NSF leaders decided to co-opt a number of well-known oppositional figures onto the NSF council. On January 12, 1990, a demonstration took place in Bucharest where Iliescu, Roman, and Mazilu were accused of trying to preserve the communist system. Under the pressure of the crowd, the three announced a decision to ban the RCP. Mazilu engaged in a dialogue with the demonstrators that seemed to be an attempt to undermine Iliescu's authority. The next day, *România Liberă*, the country's most outspoken daily newspaper, published hitherto unknown and unflattering details of Mazilu's political career.¹⁷ Upset by these revelations, Mazilu resigned, and the NSF leadership remained in the hands of the Iliescu–Roman–Brucan troika.

Several other elements contributed to the political radicalization of the Romanians. One was the rapid constitution of political parties. During the first days after Ceaușescu's overthrow, the National Peasant and the National Liberal parties were formed. On January 5, 1990, Radu Câmpeanu, a liberal politician who had spent nine years in communist prisons, returned from fourteen years of exile in Paris. The National Peasants merged with a newly created Christian Democratic formation and became the National Peasant Christian and Democratic Party (PNȚCD), headed by Corneliu Coposu, a survivor of Romania's Stalin-

ist jails and one of the closest associates of Iuliu Maniu, the historical leader of the National Peasant Party, who had died in the Sighet prison in the early 1950s.¹⁸ Another important personality of the PNȚCD was Ion Rațiu, who returned to Romania after fifty years of exile in England and decided to run for president in the 1990 elections. The Social Democratic Party, the third of the traditional democratic parties in Romania, reemerged under the leadership of the engineer Sergiu Cunescu.

The paradoxical regime transformation in post-1989 Romania cannot be thoroughly grasped and analyzed unless understood in the context of the communist political culture. Although subsiding, the lingering climate of distrust, deception, and fear prolonged the authoritarian patterns of leadership and domination established by the ruling elite in previous decades.¹⁹ Indeed, the nature of Romania's immediate post-1989 regime (Iliescu I) cannot be fully understood without reference to the cultural and political legacies of the past (both communist and precommunist). Romania is not a case of complete restoration, however, but a hybrid political culture that incorporates elements of the Leninist experience, nationalist trends, and civic-liberal values, groups, and parties. To deny the existence of significant changes and consider the Romanian democratic process as irrelevant is a gross exaggeration. On the other hand, the Romanian transition, especially after the 1992 elections, was marred by lack of reformist will and imagination.

Initially, a "third way" approach dominated.²⁰ Many of the opportunities created by the legal framework formed between 1990 and 1992 were missed. Confrontational rather than consensual strategies remained prominent in Romanian politics: the ruling party (the PDSR) governed in alliance with radical nationalist and leftist-populist formations.²¹ The oppositional main force, the Democratic Convention, dominated by the National Peasant Christian and Democratic Party, regarded President Iliescu as a "crypto-communist." This diagnosis was endorsed by other oppositional formations outside the Convention (including former Prime Minister Petre Roman's Democratic Party, the Civic Alliance Party, and the Hungarian Democratic Union). The "neo" or "crypto" communist designations turned out to be hyperbole. Ion Iliescu's ideological commitment to Leninism disappeared, and he became a populist leader.

During his first presidency, Iliescu exhibited forms of residual authoritarian or RCP-like behavior, including resistance to full marketization and attachment to the pseudoegalitarian values of state socialism.²² Thomas Carothers gave an accurate description of the overall political situation in

Romania five years after the May 1990 presidential and parliamentary elections (the first free, if not entirely fair, elections in forty-five years):

Romania is a greatly changed society, with many of the institutional features of democracy, a nascent capitalist economy and an identifiable path toward gradual integration with Europe. At the same time, however, it lags badly behind its neighbors in breaking clearly away from its communist past, has yet to face the most serious challenges of economic reform, and seems unable to escape a turgid and often opaque political life. For most Romanians—who are struggling to stay afloat economically, fearful of rising unemployment and disgusted by the apparent corruption and inefficiency of “democratic politics”—the positive future they hoped for in December 1989 still appears quite distant.²³

Compared to other transitions from state socialism, Romania’s first postcommunist stage had as its most salient features the absence of a decisive break with Leninism traditions. The dismantlement of the old bureaucratic structures wavered and was inconclusive, and the opposition capitalized on the ruling elite’s failure to cut the umbilical chord with the Leninist past. One of Iliescu’s former advisers described the process as “spontaneous transition” and suggested that it was a response to the political interests of the industrial managerial class.²⁴ No less symptomatic of the “Bucharest syndrome” of transition were the resurgence of “traditional,” pre-World War II political parties and the revival of a weak, but persistent, monarchist trend.²⁵ It is significant that the most important oppositional party, the National Peasant Christian and Democratic Party, headed until his death in November 1995 by the veteran politician Corneliu Coposu, remained unequivocally in favor of a return to the 1923 constitution, including the reestablishment of constitutional monarchy (abolished by communist diktat in December 1947).²⁶ In other words, the strongest opposition party in Romania saw the fulfillment of the December 1989 revolution in the complete restoration of the precommunist political structures. To use Ralf Dahrendorf’s concepts, the clash between the Romanian political forces bore upon constitutional as well as normal politics.²⁷

By mid 1995, 10 percent of the mayors, councilors, and top local officials elected in February 1992 had been dismissed by the government. Of these, some 80 percent represented opposition parties.²⁸ Iliescu in his first term was closer in political preferences, nostalgias, and aspirations to Slovakia’s Vladimir Mečiar and Serbia’s Slobodan Milošević than to the Czech Republic’s Václav Havel or even Hungary’s Gyula Horn. After having postured in December 1989–January 1990 as the symbol of

the divorce from the old regime, Iliescu did very little to oppose the trends in Romanian politics aimed at conserving or restoring aspects of it.²⁹ The social base of Iliescu I was primarily the population emotionally and professionally linked to the economic and social structures inherited from the communist system: particularly, the large industrial and ministerial bureaucracy, the former apparatchiks converted into entrepreneurs, and a group of new barons of Romania's emerging private sector, often recruited from among the former UTC nomenclatura.³⁰ Given the ubiquitous presence of the Securitate in Ceaușescu's Romania and its control over foreign trade companies, many former secret police hacks were able to become financial and industrial magnates.

Until the 1996 elections, the cleavage between the old order and the new one was less marked in Romania than in most other Central and Eastern European countries. More than in any other country, postcommunist secret services influenced the political process: they organized leaks of information about political personalities, publication of secret police files, and surveillance of journalists and other critics of the Iliescu regime.³¹ Virgil Măgureanu, a former RCP "Ștefan Gheorghiu" Social Science Academy professor and one of Iliescu's closest associates, ran the Romanian Service of Information (SRI) from its creation in March 1990 until his replacement in early 1997 by one of Constantinescu's associates. Iliescu and Măgureanu were the only two personalities who remained in office for the whole period between the emergence of the NSF regime in late 1989 and the opposition's victory in late 1996.

Initially, a major problem was the absence of genuine and credible alternatives to Iliescu: there was a "critical opposition" but little alternative opposition.³² While the president's achievement was "democracy by default,"³³ the opposition excelled in hard-line anticommunist rhetoric; ceaseless calls for decommunization and "a trial of communism" (*procesul comunismului*); frequent espousal of nationalist themes (especially in rejection of the Hungarian minority's demands); and lack of genuine economic solutions for the country's crisis. President Iliescu's major asset was this anemic, fragmented, and confused opposition. Second, and no less important, after the pact between the PDSR and the România Mare Party came to an end in October 1995, when Vadim Tudor withdrew his representatives from the government, Iliescu embarked on a struggle against Tudor and other extremists.

The climate in Romania in the mid 1990s was dominated by disenchantment, frustration, malaise, anxiety, and insecurity.³⁴ Banking on these sentiments, radical nationalist movements emerged, including at-

tempts to reconstruct the Iron Guard, Romania's interwar fascist movement. There were also official attempts to rehabilitate Marshal Ion Antonescu, Romania's pro-Nazi dictator (executed in 1946 for crimes against humanity), with members of the Iliescu I government participating in the consecration of monuments to him.³⁵ Leading PDSR politicians often championed strong nationalist positions, especially regarding denial of rights to native language education for the Hungarian minority. Support for the ruling coalition (PDSR–PUNR) also came from the neocommunist Socialist Party of Labor–PSM (headed by Ilie Verdeț, a former Ceaușescu premier and Adrian Păunescu, one of the most active sycophantic poets of the Ceaușescu era).³⁶ Most of the Ceaușescu-era dissidents were marginalized and viciously besmirched in the pages of the progovernment media. The National Council of the Audiovisual controlled official television.

Meanwhile, Romanian civil society, including human rights organizations, the nationwide Pro-Democrația movement, the Tîrgu Mureș Pro-Europa initiatives, and many organizations active in social services, public policy, and children's issues, was increasingly active and vocal. As of mid 1995, there were over 8,000 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) registered, out of which only about 200 really functioned, and the vast majority relied on funding from the United States and Western Europe.³⁷ Civil society, understood as the area of independent social initiatives from below, was limited to pockets of urban intellectuals and had scant impact on national politics. Students, once the most politically active group, were disaffected and had abandoned politics in large numbers. Portions of the media were outspoken and energetic, but the government used economic and political methods to intimidate and harass some of the more critical newspapers.³⁸ Minorities were expected to behave, and the ruling party and its allies denounced their articulation of legitimate grievances as subversion meant to destroy Romania.

The Unmastered Past: Facing the Leninist Legacies

Romania newly freed of Ceaușescu shunned the vital historical soul-searching needed for a real national therapy. The archives were and remain jealously guarded, and the Romanian political imagination has continued to be haunted by unfulfilled desires and vengeful fantasies. During his first administration, President Iliescu's unyielding refusal to allow genuine reshuffling of the elite had a deep-seated cause: it related

to the official orthodoxy that claimed that once Ceaușescu was ousted and liquidated, communism had ceased to exist and Romania had become a democracy. Very little rigorous examination of the communist past occurred after the December 1989 uprising: neither Iliescu nor his supporters were ready to engage in an analysis of Romania's Leninist experiment. There were too many skeletons in their closets, and they preferred simply to assign the guilt for past aberrations to the defunct dictator and his immediate subordinates. On the other hand, once the former opposition came to power in 1996, its luminaries, too, had curiously little interest in revisiting the past: the new leaders avoided thorough discussions about the Securitate's role in organizing mass and individual terror, collaborationism, and the need to address decommunization in a comprehensive way. Despite official radical talk about the shadowy presence of the former secret police, Constantinescu avoided a resolute reshuffling of the intelligence agencies and proclaimed his commitment to the defense and preservation of the existing constitution (adopted under Iliescu and unambiguously antimonarchic). For Romanians, once again, the past was another country.

In the first decade following the breakdown of Ceaușescu's tyranny, no political force took responsibility for the country's Leninist heritage: even the Socialist Party of Labor preferred to distance itself from the dictatorial past and insisted on its traditional socialist orientation.³⁹ Thus, the self-criticism professed by former communist parties in other East and Central European countries has been avoided in Romania. It is as if a tiny Ceaușescu clique had imposed a despotism that was lamented and abhorred by the overwhelming majority of the population. A similar uncritical and unqualified monolith of perfunctory anti-Ceaușescuism replaced the unanimity of Ceaușescu's pageants.

Coming to terms with the past in late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century Romania has been hindered by a combination of silence on the part of the new leaders and amateurish, impressionistic, and often vindictive treatment of the communist period by the opposition. Few publications make available major documents from the archives, and when they do come out, critical-comparative analysis is conspicuously absent.⁴⁰ Little has been done in the approach to the Stalinist terror and post-Stalinist repression to distinguish between individuals and institutions: a systematically maintained oblivion often favors opportunistic alibis and self-serving legends of heroism and resistance.

Likewise, a thorough study of the different stages in the evolution or devolution of the Ceaușescu regime has been avoided. This avoidance

stems in large part from the legacy of Ceaușescu's ideological version of Romanian socialism, which mixed a Stalinist commitment to a centrally planned economy and collective agriculture with traditional themes of the fascist extreme right (including the myth of the homogeneous nation, exaltation of feudal princes, insistence on the Thracian-Dacian roots of the Romanian nation, a xenophobic fixation on alleged conspiracies fomented by foreigners, and anti-intellectualism.)⁴¹ Elena Ceaușescu and Central Committee Secretary Emil Bobu had decided all significant personnel appointments. Whereas Gheorghiu-Dej had ruled as the chief officer of an oligarchy and ingratiated himself with the party bureaucracy, power under Ceaușescu was exerted by a tiny coterie using the mechanisms of populist authoritarianism, symbolic manipulation, and, especially after 1980, psychological mass terror. Ceaușescu allowed the Securitate to establish a huge network of informers and "collaborators" to prevent the rise of any critical current. Even in late 1989, the seemingly faithful Securitate continued to carry out Ceaușescu's orders.⁴² Thus, when the RCP ruled Romania, Ceaușescu and his clan had supplanted the party's collective leadership (the executive committee) in decision-making. The demoralized political elite was strictly subordinated to the Securitate, which was entirely dominated by Ceaușescu's appointees.

The explanation for this devolution of the party's traditional functions in a Leninist regime was linked to Ceaușescu's overblown suspiciousness, as well as to awareness of discontent even among once loyal supporters within the nomenklatura. Additionally, a vocal group of authors endorsed the chauvinistic harangues of the Ceaușescu ideology and thrived as court writers for the Conducător and his wife, the most notorious of them being Adrian Păunescu, Eugen Barbu, and Corneliu Vadim Tudor. Like Iliescu, these men did not vanish after the Romanian revolution. Păunescu, Barbu, and Vadim reemerged as champions of a fundamentalist nationalism with racist overtones that simply jettisoned the perfunctory communist veneer of the previous era.⁴³ After 1989, they publicly proclaimed views they had only dared to whisper before. They became among the active exponents of a radical ethnocentric alliance whose main targets are the democratic parties and anyone with a record of opposition to Ceaușescu.⁴⁴ During the September 1992 elections, they won parliamentary seats running on xenophobic platforms.

Until 1995, members of these "red-brown" parties controlled important ministries, but the conflict between Iliescu and the PDSR, on the one hand, and Vadim Tudor on the other, changed the political game. This clash between the former allies (and former RCP members) likely

influenced Iliescu's strategy for the 1996 elections. Probably, the PDSR tried to absorb and contain the radical populists, but Tudor himself was excluded. In any event, more than in other postcommunist countries, Romania has seen continuity between influential figures in the communist regime and the succeeding rulers.

Problematic Pluralism

The first stage of Romania's transition blended authoritarianism, paternalism, and embryonic democratic political processes. The nomenklatura remained in positions of economic and institutional power and reduced the opposition to powerless marginality. Instead of a well-constituted and properly functioning system of political parties, Romania's public space was dominated by a self-styled version of majoritarianism favorable to the sweeping embourgeoisement of the nomenklatura, which is to say the predictable conversion of its political domination into economic supremacy and the formation of a financially omnipotent class of business mafiosi.⁴⁵

The peculiarities of Romania's exit from communism caused a profound moral crisis that negatively affected the development of civil society, privatization, and fledgling democratic forces.⁴⁶ Only by connecting these elements in a comprehensive analytic framework can sense be made of the results of the September–October 1992 parliamentary and presidential elections. Ion Iliescu was reaffirmed by over 60 percent of the Romanians voters as their president, and his party, the Democratic National Salvation Front (DNSF), which had only 40,000 members, received 28 percent of the vote, constituting the parliament's largest faction. The election law under which the 1990 and 1992 elections were conducted was adopted in 1990. The main source of Iliescu's 1992 and 2000 victories is a phenomenon that transcends Romanian boundaries: the contrast between the anticommunist sentiment among the population at large and the (sometimes subliminal) interest of most social groups in a vaguely socialist "third road." As the Polish sociologist Edmund Mokrzycki put it:

The idea of the "third road" (sometimes called that way, sometimes not) emerges from the grassroots rather than from the intellectual or political elites and it is clearly incoherent, if not outright naive. . . . But this is precisely why it is so important and powerful. It gives clear answers to questions people ask. The answers correspond to people's knowledge, experience, needs, fears, and expectations. The answers are simple and yet the idea is rich: there are plenty of alternatives from which to choose, depending on the circumstances. It is becoming

the ideology of the masses—of this part of the masses anyway that actively oppose the liberal reform and see the political stage as a scene of war between “the people” and “them”—the corrupt and alien elites.⁴⁷

Iliescu’s ability has been to cater precisely to the fears, neuroses, and phobias of Romania’s industrial workers, peasants in the less developed regions, and retired population, whom he persuaded that the transition would be less painful if effected gradually by “true patriots” like himself, rather than by oppositional Westernizers, allegedly intent upon restoring big landed estates and “selling the country out” to multinational corporations. To ensure Iliescu’s electoral triumph and preserve a structure of power still intimately linked to the authoritarian legacy of Ceaușescuism, all the populist stereotypes—anticapitalism, anti-intellectualism, anti-Westernism, and fiery chauvinism—were used by the DNSF (PDSR) and the fundamentalist parties to instill a sense of panic among Romanians about the Democratic Convention’s possible victory.

Romanian Peronism?

Left and Right are elusive concepts in early twenty-first-century Romania. Can someone like Corneliu Vadim Tudor accurately be depicted as a rightist politician, in spite of his outspoken nostalgia for the Ceaușescu regime? Is the nationalist poet Adrian Paunescu a man of the Right, notwithstanding his egalitarian, allegedly socialist pronouncements? The real spectrum would cover the rapid changes and the versatility of political and ideological labels in times of transition.

The Left, in such a scheme, includes the following orientation: (a) traditional communism, (b) nationalist populism, and (c) socialist populism. Traditional communism emphasizes the “merits” of the Leninist order: the need to preserve the safety net for the economically challenged groups and hostility to “democratic chaos.” Such trends are found in the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), which is far from being a homogenous Hungarian ethnic party, but rather an association of different, often contradictory, ideological and political platforms, from nationalism and liberalism to Christian Democracy. Socialist populism predominates within the PDSR, and Ion Iliescu oscillates between his socialist preferences and readiness to bend to the pressures of the electorate (populism). Some groups herein described as leftist share with the extreme right xenophobia, ethnocentrism, and an exaltation of a

völkisch definition of the nation. In socialist populism, anticapitalism includes rejection of the West, hostility to market and financial mechanisms, and glorification of a strong, centralized, and ethnically homogeneous state.

Closer to the center is the PD (Democratic Party) headed until 2000 by Petre Roman. This party's orientation emphasized the need to bring the secret police under parliament's genuine control, privatize the economy, integrate with Euro-Atlantic structures, and observe internationally required guarantees for minority rights.

The Right in Romania includes: (a) proponents of civic-liberal values, (b) Christian Democracy, and (c) nationalist and religious fundamentalist groups and parties. Among the civic liberal formations themselves, many members would reject being defined as rightists. This is the orientation shared by the National Liberal Party and groups within the UDMR who favor the rule of law, individual rights, a market economy, state support for free enterprise, a resolute break with the communist legacy, and the values of secularism and modernity. Further to the right are "mystical nationalists," fringe groups of neo-Iron Guardists, and some vocal representatives of the former political prisoners. For instance, a splinter group of the Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR), headed by a member of parliament named Cornel Brahaș, formed a new party in 1995 called Dreapta Națională (National Right). The logo of its namesake weekly is "Noi facem ordine" ("We make order").⁴⁸

Within this cursory scheme, note that the center is quite weak in postcommunist Romania: it includes the PD, the liberal parties, and several politically unaffiliated but very influential media and cultural personalities. The fragility of the center is related to the nebulousness of the political platforms generated by different parties; the exaggerated preoccupation with the political backgrounds of different personalities; the lack of serious debate in the main media regarding the country's possible economic and political choices; and the confusions inherited from the previous regime regarding the distinctions between communism, socialism, nationalism, and fascism.

From where do all these confusions come? What accounts for the ideological disarray in Romania? As the old saying goes, *ex nihilo nihil* (out of nothing, nothing). Post-Ceaușescuism includes many elements that had been part and parcel of the political style of the communist bureaucracy, including components of the symbolic structure of the old regime's legitimacy, such as (1) a quasi-charismatic party or movement with a leader suspicious of and often hostile to impersonal democratic

procedures and regulations; (2) an exaltation of the ethnically homogeneous community (*patrie, neam, națiune*) and an exploitation by some of the hegemonic forces of *völkisch* themes and mythologies; (3) an aversion to, or distrust of, market relations and continuous appeal to “Third Way” formulas (as noted, this is a major trend in the PDSR); (4) an intense cultivation of collective identities, loyalties, and attachments, combined with a suspicious attitude toward minority rights, aspirations, and grievances; and (5) regime anxiety demonstrated by a strong rhetoric of solidarity that insists on the need for Romanians to close ranks against all alleged foreign conspiracies meant to dismantle their unitary nation-state.

That many of these themes and phobias predate communism and are indeed derived from the ideological-emotional constellation of the interwar extreme Right makes the Romanian case even more puzzling and theoretically challenging in its political-cultural syncretism. By the end of the Ceaușescu regime, a strange ideological blending had come into being as the belief system of the party bureaucracy and large segments of the intelligentsia, which included collectivism, ethnic purity, anti-Westernism, antiliberalism, anticapitalism, and a rejection of the Marxist vision of internationalism. This ideology provided the postcommunist bureaucratic elite with a symbolic legitimacy and an alternative to the principles and methods of liberal constitutionalism.

At the start of twenty-first-century, democracy in Romania has been achieved as the half-full part of the proverbial bottle. Competing political parties articulate their views and address relatively predictable political constituencies. Although the government monopoly of national television has been a major hindrance in the development of a true culture of dialogue, this situation improved after 1993. Romania now has international cable television and a number of nongovernmental TV stations, including many local ones. The independent printed media, among the most vivid in East-Central Europe, barely reach the countryside or even remote urban areas, primarily because of government control of distribution networks. The economy seems to be recovering, and there are indications that the government may truly undertake large-scale privatization.⁴⁹ Demagogic chauvinism and even nostalgia for Ceaușescu’s times is rampant in the pages of the extremist media, but these publications constitute only a marginal portion of the press. *România Mare* has lost most of its initial appeal and has become a simple vehicle for venting Vadim Tudor’s hatred of both the opposition and Iliescu’s post-2000 presidency. The most circulated newspapers are

not controlled by the government and often criticize its policies (*Evenimentul zilei*, *România Liberă*, even the once pro-Iliescu *Adevărul*). The weekly edited by the neo-Iron Guardist “Movement for Romania” (*Mișcarea*) is printed for a small coterie of “true believers” and can barely be found at news kiosks.⁵⁰

On the other hand, there are several problems with the Romanian approach to democracy. A few key issues include: (1) a deeply engrained authoritarian leadership style and a distrust of dialogue; (2) excessive personalization of politics; (3) official attempts to curtail the independence of the media and to limit freedom of expression; (4) fragmentation of the opposition; (5) lack of a common vision of the public good; and (6) the rise and persistence of nationalist parties and their sanction by the government. The main threats to Romania’s democracy are therefore linked to the low level of civic culture; the fragility of the democratic institutions; the inchoate and provisional nature of the political parties and their ideological preferences; the persistence of a mass psychology of nostalgia for collectivistic forms of social protection; the growing public dissatisfaction with the effects of half-hearted reforms; the endurance of the communist mentalities and methods in the functioning of important institutions, such as the presidency, the Supreme Defense Council, the army, the Romanian Information Service, and television; and the failure to launch a serious discussion of the country’s precommunist and communist experiences. These elements could lead to a situation of profound despair and the rise of Peron-style social demagogues who claim to offer immediate and simple solutions to complex issues.⁵¹

In November 2000, to the surprise of many observers, Ion Iliescu was reelected president. In spite of dire predictions, his return to the highest state position and the formation of a government dominated by the PDSR (an ideologically heterogeneous political party closer in terms of its pragmatic and clientelist methods to Mexico’s Revolutionary Institutional Party than to the defunct RCP) did not result in a return to dictatorial attacks on opposition forces. The good news from Romania is that the age of monolithic authoritarian rule is over. In Romania, as in the other postcommunist countries, twenty-first-century success depends on the ability of the political elite to realize that trust, truth, and tolerance are the indispensable ingredients of an open society. In this respect, Romania is not exceptional: it simply epitomizes political, moral, and psychological features found in all the other societies long subjected to Leninist experiments in mandatory happiness.

APPENDIX

The Romanian Communist Party's Leadership: A Biographical Roster

Ștefan Andrei (b. 1931). One of the leaders of the Union of Communist Student Associations in late 1950s and early 1960s, when Nicolae Ceaușescu was the supervisor of the youth organizations. Candidate member of central committee of RCP, 1969–72; full member of the central committee and first deputy head, then head of the RCP's international department, 1972; secretary of the central committee, 1972–78, 1985–87; minister of foreign affairs, 1978–85; minister of foreign trade, 1985–89. Closely associated with Ceaușescu's son Nicu in the late 1980s. Andrei was seen as a possible successor to the dictator.

Gheorghe Apostol (b. 1913). An intermediate-rank activist in the underground movement and member of the party group from prisons led by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Member of the politburo and president of communist trade unions association after 1944. First secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP), 1954–55, later named first vice premier. Considered one of Gheorghiu-Dej's probable successors as party and state leader. His ambitions to achieve the leading position in the RCP were overruled by Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer's decisive support for Nicolae Ceaușescu, which deepened Apostol's resentment of the latter and the sophisticated and cynical Maurer. Apostol was ousted from the RCP's leadership in 1969, at the RCP's Tenth Congress, after an attack by Constantin Dăscălescu, the first secretary of the Galați County party organization, who later served as Ceaușescu's last prime minister (1982–89). Apostol did not hold another prominent position for a while, until he was named ambassador to Argentina. Later, in various interviews, he claimed that Ceaușescu had ordered the Securitate to stage a series of car accidents and have him killed. An old-fashioned Leninist, increasingly disgusted with the pageants of Ceaușescu's cult, Apostol was among those who initiated and signed the "Letter of the Six," broadcast by Western media in March 1989. Without a real ideological and cultural background, Apostol epitomized the mediocre and dog-

matic Stalinist oligarchy. His split with Ceaușescu was not due to a conflict of visions but rather to the general secretary's morbid jealousy of those with more impressive revolutionary biographies. As with the other signers of the "Letter of the Six," Apostol's merit lies in his having tried to formulate explicitly and personally signing a reform-communist political platform in a country haunted by dictatorial delirium. Accused by Siviu Brucan of giving up under the pressure of the party control commission's investigators, he failed in his attempt to reenter public life after December 1989. In the 1950s, Apostol was married to the veteran party member Melita, whom he divorced in the early 1960s to marry an opera singer.

Ecaterina Arbore (1873–1937). The daughter of the well-known socialist militant Zamfir Arbore, she was expelled from Romania in 1924 and, as a physician, held important offices in the health system of the Soviet Ukraine before her arrest and execution in 1937.

Emil Bodnăraș (1904–1976). Born to a Ukrainian father and a German mother. One of the most complex personalities of Romanian communism. A career officer, he became a Soviet spy and defected to the USSR. He returned to Romania in the middle 1930s and fulfilled different special missions for Soviet military intelligence. Caught by chance, Bodnăraș was sentenced to ten years in prison. At the Doftana and Caransebeș prisons, he became a trusted friend of Gheorghiu-Dej's and a key figure in Dej's faction. Released from prison in 1943, he was directly involved in the political elimination and physical isolation of Ștefan Foriș, the RCP's general secretary, on April 4, 1944. He led the party together with Constantin Pîrvulescu and Iosif Rangheț until Gheorghiu-Dej's escape from prison and the formation of the party's new hegemonic nucleus. After August 23, 1944, he was the head of the party's secret intelligence apparatus, and between 1945 and 1947, the head of the secret intelligence service affiliated to the Council of Ministries' presidency. His enormous influence was due to permanent direct contact with the Soviet secret service. (He was reporting on each of the RCP leaders, as revealed later in the case of Ana Pauker.) Later on, he was named minister of defense, army general, and vice premier and held other important positions until Gheorghiu-Dej's death. After 1965, he accepted a pact with Ceaușescu: in exchange for his total obedience, Ceaușescu offered him the honors of vice president of the state council and member of the communist top elite (the permanent presidium). Like Apostol, Miron Constantinescu, and Chivu Stoica, he took part, as a politburo member, in the making of the decision to eliminate Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu (a fact mentioned and utilized politically by Ceaușescu in April 1968). Remarkably intelligent, and an austere communist, it seems that he was sympathetic to the Maoist line during the conflict between Moscow and Beijing. Divorced from his wife Florica Münzer, he lived like a hermit, without notable social contacts. Already during the Gheorghiu-Dej period, he was criticized in the politburo for his refusal to take part in the parties organized by the party administration (Vasile Posteuca and Simion Babenco, then Leon Nasch and Petre Burciu) to satisfy the communist potentates. After his death, as requested in his last will, his remains were not placed near those of

Gheorghiu-Dej in the Heroes' Monument but transported to his native village in northern Moldavia.

Petre Borilă (1906–73). Communist militant, born in Silistra (Bulgaria), whose real name was Iordan Dragan Rusev. In the 1930s, he adopted the pseudonym Borilă. A member of the RCP since 1924 and a political commissar in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War. During World War II, he was in Moscow, where he collaborated with Georgi Dimitrov (the Comintern's chairman) and Dmitri Manuilsky (the main Soviet Comintern official) and worked with Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, Leonte Răutu, and Valter Roman to form the nucleus that would take over the RCP leadership after the Red Army invaded Romania. Well-trained in Comintern intrigues, Borilă knew how to establish a close relationship with Gheorghiu-Dej. During the 1950s, he participated directly in repressive actions organized by the Securitate together with Dumitru Coliu (another communist activist of Bulgarian origin) and Ion Vințe (János Vincze). Actually, Borilă was involved in the most deeply shrouded political affairs and was known as a distant and suspicious figure. He was married to Ecaterina Abraham-Borilă, a communist militant of Jewish origin. Member of the central committee of RCP, 1948–69; politburo, 1952–65; executive committee of the central committee of RCP, 1965–69; vice president of the council of ministers, 1955–57, 1957–65. Relations between the Ceaușescu and Borilă families were strained, especially after the marriage of Ceaușescu's oldest son Valentin to Borilă's daughter, Iordana, which the Ceaușescus staunchly opposed, probably because of Elena's xenophobia—the daughter-in-law was not of pure Romanian origin. On the other hand, Borilă himself disliked this marriage, primarily because of his condemnation of what he saw as Ceaușescu's anti-Sovietism. Shortly before his death, Borilă wrote a memorandum addressed to the party leadership in which he condemned Ceaușescu's "nationalism." The document remains unreleased (personal information from Mircea Răceanu, who was able to read it thanks to his friend Iuri Borilă, Petre Borilă's eldest son). Valentin Ceaușescu and Iordana Borilă divorced in 1988. After the 1989 revolution, Iordana emigrated to the United States via Israel, together with her son Daniel, Nicolae and Elena's only grandchild.

Nicolae Ceaușescu (1918–89). A Communist Youth Union (UTC) militant with little real education or Marxist political indoctrination until he was sentenced and imprisoned (at Jilava, Brașov, Doftana, Caransebeș and the Țirgu-Jiu concentration camp during the war). At the end of the 1930s, he became one of the leaders of the underground UTC (with Ofelia Manole, Miron Constantinescu, and Ileana Răceanu). Fanatical, zealous, possessed by the myth of the proletarian revolution, and without any doubts about the rightness of the "cause," Ceaușescu attached himself to Gheorghiu-Dej, in whom he saw the archetype of the Stalinist leader. While imprisoned at Țirgu-Jiu, he became one of Gheorghiu-Dej's closest collaborators, along with Alexandru Drăghici, Chivu Stoica, Gheorghe Apostol, and Alexandru Moghioroș. After 1944, he led the UTC, then held important positions in the army and agriculture. Ceaușescu proved to be intransigent, unmerciful, and lacking in any kind of self-question-

ing or doubt. Benefiting from the elimination of the Pauker–Luca group, he became a member of the politburo after 1953–54, CC secretary responsible for cadre policy (he worked directly and established close relations with Chiși-nevschi, whom he would denounce unrestrainedly later on). Supported by Maurer and Bodnăraș, he defeated Apostol and Drăghici in the power struggle for Gheorghiu-Dej's succession. In coming to power, he was given support by the party apparatus group, composed of many former UTC activists he knew well from the 1950s, who were seeking to replace the older generation at the top (Ștefan Andrei, Maxim Berghianu, Petre Blajovici, Cornel Burtică, Ion Iliescu, Ion Ioniță, Petre Lupu, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Cornel Onescu, Gheorghe Pană, Ion Stănescu, Virgil Trofin, and Ilie Verdeț, to name the most representative). Manea Mănescu, a party member from the underground period who had studied economics and was something of a special case became a humble executor of Ceaușescu's and his wife Elena's orders. Later on, when many of the party apparatus group showed themselves reticent about the increasing personalization of power and the arbitrariness of cadre and economic policies, Ceaușescu promoted people like Emil Bobu, Constantin Dăscălescu, Ion Dincă, Alexandrina Găinușe, Constantin Olteanu, and Tudor Postelnicu, all deeply subservient to him and utterly incompetent. During the last years of the dictatorship, the members of the executive committee and permanent bureau became pitiful timeservers ready to put up with endless humiliations from the Ceaușescus, who were almost obscenely glorified by incessant propaganda. Between 1965 and 1989, as leader of the RCP and, after 1967, as head of state, Ceaușescu played an important role not only in the relative liberalization of 1965–71, but also in the re-Stalinization of the party and the establishment of the joint dictatorship of the last years with his wife and closest collaborator, Elena. Facing charges that were hard to prove—genocide, the killing of over 60,000 citizens, deposits of billions of dollars in foreign bank accounts—Ceaușescu was the only East European communist leader executed in the revolutionary turmoil of 1989.

Elena Ceaușescu (1919–89). A textile factory worker who joined the RCP in the late 1930s and after 1948 held a minor position in the central committee's International Department. In the 1950s, she obtained a degree in chemical engineering from the Bucharest Polytechnic Institute. She worked as a researcher and served as head of the party organization at the Bucharest Institute for Chemical Research (ICECHIM). After 1970, she enjoyed a spectacular ascent in the party hierarchy: member of the central committee, 1972; member of the executive committee (proposed by Emil Bodnăraș) and chair of the National Council for Science and Technology, 1974; member of the permanent presidium, chair of the central committee cadres commission, and first deputy prime minister (in fact, the number two person in the party and state hierarchy) in the 1980s. After being executed together with her husband on December 25, 1989, she became the primary target of shrill demonization, often presented as the main source of Nicolae's alienation from the party and the people (such attacks have been particularly violent in the memoirs of former Securitate officers).

Nicu Ceaușescu (1951–96). Graduated in 1970 from High School No. 24 in Bucharest (currently the “Jean Monnet” High School). Elected to the top echelons of the UTC while a physics student at the University of Bucharest. As first secretary of the union and minister of youth, he was elected to the RCP’s central committee in 1982. During his apprentice years as a communist apparatchik, Nicu’s main advisers were the CC secretary Ștefan Andrei, the communist youth leader Ion Traian Ștefănescu, and the head of the party organization of the Bucharest University center, Cornel Pacoste (later Pacoste became a CC secretary). In the late 1980s, candidate member of the party’s executive committee, head of the Sibiu County party organization, and groomed by his parents to succeed Nicolae as Romania’s leader (the only such case in a European Leninist regime). Following the overthrow of the Ceaușescu regime in December 1989, Nicu was tried and spent several years in prison. Reportedly a heavy drinker and playboy since adolescence, he was the symbol of the dynastic degeneration of Romanian communism in the 1980s. Ironically, in the late 1980s, some of the top leaders, fearing Elena’s aspirations to succeed her ailing husband, placed their bets on Nicu as the lesser evil (personal interview with Ștefan Andrei).

Iosif Chișinevschi (1905–63). The RCP’s leading ideologue and propagandist during the 1944–57 period, the Bessarabian-born Chișinevschi was one of Gheorghiu-Dej’s closest accomplices in the murky machinations that led to the fall of Ana Pauker, the murder of Pătrășcanu, and the trial of Vasile Luca. He attended the Comintern’s famous Leninist School and participated in the Fifth Congress of the RCP, held in Russia in December 1931. In 1940, he was named to the RCP’s secretariat. Arrested in 1940, he spent the war years in the Caransebeș penitentiary and the Tîrgu-Jiu camp, where he was one of Gheorghiu-Dej’s close associates. A consummate intriguer and opportunist, sycophantically subservient in relations with his superiors, vindictive, and despotic toward his subordinates, he was a perfect Stalinist, unconditionally devoted to the USSR. Since he identified his own destiny with the “homeland of socialism,” when the Russians changed course at the Twentieth Congress in February 1956, he immediately started to spread insidious critical allusions to Gheorghiu-Dej, hoping to cover up the crimes and abuses of his own past. After March 1956, in spite of his renewed declarations of faith to Gheorghiu-Dej, there was no chance of Chișinevschi’s political survival. In June 1957, he was excluded from the politburo, and in 1960, the Third Congress of the RWP did not reelect him to the central committee. He was married to Liuba Chișinevschi, a firebrand communist activist, whose family name he adopted (his own family name was Roitman). In the 1950s, Liuba was a CC member, vice president of the Trade Union Confederation, and deputy chair of the party’s control commission. Known among the party members as “Ioșka,” Chișinevschi was the benefactor of an entire group of crude, narrow-minded, and aggressive apparatchiks who dominated Romanian spiritual life during the years of unchecked Stalinism. His oldest son, Milea, left for Canada, and two others, Andrei and Gheorghe, immigrated to Israel, where the latter died in the late 1980s. Of the whole Chișinevschi family, there is only one son, Iuri, born in 1945, still living in Romania.

Miron Constantinescu (1917–74). A Marxist sociologist, former participant in Professor Dimitrie Gusti's seminar, and one of the few intellectuals at the higher levels of the RCP (therefore detested by his less-cultivated colleagues). Director of the party's newspaper *Schiteia* after August 23, 1944; member of the politburo, 1944–57; head of planning and briefly minister of education. In 1956, Constantinescu criticized the Securitate and Gheorghiu-Dej's leadership, and the latter took revenge in June 1957, when Constantinescu and Chişinevschi were excluded from the politburo for their "attempt to orient the party toward liberalist and revisionist anarchy." He subsequently worked at the Institute for Economic Research, the Academy History Institute, and the Center for the Specialization of Teaching Staff. Constantinescu made a political comeback after the death of Gheorghiu-Dej and was first minister of education, then secretary of the central committee and candidate member of the executive committee. He was president of the Academy of Political and Social Sciences, rector of the "Ştefan Gheorghiu" party academy, and, at the end of his life, president of the Grand National Assembly (the communist pseudo-parliament). He endured much in his family life. First, at the beginning of the 1950s, his son Horia died of appendicitis; then, in 1968, his wife, the old communist Sulamita Bloch-Constantinescu was killed by her own daughter; finally, another son, also named Horia, died of frostbite during a trip in the Bucegi Mountains. Although without any special theoretical value, Constantinescu's work is relevant in that it permitted the reestablishment of sociology as a discipline in Romania after 1965.

Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1901–65). A railway worker arrested after the 1933 strikes and sentenced to a ten-year prison term at the Craiova trial. Leader of the "center of prisons," he escaped from the Tîrgu-Jiu concentration camp in August 1944 and took over control of the party in collaboration with the Pauker-Luca group when the latter returned from the USSR in September 1944. A member of the RCP's central committee since 1935. A master of backstage intrigue, and friendly and avuncular in relations with his entourage, he sought to leave an impression of modesty and benevolence, even toward his critics. In reality, like Stalin, Rákosi, and Thorez, Gheorghiu-Dej was obsessed with power and beset by an irrepressible complex of inferiority to older party members and intellectuals. Elected general secretary at the party's national conference in October 1945, he led the party in collaboration with Pauker, Luca, and Teohari Georgescu. Gheorghiu-Dej was the principal instigator and beneficiary of the assassination of Foriş in 1946 and the arrest of Pătrăşcanu in 1948. He maneuvered subtly during the power struggles within Stalin's entourage, supported the Malenkov group, and obtained permission to eliminate Ana Pauker during the anti-Zionist campaign. In that period, Dej's principal ally was Chişinevschi. After 1953, he simulated a "new course," which was interrupted in 1956. Troubled by the disclosures of the Twentieth Congress and anguished by the contagious effects of the Hungarian Revolution, he stopped any intraparty reforms and masterminded a new wave of exclusions, arrests, and persecutions. An unrepentant Stalinist, he had an unconditional admiration for grandiose construction projects (like his disciple Ceauşescu) and initiated the notorious Danube-Black

Sea Canal—in reality, an immense concentration camp. In achieving and exercising absolute power, he relied primarily on the secret police (Securitate), headed at the outset by the Soviet agents Pintilie Bodnarenko and Alexandru Nikolski but “ethnicized” later, during the last period of Gheorghiu-Dej’s life. First secretary of the central committee and president of the state council until his death in March 1965.

Ștefan Foriș (1892–1946). After serving as a lieutenant in the Austro-Hungarian Army during World War I, Foriș joined the Hungarian Communist Party in December 1918. He earned a degree in mathematics and physics at the University of Budapest in 1919, then returned to Brașov (Romania) and became a member of the Socialist Party. In 1923, he moved to Bucharest, where he joined the Romanian Communist Party in 1926. Beginning in the spring of 1924, he was arrested several times and was sentenced to ten years in prison in the Cluj trial (sentence canceled). Between 1928 and 1930, he served as a party functionary in Kharkov and Moscow and as RCP representative to the Comintern in Berlin. In 1930–31, he was a member of the regional secretariat of the RCP in Transylvania, then secretary of the agitprop section of the central committee of the RCP. Arrested in 1932 and sentenced to five years in prison, he was released in 1935. In 1936 or 1937, he became a member of the central committee of the RCP in charge of agitprop and youth activities in Bucharest. In 1940, he went clandestinely to Comintern headquarters in Moscow and was appointed RCP general secretary (replacing Boris Ștefanov). Foriș spent the war years in Bucharest, living, together with his companion, the CC member Victoria Sârbu, in a safe house provided by a wealthy militant. In April 1944, as a result of a “party coup,” Foriș was illegally arrested and detained by Bodnăraș and his allies, who pretended that they were carrying out Soviet instructions. In the summer of 1946, when the RCP was already in power, following a decision made by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Teohari Georgescu, Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca, Foriș was murdered with an iron bar by Gheorghe Pintilie (helped by his driver Dumitru Neciu). The RCP central committee plenum rehabilitated him in April 1968.

Alexandru (Sașa) Dobrogeanu Gherea (1879–1938). Son of Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, the patriarch of Romanian socialism. Elected to parliament as a socialist deputy in 1919, he went to Moscow with a Romanian delegation in November 1920 and met Lenin. A founding member of the RCP, he joined Marcel Pauker’s left-wing faction. Arrested by the Romanian police in 1928, he was freed in 1929 after a hunger strike. In 1932, he immigrated to the USSR, where he was arrested in 1936 and executed in 1938. The RCP central committee plenum rehabilitated him in April 1968.

Petru Groza (1884–1958). A lawyer by profession, Groza was elected six times as a deputy in the Romanian interwar parliament (1919–27) and served as a minister in the governments presided over by Alexandru Averescu in 1920–21 and 1926–27. In 1933, he founded the Plowmen’s Front, a radical peasant organization based in Hunedoara County. In 1935, Groza’s Plowmen’s Front became linked with the RCP. Vice president of the council of ministers, November 1944–February 1945, prime minister, 1945–52, and president of the presidium of

the Great National Assembly, 1952–58. Having been the communists' most important fellow traveler, Groza found himself isolated and politically irrelevant after 1948. His only role was to legitimize the regime's pretense of national representation and emphasize the link between the initial stage of takeover and post-1948 radical Leninism. On various occasions, he sent letters to Gheorghiu-Dej and other party leaders complaining about his marginalization and asking for favors for his relatives and friends.

Vasile Luca (1898–1960). A worker of Hungarian origin (born Luka László), Luca had fought with the Szekler detachment against Béla Kun's Soviet Republic (for which he would be criticized later on) but joined the communist movement after 1919 and led the Braşov party organization. As a trade union leader and member of the RCP leadership, he was arrested and sentenced repeatedly, and he was jailed in Cernăuți at the time of the Soviet ultimatum of June 1940. He remained in the USSR and became a deputy in the soviet of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. During the war, he was Ana Pauker's closest collaborator in Moscow. He was married to Elisabeta Luca, who had worked in the administrative apparatus of the International Brigades in Spain. Luca returned to Romania with Ana Pauker and became one of the members of the dominant four in the RCP. In January 1946, like Ana Pauker, he was nearly expelled from Romania (Pauker to the USSR, Luca to Hungary) as a part of Stalin's plan to "Romanianize" the party. After 1947, he was vice premier and finance minister. Accused of sabotaging the monetary reform of 1952, he was the first target in the attack orchestrated by the Dej–Chişinevschi–Apostol–Borilă group against the "faction" of the three "deviationists," Pauker, Luca, and Teohari Georgescu. He was accused of having had relations with the interwar secret police, the Siguranță, in the 1930s, a charge he accepted with strange resignation. Interrogated ruthlessly, he gave up under torture and acknowledged the wildest accusations. Trying to please his interrogators (and thereby Gheorghiu-Dej), he accused Ana Pauker of "Zionist nationalism." Psychologically and morally ruined, he sent numerous letters and memoirs to Gheorghiu-Dej from the Sighet prison, pledging unswerving faith and imploring his former colleague's mercy. On the margin of one of these letters, preserved in his personal archive (to which this author had partial access) Gheorghiu-Dej noted: "The same old swine and unrepentant deceiver." This was the "fraternal style" in the RCP's "Leninist nucleus." Luca was rehabilitated posthumously in 1968. His wife was also arrested in 1952 and held for several years in solitary detention.

Ion Gheorghe Maurer (1902–2000). A lawyer, Maurer became involved in the communist movement in the 1930s. During the war, he was arrested (between 1942 and 1943), then was active in Patriotic Defense (a communist-run organization). Close to Gheorghiu-Dej, he was for a short time Ana Pauker's deputy at the Ministry for External Affairs (as a lawyer, he had defended the communists in the 1936 Craiova trial of Ana Pauker, Drăghici, Moghioroş, Bernath, etc.) but Pauker had ousted him on grounds of "political unreliability." Director of the Institute for Legal Research, he returned to political life after 1957 as minister for external affairs (following Grigore Preoteasa's death), then as president of the

Grand National Assembly's presidium and, finally, until his retirement, as prime minister. Maurer disappeared from the forefront of political life in 1974, but he continued to benefit from all the privileges of a high-ranking official. He was one of the chief backers of Ceaușescu as Gheorghiu-Dej's successor, hoping to influence him in the direction of moderate reforms. Sarcastic, cultivated, and familiar with Western sociological and political writings, he never became an apparatchik (and the party bureaucracy distrusted him). His *grand seigneur* manners, hunts, and banquets with the Ceaușescus until the middle 1980s and his princely residence on the residential Bulevardul Aviatorilor contrasted sharply with Romania's catastrophic situation. Disliked by party veterans, who never forgave him for his role in Ceaușescu's rise to power, Maurer was not approached to sign the "Letter of the Six" in March 1989. After 1990, he expressed no remorse for the role he had played under both Gheorghiu-Dej and his successor. His ability and the diplomatic talent he displayed when Bucharest was taking an autonomous line with regard to the Sino-Soviet conflict and in other situations of international crisis are undeniable. In his memoirs, Petre Pandrea, Pătrășcanu's brother-in-law and a distinguished left-wing intellectual, calls Maurer "Romania's true Lenin."

Manea Mănescu (b. 1916). A trained economist and RCP underground veteran, son of an old socialist militant from Ploiești, Mănescu served as head of the CC Science Department in late 1950s and early 1960s. He was a member of the party apparatus group that ensured Ceaușescu's rule after Gheorghiu-Dej's death. Member of the executive committee, secretary of the central committee, and prime minister for a few years (following Ion Gheorghe Maurer's resignation in 1974), Mănescu was one of the most obedient and sycophantic among Ceaușescu's associates. In December 1989, he accompanied Nicolae and Elena during their flight by helicopter from the Central Committee Building to their mansion on Lake Snagov, on the outskirts of Bucharest. Arrested and sentenced for participation in genocide, he was released for health reasons in the early 1990s and published fragments of memoirs in the publications of ultranationalist, neocommunist pro-Securitate weeklies *România Mare* and *Totuși iubirea*.

Paul Niculescu-Mizil (b. 1923). Born in Bucharest, Mizil was head of agitprop, 1956–65, secretary of the central committee, 1965–72, and a member of the executive committee, 1965–89, and the permanent presidium, 1966–79. Under Ceaușescu, he held positions in the executive, serving as minister of finance, minister of education, and vice president of the council of ministers. Between 1965 and 1972, he supervised the RCP's ideological and international departments. In February 1968, as head of the RCP's delegation to the Budapest meeting in preparation for the international communist and workers' parties conference, he made the spectacular gesture of leaving the gathering in protest over Soviet-inspired attacks on the Romanian defense of the principles of equality and independence within world communism. He lost influence as Ceaușescu's policies became increasingly personalized and erratic, and he was politically irrelevant in the 1980s, although Ceaușescu kept him on as an executive committee member. After the collapse of communism in 1989, Mizil was among the former top com-

munist officials condemned to prison. He was released in 1992. Together with Ion Iliescu (marginalized in the 1970s), Mizil represented the less dogmatic elements in Ceaușescu's entourage.

Ana Pauker (1893–1960). Born Ana Rabinsohn, into a religious Jewish family in northern Moldavia, she was one of the most important figures of Romanian and European Stalinism. A schoolteacher by profession, she became involved in the socialist movement early in life and married Marcel Pauker, scion of an influential family of leftist journalists and lawyers, who were co-owners of the newspapers *Adevărul* and *Dimineața* and family friends of important figures in Romanian political, juridical, and cultural life. Arrested in 1922, then released from prison together with her husband, she left Romania for Switzerland. Afterwards, she was active in the communist movement in the Balkans and especially in France, where she was a Comintern instructor, along with the Czech militant Eugen Fried (alias Clément), the father of her daughter Marie, now a French citizen. Ana Pauker returned to Romania, where she was arrested on July 14, 1935, and tried along with Alexandru Moghioroș, Alexandru Drăghici, and Liuba Chișinevschi, among others, and sentenced to ten years. She did not complete the term, because in 1940, she was exchanged for a Romanian patriot detained by the Russians after the occupation of Bessarabia. The Romanian battalion in the International Brigades in Spain was called “Ana Pauker.” Moreover, as a sign of admiration for the most celebrated figure of Romanian communism, many RCP leaders gave her name to their daughters (Miron Constantinescu, Chivu Stoica, Leonte Răutu, Leontin Sălăjan, and Virgil Trofin). From the moment of her arrival in Moscow, she became the undisputed leader of the Romanian communist exiles in the USSR (a relatively small group, made up of those who had survived the purges of the Great Terror period, militants of Bessarabian origin, and former Spanish Civil War fighters). Her children from her marriage with Marcel Pauker, Vladimir and Tatiana, were also in Moscow. Persistent rumors concerning her role in denouncing Marcel Pauker to the Soviet NKVD have not been supported by documentary evidence. Close to Dmitri Manuilski and Georgi Dimitrov, she maintained warm relations with other communist leaders in exile in Moscow, such as Palmiro Togliatti, Maurice Thorez, and Dolores Ibárruri. She played an important role in the establishment of the “Tudor Vladimirescu” Division recruited from among Romanian prisoners of war in the Soviet Union and led “reeducation” work (having close relations with Colonel, then General, Dimitrie Cambrea). After returning to Romania, she was for less than a year the real leader of the RCP (proven by documents, testimonies, and memories of that period's activists). In the fall of 1945, she proposed Gheorghiu-Dej, whom she had first met in 1940, when he was taken to Caransebeș after the fall of Doftana, as secretary general. Although initially cordial, relations between Ana Pauker and Gheorghiu-Dej were in fact ambivalent. They came to detest each other intensely, although there was also a degree of mutual admiration. Despite always being mutually suspicious, they made perilous confessions to each other. She needed his proletarian prestige, while he made use of her Moscow connections. Each of them saw the other as a

rival, but there was also a rather morbid psychological attraction between them. Years after her exclusion from the RWP leadership, Gheorghiu-Dej would come forward periodically at the politburo meetings with recollections of the pseudo-friendship between “our Ana” and “Ghițuș.” Secretary of the central committee, minister of foreign affairs after 1947, and the subject of a hyperbolized personality cult, Ana Pauker was eliminated from the RCP leadership in 1952. She was arrested and interrogated between February and June 1953 by Securitate Colonel Vasile Negrea (later a general and Drăghici’s deputy at the Ministry of the Interior). Under continuous surveillance, suspected of intending a political comeback during the period of relative de-Stalinization initiated by Nikita Khrushchev, she was invited in 1956 to have talks with Gheorghiu-Dej’s emissaries, Apostol, Pîrvulescu, Moghioroș, Borilă, and Ion Vințe (vice president of the Party Control Commission). She refused to acknowledge her guilt vis-à-vis the RCP leader, declared herself politically innocent, and asked to be reinstated in her rights of party member. Defiant to her former colleagues and subordinates, she requested explanations of what had happened to her in 1952–53, including the Securitate interrogations and the confiscation of family documents. She was operated on for breast cancer in Moscow in 1951 and, abandoned by all her friends, withdrew inside the family universe. During her last years, she translated books from French and Russian for the Political Publishing House (perforce anonymously).

Marcel Pauker (1896–1938). Born into a well-off Jewish family and a lawyer by profession, Pauker was a founding member of the RCP and a leading militant until 1930. Between 1925 and 1928, he was the RCP delegate to the Comintern. At the Sixth Comintern Congress in August 1928, Pauker was elected to its executive committee under the pseudonym Popescu. He played a leading role in the factional struggles within the RCP under the name Luximin. Following the Comintern’s September 1930 resolution on the “unprincipled factional struggle and on the revival of the Communist Party in Romania” and the defeat of his “leftist” opposition, Pauker emigrated to the Soviet Union. He was arrested in 1936 as a member of the “Trotskyite–Zinovievite Center” and executed without trial in 1937. Benefiting from their mother’s international prestige—she was then in jail in Romania—Vladimir and Tania, Ana Pauker’s children by Marcel Pauker, escaped the tragic fate reserved for the offspring of “enemies of the people” and survived in an orphanage near Moscow.

Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu (1900–1954). A communist militant, lawyer, sociologist, and economist, born into a distinguished family with political connections and educated in Leipzig, Pătrășcanu was long the most visible figure in Romanian communism. Repelled by social injustice, he joined the socialist movement in his youth. Pătrășcanu wrote numerous works of social history and ideological critique and was RCP’s representative to the Comintern in 1934–35. In that period, he had close connections with Elena Filipovici, secretary of the central committee, executed in Moscow during the Great Terror. Those who were close to Pătrășcanu, including Lena Constante, testified that he started to doubt the Stalinist system in Moscow in the 1930s. As a convinced antifascist, he sus-

pended his critical spirit, however, and continued to be active in the RCP. During the war, he was imprisoned for a period at Țirgu-Jiu, where he came into contact with Gheorghiu-Dej and his group. A member of the central committee after 1945, then member of the politburo (1946–47) and minister of justice, he was the most active communist participant in the negotiations that led to the fall of Marshal Ion Antonescu's fascist dictatorship. Distinguished, erudite, sophisticated, polite, and urbane, Pătrășcanu was exactly the opposite of the new RCP leadership (many of whom behaved like *nouveaux riches*). Lacking support within the party, surrounded by Bodnăraș's agents, and abandoned by Ana Pauker (the only member of the secretariat with whom he had cordial relations), Pătrășcanu appeared as the ideal victim of the purge system instituted after the Sovietization of the country. Gheorghiu-Dej detested and envied him for personal reasons, Chișinevschi suspected him of nationalistic temptations, and the Russians did not forgive him his dignified behavior during the armistice negotiations. Arrested in 1948, interrogated by a team headed by Securitate Colonel Petre Goncearuk (Petrescu), a Soviet agent, Pătrășcanu refused to cooperate with his tormentors. After the fall of Teohari Georgescu, his interrogation, carried out by sadistic Romanian officers under Soviet supervision, turned increasingly violent. Following Gheorghiu-Dej's instructions, Minister of the Interior Alexandru Drăghici was determined to extract a confession from Pătrășcanu by any means available. Pătrășcanu resisted until the end, but some of those he considered his friends did not. He was executed in April 1954, after a simulacrum of a trial. Rehabilitated politically in April 1968 as a part of Ceaușescu's attempt to acquire legitimacy by restoring "socialist legality" and demolishing the myth of his predecessor.

Constantin Pîrvulescu (1895–1992). A communist militant and member of the RCP since its founding congress and of the central committee since 1929. Arrested in 1934, he escaped and went to the USSR, where he stayed until World War II. During the war, he was one of the leaders of the underground RCP. In April 1944, together with Emil Bodnăraș and Iosif Rangheț, Pîrvulescu ran the party while Ana Pauker was still in the USSR and Gheorghiu-Dej was in prison. Between April and September 1944, he was the party's provisional general secretary. He was chairman of the party control commission, 1945–60, and a member of the politburo, 1948–60, but he lost these positions after the CC plenum of November–December 1961, where he was criticized for complicity with Iosif Chișinevschi and Miron Constantinescu. At the Twelfth Party Congress, in 1979, Pîrvulescu, then aged eighty-four, protested against not being permitted to address the congress. Finally, he was allowed to speak and accused Ceaușescu of putting his personal interests above those of the country. Although he was silenced rapidly, news about the incident reached Western media. After the congress, Pîrvulescu disappeared from the public life, but in spite of the rumors, he was not murdered. In March 1989, he signed the anti-Ceaușescu "Letter of the Six" party veterans. Pîrvulescu lived to see the collapse of the Ceaușescu regime in December 1989. He was married to Suzana Pîrvulescu (1898–1942), also a communist militant, active in the technical apparatus of the RCP, jailed in 1936–39.

Grigore Preoteasa (1915–57). One of the leaders of the Democratic Student Front, created in 1936 to counter the advance of the Iron Guard in Romanian universities and presided by Gheorghe (Gogu) Rădulescu. Preoteasa was managing editor of the newspaper *România Liberă* from 1944 to 1946, minister of external affairs, 1956–57, a candidate politburo member, and, after June 1957, CC secretary in charge of ideology and culture. He died in a plane crash in Moscow in November 1957. At the time of his death, many in the party elite saw him as the rising star within Dej's closest entourage. In fact, it was only after Preoteasa's demise that Ceaușescu emerged as the leader's main protégé.

Gheorghe Rădulescu (1914–91). When the Ceaușescu regime collapsed in December 1989, Rădulescu was the last member of the RCP's old guard in the top party and state hierarchy. He was a member of the permanent presidium of the executive committee and vice chairman of the state council. Trained as an economist, and head of the communist-controlled antifascist Democratic Student Front in the 1930s, he spent the war years in the USSR. (He defected from the Romanian Army to the Soviet lines in 1941, was then deported to Siberia, and eventually joined the political emigration in Moscow.) After 1948, he was minister of trade, a CC member, briefly under party investigation and house arrest in the 1950s, then deputy prime minister and an influential member of Ceaușescu's initial inner circle. Elected to the top party echelons in 1965, he stuck to his privileges and participated in the crafting of Ceaușescu's cult. Privately, among his close intellectual friends, pretending to be drunk, he expressed nausea and contempt for the Conducător, while publicly he was one of the most servile propagandists and promoters of Ceaușescu's myth. His wife, Dorina Rudich, who died in the early 1980s, had also been also a party veteran. After being arrested and tried with other executive committee members, Rădulescu was released for poor health reasons. He died in the early 1990s as a patient at the Jewish Community Hospital (although he was not Jewish).

Leonte Răutu (1910–93). Chief ideologue of the RCP during the Dej era. The son of a pharmacist from the Bessarabian city of Bălți (his real name, which he used until 1945, was Lev Oigenstein), Răutu graduated high school, enrolled at the University of Bucharest (in mathematics), but never completed his degree. He joined the communist movement in his youth and was active in the propaganda apparatus. He was the editor of the clandestine party newspaper *Scînteia* and collaborated with Ștefan Foriș, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, Valter Roman, Sorin Toma, Mircea Bălănescu, and Tatiana Leapis (later Bulan), Răutu's first wife (she left him for Ștefan Foriș). Intelligent, witty, and well informed, Răutu mostly read Russian and Soviet literature. Although lacking a systematic philosophical background, he was nonetheless one of the few activists with a certain degree of Marxist and even non-Marxist culture. Arrested and sentenced in the 1930s, he emigrated to the USSR after the annexation of Bessarabia in June 1940. As head of Radio Moscow's Romanian broadcasting service, he was one of Ana Pauker's favorites (together with Valter Roman and Petre Borilă). Răutu returned to Romania in 1945 (at Ana Pauker's instigation) and was immediately catapulted to the top of RCP's propaganda apparatus as Chișinevski's deputy, joining the ed-

itorial board of the party's daily, *Scînteia*. His articles were noticed for their acerbic irony and the vehemence of the adjectives used against political enemies (primarily the National Peasant Party and its newspaper, *Dreptatea*). Together with Silviu Brucan, Ștefan Voicu, Sorin Toma, Nestor Ignat, Nicolae Moraru, Miron Radu Paraschivescu, and Traian Șelmaru, Răutu was among the most zealous critics of pluralistic democracy and the multiparty system. From this group, Răutu later recruited the nucleus of the RWP's ideological apparatus. Recognized officially as Chișinevschi's closest collaborator, a member of the central committee of RWP after 1948, and head of the section for propaganda and culture, Răutu was in fact the dictator of Romanian culture until Gheorghiu-Dej's demise. After 1956, he had practically no superior except for Dej, who was little interested in the intrigues of cultural life. After Stalin's death, Răutu, who had organized the unmasking of "decadent" critics and poets, presided over "the reconsideration of the cultural heritage." At RWP's Second Congress (December 1955), he became candidate member of the politburo. His single possible rival was Grigore Preoteasa, who in June 1957 became secretary of the central committee in charge of ideology. Preoteasa's death in November 1957 gave Răutu a free hand as culture czar. Over the years, his deputies were Mihail Roller (who had also returned from the USSR), Ofelia Manole, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Nicolae Goldberger (a member of the politburo in the 1930s), Manea Mănescu (in charge of the science sector), Cornel Onescu, and Pavel Țugui (later expelled from the party on charges of having concealed his youthful right-wing sympathies). Suffering from a complex due to his social and ethnic origins, Răutu sought to ingratiate himself with Ceaușescu (the relationship got warmer thanks to the friendship between Răutu's wife, Natalia, and Elena Ceaușescu). The cordial relations with the Ceaușescus established during Dej's lifetime, as well as his chameleonlike ability to adjust himself to all political twists and turns, explain Răutu's political longevity. After 1965, he became secretary of the central committee, a member of the executive committee, vice premier in charge of education, and, between 1974 and 1981, rector of the "Ștefan Gheorghiu" party academy. He was forced to resign from the RCP leadership and to retire after one of his daughters decided to emigrate with her husband to the United States. Răutu's last years were spent in panic and enormous confusion: notwithstanding the perverted satisfaction that seeing Ceaușescu executed gave him, the revolutionary convulsions destroyed (formally at least) the entire political and symbolic edifice whose construction had been the meaning of his whole life.

Ilie Verdeț (1924–2001). A member of the party apparatus group that included also Virgil Trofin, Gheorghe Pană, Vasile Patilineț, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Cornel Onescu, Ion Stănescu, and Constantin Dăscălescu. Born to a socialist family in the coal-mining area of Petroșani, Verdeț joined the RCP in 1944. In the 1950s, he went to Moscow, where he studied at the CPSU's Advanced Party School. After 1960, he was Ceaușescu's deputy in the CC directorate for cadres (organizational directorate). Between 1965 and 1989, he held important party positions, including that of CC secretary, member of the permanent presidium of the executive committee, and prime minister (1980–82). During the last years of the

Ceaușescu dictatorship, the increasingly marginal Verdeț served as chair of the powerless central auditing commission. Immediately after Ceaușescu's flight from the Central Committee Building on December 22, 1989, Verdeț tried unsuccessfully to form a new government, invoking the principles of socialism and proletarian values—in fact, a last-minute effort to rescue the crumbling edifice of Leninism in Romania. From 1989 until his death in 2001, he was head of the Socialist Labor Party, a radical leftist, neocommunist formation.

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Notes

Introduction. Why a History of Romanian Communism?

1. Both Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu maintained cordial personal relations with the Spanish communist leaders Dolores Ibárruri (“La Pasionaria”) and Santiago Carrillo. Ibárruri in fact lived in Romania in the 1950s, and the communist “España independiente” radio station began broadcasting from Bucharest in 1955. For an insightful analysis of Ibárruri’s revolutionary career, see Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Pasionaria y los siete enanitos* [Pasionaria and the Seven Little Dwarfs] (Barcelona: Planeta, 1995). For an informative, albeit often self-serving, analysis of the anti-Soviet positions taken by the RCP in world communism, especially during the crucial year 1968, see Paul Niculescu-Mizil, *De la Comintern la comunism național* (Bucharest: Editura Evenimentul Românesc, 2001). As CC secretary between 1965 and 1972, Niculescu-Mizil supervised the RCP’s international relations.

2. For provocative analyses of political and cultural trends in postcommunist Romania, see Tony Judt, “Romania: Bottom of the Heap,” *New York Review of Books*, November 1, 2001, pp. 41–45.

3. See Robert C. Tucker, *The Soviet Political Mind: Stalinism and Post-Stalin Change*, rev. ed. (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 143.

4. For Hoxha’s opposition to Khrushchev’s humiliating treatment of him, especially during the Moscow world communist conference in November 1960, see the Albanian writer Ismail Kadare’s novel *Le Grand Hiver* (Paris: Fayard, 1978). Kadare discusses Hoxha’s personality and the nature of Albanian Stalinism in a book of conversations with Denis Fernandez-Recatala, *Temps barbares: De l’Albanie au Kosovo* (Paris: Éditions de l’Archipel, 1999).

5. See, e.g., Kenneth Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development: The Case of Romania, 1944–1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); *The Crisis of Leninism and the Decline of the Left: The Revolutions of 1989*, ed. Daniel Chirot (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991); Catherine Durandin and Despina Tomescu, *La Roumanie de Ceaușescu* (Saint-Ouen, France: Éditions Guy Epaud, 1988); Trond Gilberg, *Nationalism and Communism in Romania: The Rise and Fall of Ceaușescu's Personal Dictatorship* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990); and Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

6. Michael Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society: Political Stagnation and Simulated Change* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1985).

7. Mary Ellen Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu: A Study in Political Leadership* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1989).

8. This is recognized in the former economic czar Gheorghe Gaston Marin's memoirs, *În serviciul României lui Gheorghiu-Dej. Însemnări din viață* [Serving Gheorghiu-Dej's Romania: Notes from My Life] (Bucharest: Editura Evenimentul Românesc, 2000), and even in statements by Nicolae Ceaușescu, Gheorghe Apostol, and Paul Niculescu-Mizil.

9. Much of this material has previously appeared in Romanian; see Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantoma lui Gheorghiu-Dej* [The Phantom of Gheorghiu-Dej] (Bucharest: Univers, 1995).

10. *Serviciul Român de Informații, Cartea Albă a Securității* [The White Book of the Securitate], vols. 1–2 (Bucharest, 1994); vols. 3–5 (Bucharest, 1995).

11. The concluding sections of the book draw on numerous memoirs and interviews. In June 1994, for example, I had a one-on-one interview with Ion Iliescu about his intellectual and political evolution, and I followed up on this in a long personal interview with him in June 2001.

12. On the relationship between Jews, modernity, and political radicalism, see *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

Chapter 1. Understanding National Stalinism

1. Ion Iliescu, *Revoluție și reformă* [Revolution and Reform] (Bucharest: Redacția publicațiilor pentru străinătate, 1993), p. 9. Western analysts, primarily Ken Jowitt, Daniel Chirot, and this author had long since made these points. See, e.g., my article "Ceaușescu's Socialism," *Problems of Communism* 34, 1 (January–March 1985): 50–66; for analyses of the turbulent Romanian exit from communism, see the chapter "The Effects of Totalitarianism-cum-Sultanism on Democratic Transition: Romania," in Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 344–65, and Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Romanian Exceptionalism? Democracy,

Ethnocracy and Uncertain Pluralism in Post-Ceaușescu Romania,” in *Politics, Power and the Struggle for Democracy in South-East Europe*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 403–51.

2. A point admitted by Silviu Brucan, a former Ceaușescu opponent. See his *De la capitalism la socialism și retur: O biografie între două revoluții* [From Capitalism to Socialism and Back: A Biography between Two Revolutions] (Bucharest: Editura Nemira, 1998).

3. Patilineț conspiracy information from an interview with Mircea Răceanu, Washington, D.C., May 19, 1994. Răceanu, a high-ranking Romanian diplomat, was arrested and sentenced to death in 1989, but Western pressure forced Ceaușescu to commute the sentence to life imprisonment. After the December 1989 events, Răceanu was released, became active in the democratic opposition to the Iliescu regime, and was forced to leave Romania in 1990. For a lucid analysis of the events in December 1989 and their aftermath, see Nestor Ratesh, *Romania: The Entangled Revolution* (New York: Praeger; Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1991).

4. See my book *Arheologia terorii* [The Archaeology of Terror], updated ed. (Bucharest: Editura All, 1998).

5. See Dumitru Popescu, *Un fost lider comunist se destăinuie: “Am fost și ciopliitor de himere”* [A Former Communist Leader Confesses: “I too was a carver of chimeras”] (Bucharest: Editura Express, n.d.).

6. A. James McAdams, “GDR Oral History Project,” American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, *Newsletter*, March 1994, p. 5.

7. My interview with the former foreign minister Ștefan Andrei, Bucharest, June 1994. According to Andrei, arguably one of the most intelligent members of Ceausescu’s entourage, the best hope for the nomenklatura was to promote Nicu, Ceaușescu’s youngest son, as a way of preventing Elena from succeeding her husband at the top of both party and state. Neither Andrei nor other members of the party’s executive committee realized how explosive the situation was in 1989.

8. See Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), esp. pp. 121–219. I owe to Ken Jowitt the insightful idea of approaching Romanian communism as “pariah Leninism.”

9. Belu Zilber [Andrei Șerbulescu, pseud.], *Monarhia de drept dialectic: A doua versiune a memoriilor lui Belu Zilber* [The Monarchy of Dialectical Right: The Second Version of Belu Zilber’s Memoirs] (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 1991).

10. Robert C. Tucker’s masterful studies of Stalin and Leninist political culture are the model for this type of approach. See, e.g., Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928–1941* (New York: Norton, 1990).

11. Karl Marx, “Contributions to Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 23.

12. See “Charter 77 Appeals for Solidarity with Romania,” *Radio Free Europe Research*, Czechoslovak SR, January 21, 1988, pp. 39–40.

13. See “Pogrom in Romania,” *Economist* (London), September 3, 1988, p. 15.

14. See Daniel Chirot, “Romania: Ceausescu’s Last Folly,” *Dissent*, Summer 1988, p. 275.

15. See Pavel Câmpeanu, “Ceașescu: Anii numărătorii inverse” [Ceașescu: The Countdown Years], *Revista* 22 (Bucharest), February 2–8, 1999.

16. See Lavinia Betea, *Maurer și lumea de ieri: Mărturii despre stalinizarea României* [Maurer and the World of Yesterday: Testimonies on Romania’s Stalinization] (Arad: Fundația Culturală “Ion Slavici,” 1995). This book is a striking example of the enduring pro-Dej sentiment among many members of the RCP old guard.

17. In the 1950s, Silviu Brucan served as deputy editor of the party newspaper *Știința*, then as Romania’s ambassador to the United Nations and the United States. Under Ceaușescu, his political influence evaporated and he taught scientific socialism at the Bucharest Medical University. In the 1980s, Brucan published several books in the United States promoting moderate reforms within Soviet-style regimes. In March 1989, he was one of the signatories of an anti-Ceaușescu letter and was placed under strict Securitate surveillance. After the regime’s collapse in December 1989, Brucan emerged as one of the new leading group’s top figures. A few months later, however, he resigned and became an independent commentator.

18. See Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania, 1944–1962* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 351, and Tismaneanu, *Fantoma lui Gheorghiu-Dej*.

19. See Z. Ornea, *Anii treizeci: Extrema dreaptă românească* [The 1930s: The Romanian Far Right] (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1995).

20. See Stelian Tănase, *Elite și societate: Guvernarea Gheorghiu-Dej* [Elites and Society: The Gheorghiu-Dej Regime] (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 1998).

21. See Sergiu Verona, *Military Occupation and Diplomacy: Soviet Troops in Romania, 1944–1958* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992).

22. On the post-1958 campaigns against the intelligentsia, see Stelian Tănase, *Anatomia mistificării, 1944–1989* [The Anatomy of Mystification, 1944–1989] (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 1997).

23. See Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Filosofie și naționalism: Paradoxul Noica* [Philosophy and Nationalism: The Noica Paradox] (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 1998); Norman Manea, *On Clowns: The Dictator and the Artist* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1992); and Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*.

24. For instance, the cases of Alexandru Iliescu (Ion’s father, who died in 1945), Grigore Răceanu, and apparently Grigore Preoteasa, who, at different moments and with different intensity, questioned the wisdom of the leadership’s slavish toeing of the Comintern’s line. But, as a rule, the party elite valued orthodoxy and discipline above all in militants. This explains Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu’s failure to break with the party in spite of his intimate knowledge of the criminal methods used by Stalin’s secret police to exterminate émigré members of the RCP’s old guard during the Great Purge.

25. See Georges Haupt, “La Genèse du conflit soviéto-roumain,” *Revue française des sciences politiques* 18, 4 (August 1968): 669–84.

26. For a comprehensive analysis of the ideological and political underpinnings of the Ceaușescu regime, see Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*.

27. In 1965, the Soviet delegation to the RCP's Ninth Congress was headed by Leonid Brezhnev and the Chinese one by Deng Xiaoping. See *Congresul al IX-lea al Partidului Comunist Român* [The Ninth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1966).

28. The myth of the “patriotic faction” (*gruparea națională*) would later be used by former communist leaders such as Alexandru Bîrlădeanu and Paul Niculescu-Mizil to foster the notion of a radical discontinuity between the early Stalinist stage and post-1960 developments. On the efforts of Bîrlădeanu, a former politburo member, to portray Gheorghiu-Dej as benign, in contrast to Ceaușescu, see Lavinia Betea, *Alexandru Bîrlădeanu despre Dej, Ceaușescu și Iliescu* [Alexandru Bîrlădeanu on Dej, Ceaușescu, and Iliescu] (Bucharest: Editura Evenimentul Românesc, 1997). For one of the most lucid and devastating critiques of Romanian Stalinism, coming from a disillusioned former top communist intellectual, see Titus Popovici, *Disciplina dezordinii: Roman memorialistic* [Discipline of Disorder: An Autobiographical Novel] (Bucharest: Editura Mașina de scris, 1998).

29. See Dan Ionescu, “The Posthumous Cult of Ceaușescu and Its High Priests,” *Report on Eastern Europe* 2, 22 (May 31, 1991): 23–27.

30. Although not a former member of the party apparatus, Petre Roman had deep connections with it. His father, the late Valter Roman, a former Spanish Civil war veteran, had been a member of the central committee and director of the party publishing house Editura Politică until his death in 1983.

31. I use the term “political culture” in the sense of Sidney Verba's classical 1965 definition, developed by Robert C. Tucker in his enlightening contributions on the Bolshevik political culture. See *Political Culture and Political Development*, ed. Lucian Pye and Sidney Verba (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), and Robert C. Tucker, *Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia* (New York: Norton, 1987), esp. “The Breakdown of a Revolutionary Culture,” pp. 51–71.

32. See William E. Crowther, *The Political Economy of Romanian Socialism* (New York: Praeger, 1988).

33. See Vladimir Tismaneanu, “From Arrogance to Irrelevance: Avatars of Marxism in Romania,” in *The Road to Disillusion: From Critical Marxism to Post-communism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Ray Taras (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), pp. 135–50.

34. For Ceaușescu's denunciations of reformism in the 1980s, see Michael Shafir, “‘Ceausescuism’ against ‘Gorbachevism,’” *Radio Free Europe Research*, RAD Background Report/95, May 30, 1988; Vladimir Tismaneanu, “Ceaușescu gegen Glasnost,” *Kontinent* (Munich), no. 3 (1988): 48–53.

35. See Anatoly S. Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), p. 62.

36. Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Vintage International, 1990).

37. *Scînteia*, May 4, 1988, p. 1.

38. See Ferenc Fehér and Agnes Heller, *Hungary 1956 Revisited: The Message of a Revolution—A Quarter of a Century After* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983).

39. Aleksa Djilas, “A Profile of Slobodan Milošević,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, 3 (Summer 1993): 81–96; for insightful interpretations of the Yugoslav debacle, see Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), and Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to Ethnic War*, 4th, updated ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2002).

40. See Vladimir Tismaneanu, “Moștenirea Republicii Populare Române” [The Legacy of the Romanian People’s Republic], *Revista* 22 (Bucharest), December 30, 1997–January 5, 1998, p. 6.

41. I have in mind the student unrest among ethnic Romanians, not the turmoil among students and faculty at the Hungarian language “Bolyai” University in Cluj. There was little communication between the two movements. For the political and intellectual unrest in the second half of the 1950s, see *Analele Sighet* 8: *Anii 1954–1960. Fluxurile și refluxurile stalinismului* [The Sighet Annals 8: The Years 1954–1960. The Ebb and Flow of Stalinism] (Bucharest: Fundatia Academia Civica, 2000).

42. See, e.g., Virgil Ierunca, *Fenomenul Pitești* [The Pitești Phenomenon] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1990).

Chapter 2. A Messianic Sect

1. See Nicolae Jurcă, *Istoria Social-Democrației din România* [The History of Romanian Social Democracy] (Bucharest: Editura științifică, 1994), pp. 42–47; and for a comprehensive approach to the fate of the Left in Romania and the communist destruction of social democracy, see F. Vladimir Krasnosselski, *Stinga în România, 1832–1948: Tentativa de sinucidere sau asasinat* [The Left in Romania, 1832–1948: Suicide Attempt or Assassination?] (Aarhus, Denmark: Editura Victor Frunză, 1991).

2. See Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 9.

3. Constantin Stere cited in *ibid.*, p. 3.

4. Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea quoted in *ibid.*, p. 12. As Shafir has pointed out in his seminal writings on Romania’s political culture, Gherea played an enormous role in the development of socialist thought and practice in Romania. His justifications of evolutionary socialism in agrarian European societies were noticed by luminaries of international social democracy such as Karl Kautsky, Lenin, and Rosa Luxemburg.

5. Jurcă, *Istoria Social-Democrației din România*, pp. 5, 57.

6. Mircea Mușat and Ion Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire 1918–1933* [Romania after the Great Unification, 1918–1933] (Bucharest: Editura științifică

și enciclopedică, 1986), 2: 421, 429. Hereafter cited as Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*.

7. Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 6.

8. See Jowitt, *New World Disorder*, pp. 51–56.

9. Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 7.

10. See Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, pp. 9–10.

11. For a masterful analysis of the blend of anticommunism, antisemitism, and romantic anticapitalism in the ideology of the Iron Guard, Romania's main fascist movement, see Petre Pandrea, *Garda de Fier: Jurnal de filosofie politică—Memorii penitenciare* [The Iron Guard: A Political Philosophical Diary—Prison Memoirs] (Bucharest: Editura Vreamea, 2001). A man of the Left who was persecuted by his own political allies, Pandrea wrote this memoir during his prison term, most likely at the request of the communist authorities, who tried to collect informative analyses about their main ideological opponents, primarily the Legionaries (another name for Iron Guardists).

12. For an in-depth analysis of the Romanian extreme Right, see Armin Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”: Mișcare socială și organizație politică. O contribuție la problema fascismului internațional* [The “Archangel Michael” Legion: Social Movement and Political Organization. A Contribution to the Problem of International Fascism] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999). See also Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others: A History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1970).

13. Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 19. See also Branko Lazich, in collaboration with Milorad M. Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), pp. 383–84.

14. Quoted in Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 10. See also Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, pp. 22–23.

15. Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 19.

16. See Nicolae Ceaușescu, “Partidul Comunist Român—Continuator al luptei revoluționare și democratice a poporului român, al tradițiilor mișcării democratice și socialiste din România,” Expunere la adunarea festivă organizată cu prilejul aniversării a 45 de ani de la crearea Partidului Comunist Român [The Romanian Communist Party—A Continuator of the Revolutionary and Democratic Struggle of the Romanian People, of the Traditions of the Democratic and Socialist Movement in Romania, Speech Delivered at the Solemn Meeting Organized to Celebrate the Forty-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the Romanian Communist Party], in Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Opere alese* [Selected Works], vol. 1: 1965–1970 (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1982), pp. 159–60. Hereafter cited as Ceaușescu, “Partidul Comunist Român—Continuator al luptei revoluționare și democratice a poporului român.”

17. See the exceptionally detailed references on this troubled period in Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, pp. 164–216. Much of the information published for the first time in that volume is used here.

18. Ignazio Silone in *The God That Failed*, ed. R. H. S. Crossman (1949; New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 101.

19. Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, p. 171.

20. Ibid.

21. See Victor Frunză, *Istoria Partidului Comunist Român* [History of the Romanian Communist Party] (Aarhus, Denmark: Nord Publishing House, 1984), 1: 24. Bădulescu was Moscovici's alias, and not the other way around, as Frunză claims. Moscovici was executed in the USSR in 1936.

22. *Socialismul*, December 10, 1920, quoted in Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, p. 177.

23. See Franz Borkenau, *World Communism: A History of the Communist International* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1971), pp. 172–75.

24. Basil Spîru (Erich Hutschnecker) was one of the founders of the RCP. In the 1930s, he had been a member of the RCP delegation to the Comintern, and he headed Radio Moscow's Romanian Department until Walter Ulbricht recruited him to work with German POW's in the USSR (1942–45). After the war, Spîru settled in East Germany, where he taught the history of international communism at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig.

25. Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon* (1941; reprint, New York: Bantam Books, 1968).

26. See Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 23.

27. Marcel Pauker's report, quoted in Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, p. 183; for details of the congress's proceedings, see *ibid.*, pp. 184–86. According to the party historians, the Second Congress's main resolutions were written by a commission made up of Gheorghe Cristescu, Marcel Pauker, Boris Ștefanov, David Finkelstein (alias Fabian), and Solomon Schein, which is to say, one ethnic Romanian worker, three Jewish intellectuals, and a déclassé Bulgarian landowner. Clearly, the early party elite did not for the most part spring from the ethnic Romanian working class but consisted primarily of representatives of the disenchanting, often frustrated, and undoubtedly persecuted ethnic minorities. Which is not to say that RCP was an ethnic party: it could not have been for many reasons, the most important being that belonging to the party was the ticket to a supranational identity, membership in the “universal army of the liberators of mankind.” That this rhetoric appealed more to the young offspring of Bessarabian and Transylvanian (often, but not always, Jewish) semi-intellectuals is only understandable in terms of emotional background, ideological preferences, and readiness to embrace the cosmic vision of the world revolutionary cataclysm.

28. Quoted in Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, p. 195.

29. Ceaușescu, “Partidul Comunist Român—Continuator al luptei revoluționare și democratice a poporului român,” p. 166.

30. See Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (New York: Knopf, 1991).

31. See Leonard Shapiro's discussion of the changes in Comintern's line following the crushing of the 1923 German uprising and Lenin's death in *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), pp. 358–59. Actually, a “temporary stabilization of capitalism” that would give Soviet Russia

much-needed “breathing space” was expected, and Stalin was already preparing for his alliance with Bukharin.

32. By far one of the best analyses of the communist mind is Aleksander Wat’s *My Century: The Odyssey of a Polish Intellectual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

33. Quoted in Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, p. 204.

34. Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, pp. 24–26. Ionescu misidentifies Bădulescu as Köblös; in reality, he was Gelber (Gilbert) Moscovici, the RCP’s permanent delegate to Comintern.

35. See the partial, often opaque, but still highly informative monograph written by two RCP veterans, Iuliu Szikszay and Marin Popa, and a party historian, Ion Bulei, *Eugen Rozvan* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1971). The monograph was published in a series edited by the RCP’s Institute of Historical and Social-Political Studies (in reality, the Institute of Party History) headed by Ion Popescu-Puțuri and Nicolae Goldberger. Whatever their weakness, many of these volumes remain the only source on the real dynamics of the socialist and underground communist movements in Romania. I shall have occasion later to cite other publications by this institute.

36. These are the official, published Comintern figures as quoted by Robert R. King, *A History of the Romanian Communist Party* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), p. 18; see also Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1951), p. 243. The sources are the transcripts of the Fifth Comintern Congress, as well as periodical section reports published by the Comintern’s main print outlet, International Press Correspondence (Inprekor).

37. There were only 80 RCP members in Bucharest, and fewer than 1,000 throughout the country, including those in prisons and concentration camps, at the time of the August 23, 1944, coup (figures provided by Iosif Rangheț, head of the organizational section of the central committee, at a meeting of central party *aktiv*, April 25–27, 1945). Proportionally, the RCP was thus the smallest communist party in Eastern Europe. In absolute terms, it equaled the membership of the Albanian Communist Party. For further details, see chapter 3. The figure of 1,000 members was mentioned to me by many veterans, including Alexandru Buican, Corneliu Bogdan, Ana Toma, and Ilka Melinescu.

38. See Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 28.

39. In a book written in 1941, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu proposed a Marxist interpretation of the disintegration of Romania’s democratic system and the ascent of the Iron Guard. Dominated by a strictly economist conception, he failed to underscore the characteristics of the national political culture exploited by the Guard. On the other hand, for obvious reasons, Pătrășcanu’s analysis did not point out the immensely counterproductive strategy pursued by the RCP after the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939, when the party accepted Comintern directives (1940) and welcomed Soviet annexation of Bessarabia and Bukovina. See Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, *Sub trei dictaturi* [Under Three Dictatorships] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1970).

40. Christian Rakovsky's 1927 letter-essay "The 'Professional Dangers' of Power," in *The Stalinist Legacy: Its Impact on Twentieth-Century World Politics*, ed. Tariq Ali (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 47–59. See also the paragraph quoted at pp. 57–58.

41. Letter from the archives of the RCP's central committee quoted in the introduction by Simion Vutușteanu and Gh. I. Ioniță to the anthology *David Fabian* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1972), p. 25.

42. See speeches delivered at the central committee plenum in November–December 1961 (partially published in *Scinteia*, December 10–14, 1961); full texts in the central committee archives, copies in the possession of the author) by Gheorghe Stoica (Moscu Cohn, an old Comintern survivor who had been a champion of the "unprincipled factional struggles," fought in the Spanish Civil War in the International Brigades, spent the war years in Moscow, and returned to Romania with the "Tudor Vladimirescu" division formed of Romanian POWs; the Transylvanian militant Alexandru Sencovici; and Vasile Luca's old enemy, Anton Moisescu, Gheorghe Apostol's protégé, and deputy chairman of Trade Union Council. At that plenum, Nicolae Ceaușescu was particularly pugnacious in his attack on Marcel Pauker's memory. It would be interesting to know why, in this operation of simulated de-Stalinization, Dej and his comrades had to restigmatize the victims of Stalin's terror in the USSR. After all, many of these, e.g., David Fabian, had been judicially rehabilitated in the Soviet Union. The most plausible reason is Dej's need to preserve a convincing demonology, a Stalinist picture of the party under continuous attack from within and from without, and thus to insist on the need to keep the leadership monolithically united. When the break with Khrushchev became inevitable, and as the new line was defined in the direction of a "national communist" contract, it was important to foster Dej's image as the prime genuine Leninist in the party leadership: a true Romanian worker (this chauvinistic note was unmistakable in the various speeches, especially in those delivered by the nonethnic Romanian central committee members), profoundly linked to the fate, sufferings, and aspirations of the Romanian nation. This was the legend fabricated to placate Dej's fears that desatellitization might create turbulence and shatter his power base.

43. See J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932–1939* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999).

44. See Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Origins, Growth and Dissolution*, vol. 3: *The Breakdown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 261–62. In terms of Marxist sophistication, even the Hungarian ideologue József Revái, a former student of Lukács, was of much higher caliber than Leonte Răutu, his Romanian counterpart in the 1950s, let alone Chișinevschi, whose Marxism was rudimentary. This point has been significantly and correctly raised by Stelian Tănase in his analysis of the Romanian elites. See *Sfera politică*, no. 11 (November 1993).

45. See Isaac Deutscher, "Marxism and Primitive Magic," in *Stalinist Legacy*, ed. Ali, pp. 106–17. According to Deutscher, "Marxism has its inner logic and

consistency: and its logic is modern through and through. Primitive magic has its own integrity and its peculiar poetic beauty. But the combination of Marxism and primitive magic was bound to be as incoherent and incongruous as is Stalinism itself. Stalin was exceptionally well equipped to embody that combination and to reconcile in some degree the irreconcilables. But he did not himself create the combination. It was produced by the impact of a Marxist revolution upon a semi-Asiatic society and by the impact of that society upon the Marxist revolution” (p. 116).

46. See Ceaușescu’s May 1967 article on the growth of the party’s leading role (*creșterea rolului conducător al partidului*), “Rolul conducător al partidului în etapa desăvârșirii construcției socialismului” [The Leading Role of the Party in the Stage of Fulfilling the Building of Socialism], in Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Opere alese* [Selected Works], vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1982), pp. 270–310, where he argued that factionalism had been the most disastrous disease encountered by the RCP during its history. This vision of infallible authority and demonization of any divergent, heterogeneous, centrifugal trends would be the main principle within the RCP. Think of Iliescu’s reluctant confessions about his personal meetings with General Ion Ioniță, the former defense minister, and less freely admitted encounters with Paul Niculescu-Mizil, which never resulted in a real faction within the party. The March 1921 Leninist “ban on factions resolution” remained the alpha and omega of Romanian communists’ vision of authority and legitimacy.

47. Documents from the RCP secret archives, extensively quoted (or almost completely reproduced) in Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, p. 593.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 592.

49. For a serious analysis of the relationship between Jewish radicalism, Zionism, assimilation, and communism in Hungary, see Laszlo Korsai, “Evreii și comunismul: Stăpîni sau sclavi?” [Jews and Communism: Masters or Slaves?] 22 (Bucharest), no. 2, January 12–18, 1994, p. 13.

50. Branko Lazich, with Milorad M. Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, new, rev. ed (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), pp. 354–55.

51. Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, p. 581.

52. See, e.g., the text of the letter addressed by Köblös to the IKKI in the spring of 1927, in which Mihalache (alias Schein) is exposed as a morally decrepit (*descompus moral*) individual, a passive, negligent element, insensitive to the needs of the collective. Moreover, Schein’s main offense was that he dared to challenge the authority of the new politburo-designated home secretary, Francisc Bucova (alias Sigmund). See *ibid.*, pp. 587–89.

53. The resolution is fully reproduced in Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, pp. 607–8.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 609.

55. Data on Holostenko are almost nonexistent: there are critical references, but no serious biographical study was published by the otherwise very prolific

Institute of Party History. In this respect, my analysis seeks to explain the events that led to struggles within the leadership and the eventual elimination of anything smacking of original leadership.

56. Ceaușescu, *Opere alese*, I: 163–64.

57. See Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, *30 de ani de luptă a partidului sub steagul lui Lenin și Stalin* [The Party's Thirty Years of Struggle under the Flag of Lenin and Stalin] (Bucharest: Editura PMR, 1952).

58. For statistical data regarding the Fifth RCP Congress (number of participants, social structure, etc.) see Marin C. Stănescu, *Moscova, Cominternul, filiera comunistă balcanică și România (1919–1944)* [Moscow, the Comintern, the Balkan Communist Connection, and Romania, 1919–1944] (Bucharest: Silex, 1994), pp. 112–16.

59. See Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, pp. 41–46.

60. For extensive excerpts of the proceedings of the Fifth Congress, see Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, pp. 624–41. As prominent members of Ceaușescu's historiographical team, the authors emphasize the contrast between the absurd tenets espoused by the RCP leadership ("Romania as a colonialist, predatory power") and the "realistic" views held by the "healthy" working-class rank and file in Romania. For an official account of the proceedings, see *Congresul al V-lea al Partidului Comunist din România* [The Fifth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party] (Bucharest: Editura Partidului Comunist din România, 1932; reprint, 1951, Editura Partidului Muncitoresc Român).

61. For the Bolshevik militaristic model, see Robert V. Daniels, *Is Russia Reformable? Change and Resistance from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 19–38.

62. After the war, Goldberger was the secretary of the RCP committee of northern Transylvania. In 1948, he became a chief of sector in the Agitprop Department, but in the 1950s, he was charged with "anti-Sovietism" and demoted to director of the "János Herbak" shoe factory in Cluj. After 1956, until his death in the mid 1970s, he served as deputy director of the RCP's Institute for Historical and Social Political Studies. Thanks to Nicolae Ceaușescu's support, the Ninth Congress (July 1965) reelected him (after three decades) to the central committee. His wife, Fanny, was the head of the CC chancellery in the 1950s and later served as personal secretary to the politburo member and deputy prime minister Petre Borilă. His younger son, Gheorghe (b. 1951), applied for political asylum in the United States in the early 1990s.

63. Eugen Iacobovici (Jenö Jakobovits), was born on June 10, 1902, in the village of Codaciu Mare, Odorhei County. A metalworker by profession, he entered the communist movement and became secretary of the Bucharest Communist Party organization. In May 1929, he was sent by Comintern to Moscow to attend a one-year course at the Leninist School (according to his biographer, Marius Mircu, there were ten participants from Romania: seven Jews, two Romanians and one Hungarian). In 1930, Iacobovici returned to Romania in order to put an end to factional struggle and prepare for the Fifth RCP Congress. See

Marius Mircu, *Dosarul Ana Pauker, Iosif Chişinevschi şi alţii...* [The File Ana Pauker, Iosif Chişinevschi, and others...] (Bat Yam, Israel: Editura Glob, 1991), pp. 53-58.

64. This assessment is based on my personal interviews with Vanda Nikolski and other direct participants in the Fifth Congress. They were convinced that Stefanski's election to the helm of the RCP contributed to the party's rejuvenation and improved its relations with the International. Stefanski had a major role in the elaboration of a political platform that allowed the RCP to spearhead the railroad workers' strike in the "Griviţa" workshop in Bucharest in February 1933, one of the very few mass actions inspired by the communists. Stefanski barely spoke Romanian, but he benefited from his intimate relationship with Elena Filipovici (1903-37), who, under the alias Maria Ciobanu, was deputy general secretary. Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu was also closely linked to the Polish RCP leader.

65. It is interesting that none of the members of this home secretariat perished during the Great Purge. Most of them, like Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu, Bela Brainer, and Alexandru Sencovici were in Romania, whereas Gheorghe Stoica was a political commissar with the International Brigades in Spain.

66. See Frunză, *Istoria Partidului Comunist Român*, p. 40. For the Comintern's 1935 conclave, see VII. *Weltkongress der Kommunistischen Internationale: Referate. Aus der Diskussion. Schlusswort. Resolutionen* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Marxistische Blätter, 1971).

67. Just one example: when my mother left Bucharest in 1937 to work as a nurse for the International Brigades in Spain, she was asked by her superior party liaison to tell comrades there that "eventually we shall have a Romanian general secretary" (meaning, in fact, Boris Ştefanov).

68. In his history of the RCP, Victor Frunză lists Boris Ştefanov among the victims of the Great Purge in the USSR. See Frunză, *Istoria Partidului Comunist Român*, p. 231. The truth is that thanks to his close connections with Gheorghii Dimitrov and Vasil Kolarov, the influential Bulgarian leaders of the Comintern, Ştefanov escaped this fate and remained the official general secretary of the RCP until his replacement by Ştefan Foriş in 1940.

69. See J.V. Stalin, *On the Opposition* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1974), p. 811.

70. Ecaterina Arbore, born in 1873, was the daughter of the well-known socialist militant Zamfir Arbore. She was expelled from Romania in 1924 and, as a physician, held important offices in the health system of the Soviet Ukraine before her arrest and execution in 1937.

71. Alexandru (Saşa) Dobrogeanu-Gherea (1879-1938) was the son of Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, the patriarch of Romanian socialism. He was elected a socialist deputy in 1919. In November 1920, he went to Moscow with a Romanian delegation and met Lenin. A founding member of the RCP, he joined Marcel Pauker's left-wing faction. Arrested by the Romanian police in 1928, he was freed in 1929 after a hunger strike. In 1932, he emigrated to the USSR, where he was arrested in 1936 and died in 1938. He was rehabilitated by the RCP central committee plenum in April 1968.

72. Elek Köblös (1887–1937) started his revolutionary career as a communist militant in 1918 in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, then, after 1919, was active in the Romanian woodworkers' union and was a delegate to the founding congress of the RCP. In August 1924, the Third RCP Congress held in Vienna elected Köblös RCP general secretary. In 1925, after the RCP was banned, he advocated the strategy of a front bloc to allow the RCP to remain politically active. Criticized at the Fourth Congress in 1928, Köblös was condemned in December 1929 by both the central committee of the CPSU and the Comintern, and was forbidden to take part in political work in the RCP. It seems that in private conversations with other members of the Romanian exile community in the Soviet Union, he expressed criticism of the repressive Stalinist course.

73. For further biographical details of Marcel Pauker, see Appendix.

74. Belu Zilber, *Actor în procesul Pătrășcanu: Prima versiune a memoriilor lui Belu Zilber* [Actor in the Pătrășcanu Trial: The First Version of Belu Zilber's Memoirs] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997), p. 25.

75. Codified at the Fifth Congress, the RCP's anti-Gherism originated in the communists' discontent with Dobrogeanu-Gherea's reformist outlook. In 1951, in his speech on the thirtieth anniversary of the RCP, General Secretary Gheorghiu-Dej reiterated the strong condemnation of Gherea's "right-wing opportunism." This was the official party line regarding its most brilliant forerunner until Nicolae Ceaușescu's speech in May 1966 on the forty-fifth anniversary of the RCP, when Dej's successor admitted that "with all its shortcomings and limits, Dobrogeanu-Gherea's work has a great significance in the history of social sciences in Romania, in the dissemination of Marxist ideas, and the development of the revolutionary conception of the proletariat." See Ceaușescu, "Partidul Comunist Român—Continuator al luptei revoluționare și democratice a poporului român," p. 153. The recuperation of Gherea's theoretical legacy by the ideologues of the Ceaușescu regime is worth a detailed examination. For an excellent approach to Gherea's legacy, see Cristian Preda, "Staulul și sirena: Dilemele unui marxist român" [The Stable and the Mermaid: Dilemmas of a Romanian Marxist], *Studia Politica* (Bucharest) 1, 1 (2001): 87–137.

76. On Goldmann, especially his Romanian youth, see Mitchell Cohen, *The Wager of Lucien Goldmann* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

77. For further biographical details of Petru Groza, see Appendix.

78. For further biographical details of Ana Pauker, see Appendix.

79. The Democratic Students' Front was created in 1936 to counter the rise of the Iron Guard in Romanian universities. Its president was Gheorghe (Gogu) Rădulescu, who under Ceaușescu's leadership became a member of the permanent bureau of the party's executive committee and vice president of the state council.

80. There are sociological, psychological, and moral explanations for Jewish overrepresentation in political movements on the radical Left in East-Central Europe, one of the most complex phenomena of modern times still awaiting thorough examination. For a tentative approach, see Jerry Z. Muller, "Communism, Anti-Semitism and the Jews," *Commentary*, August 1988, pp. 28–39. Ana

Pauker's relationship to her Jewish background was complex and convoluted. See Robert Levy, *Ana Pauker: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

81. See Ewa Czarnecka and Aleksander Fiut, *Conversations with Czesław Miłosz* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), p. 159.

82. According to Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, p. 53, the RCP recruited 600 volunteers and led regiments, companies, and batteries in the International Brigades. The organizers of recruiting operations included Leonte Răutu, Mihail Florescu, and Gheorghe Rădulescu in Romania, and Gheorghe Vasilichi and Alexandru Buican (Arnoldi) in France. Prominent Romanian communists who were active in the International Brigades included Petre Borilă, Constantin Doncea, Minea Stan, Gheorghe Stoica, Valter Roman, Mihail Boico, Julien Botoș, Grigore Naum, Mihail Burcă, Manole H. Manole, Mihail Patriciu, Pavel Cristescu, Mihail Florescu, Carol Neumann, and Basil Șerban. My father, then named Leonid Tisminetsky, lost his right arm at the age of twenty-four in 1937, during one of the fiercest battles of the Civil War (he changed his name to Leonte Tismăneanu in 1948 at the request of higher party officials). Among the Romanians who worked in the International Brigades Hospital were Dr. Shuli Brill and the nurses Sanda Sauvard, Galia Burcă, Elisabeta Luca, and Hermina Marcusohn (my mother). Ionescu writes that G. Katowski was Valter Roman's pseudonym. In fact, Valter Roman was the alias adopted by Ernst Neuländer, a militant of Hungarian-Jewish background born in Oradea, who was to play an important role in postwar Romanian history, first as chief of staff of the Romanian Army and minister of telecommunications, then as a major candidate for a show trial designed to purge the CP of "Titoists" and "agents of Western powers." Rehabilitated after 1953, Roman was the director of the Political Publishing House and a member of the central committee until his death in 1983. For further information on Romanian volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, see *Voluntari români în Spania, 1936–1939: Amintiri și documente* [Romanian Volunteers in Spain, 1936–1939: Memories and Documents], ed. Gheorghe Adorian et al. (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1971).

83. For further biographical details of Nicolae Ceaușescu, see Appendix.

84. See Nicolae Ceaușescu's speech at the Doftana Museum (former prison for communists) during his visit to Prahova County, *Scînteia* (Bucharest), September 26, 1986. For an English translation, see FBIS, *Eastern Europe: Romania*, October 2, 1986, pp. H5–6.

85. They were all rewarded with important party and state positions especially after the elimination of the so-called Pauker–Luca–Georgescu group in 1952. At the time of Dej's death in 1965, Apostol, Ceaușescu, Drăghici, and Moghioroș were all full members of the politburo of the Romanian Workers' Party central committee.

86. For further biographical details of Chișinevschi and Răutu, see Appendix.

87. For extensive quotations from these Comintern directives, see Ceaușescu's speech on the forty-fifth anniversary of the RCP in Ceaușescu, *Opere alese*, I: 177.

88. See Isaac Deutscher, “The Tragedy of the Polish Communist Party,” in id., *Marxism, Wars and Revolutions: Essays from Four Decades* (London: Verso, 1984), pp. 91–127.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 123. For a critical approach to the dilemmas of the Polish Left, see Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

90. On the inner dynamics of Hungarian communism, see Charles Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1986); Miklós Molnár, *De Béla Kun à Janos Kádár: Soixante-dix ans de communisme hongrois* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1987).

91. See Wat, *My Century*.

92. These three escaped from Doftana in 1935 with help from the RCP and went to the USSR, where their paths diverged. Vasilichi went to France in 1936 and later became a key figure in the F.T.P.–M.O.I. (Francs Tireurs et Partisans–Main d’Oeuvre Immigrée). Doncea fought in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War, then returned to the USSR, where he worked in the Romanian department of Radio Moscow along with Dumitru Petrescu. Both Doncea and Petrescu became political officers in the Tudor Vladimirescu division organized in the USSR from among Romanian prisoners of war. Doncea and Petrescu were expelled by Dej from the central committee in June 1958 but rehabilitated by Ceaușescu in 1968.

93. Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, p. 619.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 621.

95. The “first sacrificial curve” was applied beginning January 1931 and reduced wages by approximately 10 percent. The “second sacrificial curve” occurred in September 1932. *Ibid.*, p. 441. See also Florin Constantiniu, *O istorie sinceră a poporului român* [A Sincere History of the Romanian People] (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 1997), p. 340.

96. Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, p. 653.

97. Constantiniu, *O istorie sinceră a poporului român*, p. 340. See also Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, pp. 652–54.

98. Petre Gheorghe was captured and killed by the Gestapo. In 1944, Dej’s faction accused Foriș and Koffler of informing on Gheorghe and other communists.

99. King, *History of the Romanian Communist Party*, p. 43.

100. For a selection of the most relevant documents related to the Foriș case, see *Cazul Ștefan Foriș: Lupta pentru putere în P.C.R. de la Gheorghiu-Dej la Ceaușescu* [The Ștefan Foriș Case: The Power Struggle within the RCP from Gheorghiu-Dej to Ceaușescu], ed. Dan Cătănuș and Ioan Chiper (Bucharest: Editura Vremea, 1999).

Chapter 3. The Road to Absolute Power

1. See Radu Colt, “Adevăruri despre P.C.R. 80 în București și mai puțin de 1000 în toată țara” [Some Truths about the RCP: Eighty Members in Bucharest

and Fewer Than a Thousand in the Whole Country], *Magazin Istoric* (Bucharest), no. 6 (June 1999), <http://www.itc.ro/history/archive/mir999/current6/mir8.htm>, which provides excerpts from Rangheț's speech at the meeting of central party cadres on April 25–27, 1945; the document referred to in Colt's article can be found at Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, fond C.C. al P.C.R., Cancelarie, Dosar 32/1945.

2. Moghioroș and Apostol referred to different party meetings (November 30, 1944, January 24, 1945, May 16, 1945, May 23, 1945) in which Ana Pauker allegedly insisted on a rapid increase in the number of RCP's new members. See "Stenograma ședinței de la tov. Moghioroș din 12 iunie 1953 cu Ana Pauker" [Transcript of the Meeting at Comrade Moghioroș's on June 12, 1953], pp. 1–4.

3. King, *History of the Romanian Communist Party*, p. 52.

4. See Leonid Gibianskii, "URSS și câteva aspecte ale formării blocului sovietic în Europa Orientală" [The USSR and Some Aspects of the Emergence of the Soviet Bloc in Eastern Europe], in id. et al., *6 martie 1945: Începuturile comunizării României* [March 6, 1945: The Beginnings of Romania's Communization] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), pp. 254–56; for recent analyses of the topic of Eastern Europe's Stalinization, see *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944–1949*, ed. Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997).

5. Gibianskii, "URSS și câteva aspecte ale formării blocului sovietic în Europa Orientală," p. 263.

6. For further details of Vyshinsky's role, see Radu Ciuceanu, Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Vitalie Văratec, *Misiunile lui A. I. Vișinski în România. Din istoria relațiilor româno-sovietice, 1944–1946. Documente secrete* [A. I. Vyshinsky's Missions to Romania: From the History of Romanian-Soviet Relations, 1944–1946. Secret Documents] (Bucharest: Institutul național pentru studiul totalitarismului, 1997).

7. See Ioan Scurtu and Gheorghe Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în secolul XX* [History of the Romanians in the Twentieth Century] (Bucharest: Editura Paideia, 1999), pp. 491–92.

8. For an in-depth analysis of the 1945 events, King Michael's "royal strike" and the Anglo-American and Soviet reactions that led to the Groza regime's "fake pluralism," see the introductory study in *Imposibila încercare: Greva regală, 1945* [The Impossible Attempt: The Royal Strike, 1945], ed. Dinu Giurescu (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1999), pp. 7–91.

9. On May 17, 1946, the RCP announced the creation of the Bloc of Democratic Parties (Blocul partidelor democratice), which consisted, in addition to the RCP, of the Social Democratic Party, Tătărescu Liberals, Plowmen's Front, and other political formations, such as the Peasant Party led by Anton Alexandrescu; the bloc presented a single list in the November 19, 1946 elections. See Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866–1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 530.

10. The official results of the November 1946 elections showed an overwhelming victory for the Bloc of Democratic Parties, with about 70 percent of the vote and 349 seats in the new assembly, while the National Peasant Party re-

ceived only 32 seats, and 33 seats went to other small parties. However, independent contemporary sources and recent research in archives reveal that the election results were falsified and exactly the opposite happened: the NPP received about 70 percent of the vote. There is no doubt now that the communists rigged the 1946 elections and thus took another decisive step toward the communization of the country. For a brief analysis of the conditions in which the 1946 elections were held, see Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866–1947*, pp. 530–34. For more on the events of 1946, see the volume edited by the Fundația Academia Civică, *Analele Sighet 3: Anul 1946—Începutul sfârșitului* [Sighet Annals 3: The Year 1946—The Beginning of Closure] (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 1996). See also Constantin Sănătescu, *Jurnal* [Diary] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993), pp. 238–40.

11. Personal interview with Corneliu Bogdan, Philadelphia, April 1989.

12. Scurtu and Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în secolul XX*, p. 552.

13. Borkenau, *World Communism*, p. 179.

14. See the reproduction of the 1932 volume with the proceedings of the Fifth Congress released “for internal use only” by Editura Partidului Muncitoresc Român in 1951.

15. Two of the best attempts to interpret the RCP’s behavior before and during the takeover of power are Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian Society* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1951), and Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*. Frunză’s *Istoria Partidului Comunist Român* provides indispensable information, but is regrettably full of factual errors and far-fetched conclusions about the existence of “two parties,” one inside the country (presumably harboring secret patriotic propensities) and one of Muscovite outsiders, dominated by ethnically “impure” militants. One example among the many problematic allegations provided by Frunză: according to him, Iosif Chișinevschi came from the Soviet Union together with Ana Pauker (1: 156), whereas the truth is that he spent the war years in Romania as a member of Dej’s prison nucleus. The story is much more complex and deserves a genuine scholarly discussion.

16. The most comprehensive and illuminating analysis of the roles played by Bodnăraș and Maurer in the “making” of Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceaușescu as party leaders is Cristina Luca-Boico’s “Les Hommes qui ont porté Ceaușescu au pouvoir,” *Sources: Travaux historiques* (Paris), no. 20 (1989): 23–32.

17. See Peter J. Stavrakis, *Moscow and Greek Communism, 1944–1949* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989).

18. In *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development*, Ken Jowitt points out the “patrimonial” relationship between the leader’s political identity and power in the case of the RCP elite; for the RCP’s absence of legitimacy and the search for a national base, see Pavel Câmpeanu, “National Fervor in Eastern Europe: The Case of Romania,” *Social Research* (New York) 58, 4 (Winter 1991): 804–28. Coming from a survivor of the underground party, Câmpeanu’s explanation of Stalin’s selection of Dej is worth quoting: “Such a promotion could never have occurred in a country under the occupation of the Red Army except

on the initiative or at least with the consent of Stalin. This apparently shows that the RCP would only be able to lead the country if it ceased to be what the Kremlin made of it—an antinational sect, composed of and led by minorities or foreigners” (p. 813). The RCP’s national conference that year simply rubber-stamped his elevation to the position of general secretary. Moreover, Ana Pauker was strongly supportive of Dej’s promotion. Ambitious and vainglorious though she certainly was, Pauker realized that there was no way for her, a Jewish woman, to become Romania’s dictator. If there was any contest, it opposed Dej and Teohari Georgescu, an ethnic Romanian worker whom the Comintern had wished to appoint general secretary in 1940.

19. Immediately after his death in 1976, the Securitate confiscated Emil Bodnăraș’s papers, including his memoirs, which thus shared the fate of Miron Constantinescu’s diaries, likewise seized by the Securitate after the latter’s death in the summer of 1974. Bodnăraș’s papers are of vital importance for the investigation of the takeover by the RCP in light of his crucial role as head of the Secret Service, the dreaded forerunner of the Securitate, between March 1945 and November 1947, when this former Soviet spy became Romania’s minister of defense (a position he held until 1956, when he was appointed minister of transportation). The similarities between Bodnăraș’s appointment as minister of defense (a slap in the face for the Romanian Army) and the imposition of Soviet Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky as Polish minister of defense give one cause for reflection. Ironically, it seems that Bodnăraș played a key role in influencing Khrushchev to withdraw Soviet troops from Romania in June 1958, thus preparing the ground for Dej’s autonomous course.

20. Toma’s assessment was confirmed by the party veteran and former Domestic Trade Minister Mircea Opreșan in personal correspondence with me. For more on Dej, see Tismaneanu, *Fantoma lui Gheorghiu-Dej*.

21. Miron Constantinescu quoted by several veteran RCP members, including Cristina Luca-Boico, in personal communications to me.

22. Pantiușă married Ana Toma in 1946. Together they constituted one of the most powerful and feared couples in the RCP in the late 1940s and the 1950s. With Pantiușă closely linked to Dej, and his wife as Ana Pauker’s first deputy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the couple had access to and could influence both vying factions. He was the head of the Securitate until 1959, when Dej appointed him chief of the militia. However, Dej forced him to retire in 1961, together with other holdovers from the Stalinist network (Sergei Nicolau-Nikonov, Alexandu Rogojinschi, Ivan Didenko-Vidrașcu, Petr Gonciaruk, Vasile Bucikov, Mihai Postanski-Posteucă, Alexandru Grinberg-Nikolski, and Grigore Naum). Although denounced by Ceaușescu and expelled from the party, the Soviet agent was nevertheless awarded the Ordinul “Tudor Vladimirescu,” second class, a notable decoration, in 1971 (and continued to enjoy his special pension and other privileges until his death in 1986, when he was buried, with an army general’s honors, in the Ghencea Military Cemetery in Bucharest). Ana Toma remained a member of the central committee until 1965, but soon after Dej’s death, she lost her job as deputy minister of foreign trade and was ap-

pointed vice president of UCECOM, the national union of crafts cooperatives. She died in 1991, almost blind and completely alone, taking with her countless secrets about the murderous struggles at the top of the RCP. For more on this, see Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Arheologia terorii* [The Archeology of Terror] (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1992). In the early 1950s, like so many old-time *ilegaliști*, Pantiușa and Ana Toma adopted two children, Radu, who died in the early 1980s, and Ioana, an architect, who immigrated to Israel. One additional note to this dismal story of sadism and betrayal: it seems that in the early 1950s, Ana Toma had close relations with Dej and did not hesitate to inform him about everything significant in Ana Pauker's life (to persuade Pauker of her loyalty, she was ready to iron the foreign minister's dresses). In the 1970s, she still kept Dej's autographed picture in the living room, where the alcoholic Pantiușa sat listening to Radio Free Europe.

23. For further details on the Foriș case, see Dan Cătănuș and Ioan Chiper, *Cazul Ștefan Foriș: Lupta pentru putere în P.C.R. de la Gheorghiu-Dej la Ceaușescu* [The Ștefan Foriș Case: The Power Struggle in the RCP from Gheorghiu-Dej to Ceaușescu] (Bucharest: Editura Vremea, 1999).

24. See Krystyna Kersten, *The Establishment of the Communist Rule in Poland, 1943–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 11–12.

25. As previously noted, from Chivu Stoica and Teohari Georgescu to Leontin Sălăjan and Leonte Răutu, many RCP leaders named their daughters Ana. Similarly, members of the elite (such as Apostol, Bodnăraș, Chișinevschi, Alexandru Sencovici, Vasile Vilcu, and Ghizela Vass) tended to name their sons Gheorghe. In this respect, Ceaușescu was something of an exception, his children being named Valentin, Zoia, and Nicolae.

26. As revealed by Ana Pauker's self-critique. See Ana Pauker, "Autocritică" [Self-Critique], June 18, 1952, p. 4. Photocopy, author's personal archive.

27. See Vladimir Tismaneanu, "From Arrogance to Irrelevance: Avatars of Marxism in Romania," in *The Road to Disillusion: From Critical Marxism to Post-Communism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Raymond Taras, pp. 135–50 (Armonk, N.J.: M. E. Sharpe, 1992).

28. See Lena Constante, *The Silent Escape: Three Thousand Days in Romanian Prisons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

29. For one of the most unsettling documents on Stalinist terror in Romania (and, indeed, in the whole of East-Central Europe), see Zilber's memoir *Monarhia de drept dialectic*, published under the pseudonym Andrei Șerbulescu. Ironically, the foreword to Zilber's book is by Gheorghe Brătescu, Ana Pauker's son-in-law.

Chapter 4. Stalinism Unbound, 1948–1956

1. For the Polish case, see Teresa Torańska, *Them: Stalin's Polish Puppets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987). For the case of Romania, see Lavinia Betea, *Maurer și lumea de ieri: Mărturii despre stalinizarea României* [Maurer and the Yesterday

World: Testimonies on Romania's Stalinization] (Arad: Editura Ioan Slavici, 1995).

2. See Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, pp. 161–65.

3. See Daniel Chirot, "What Happened in Eastern Europe in 1989," in *Revolutions of 1989*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 19–40.

4. This amounted to an average of 1.3 hectares for each, much less than in the 1919–21 agrarian reform, the most radical in all of Eastern Europe, when the average plot was approximately 4 hectares.

5. On April 27, 1962, at a special session of the National Assembly, Gheorghiu-Dej proclaimed that collectivization had been completed. See Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, p. 337.

6. Ioan Scurtu and Gheorghe Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în secolul XX, 1918–1948* [The History of the Romanians in the Twentieth Century, 1918–1948] (Bucharest: Paideia, 1999), pp. 491–92.

7. A good example in this respect is the complete reinterpretation of Romanian history by a team under the supervision of Mihail Roller. Generally speaking, Western influence was neglected and the great Russian, then Soviet, people was always presented as the protector of the Romanians, or, at least, of the oppressed in Romania. Roller was the main author of a high school history textbook that served until Stalin's death as the ultimate, unquestionable expression of the communist vision of Romania's history.

8. Years later, Toma expressed deep remorse for this terrible mistake and insisted that the pamphlet attacking Arghezi had been written under explicit orders from the top party leadership.

9. For details regarding the co-optation of Romanian intelligentsia and the production of writings praising the party, see Marin Nițescu, *Sub zodia proletcultismului: Dialectica puterii* [Under the Sign of Proletcult: The Dialectics of Power] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1995); Eugen Negrici, *Poezia unei religii politice: Patru decenii de agitație și propagandă* [The Poetry of a Political Religion: Four Decades of Agitation and Propaganda] (Bucharest: Editura Pro, n.d.), and Ana Selejan, *Reeducare și prigoană: România în timpul primului război cultural, 1944–1948* [Reeducation and Adversity: Romania during the First Cultural War, 1944–1948], vol. 2 (Sibiu: Editura Thausib, 1993).

10. For more on the Zhdanov School and its program, see *News from behind the Iron Curtain*, June 1954, pp. 22–26. At the same time, the "Ștefan Gheorghiu" party school was created to form cadres in the field of "party building" (organization). The "Zhdanov" and "Ștefan Gheorghiu" schools merged in the late 1950s. "Ștefan Gheorghiu" remained the RCP's main school for cadres until December 1989. In the early 1970s, Miron Constantinescu was its rector, followed by Leonte Răutu, who was dismissed in 1981. The last rector was Dumitru Popescu, one of the main doctrinaires of Ceaușescu's socialism.

11. Materials published during the Prague Spring describe the system of repression operated by the political police and confirm the involvement of the Soviet secret police in the show trials in Czechoslovakia. See, e.g., Eugen Loebel, *My Mind on Trial* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976); *The Czechoslo-*

vak Political Trials, ed. Jiří Pelikan (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1971). In Romania, Soviet agents played an even more decisive role, since they were officers of the Romanian political police and members of Gheorghiu-Dej's entourage. When Romania and the USSR came into conflict, these agents were removed from their positions, but they continued to live as privileged citizens of Romania.

12. Adam B. Ulam, *Titoism and the Cominform* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952); Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967); Héléne Carrère d'Encausse, *Le Grand frère: L'Union soviétique et l'Europe soviétisée* [The Big Brother: The Soviet Union and Sovietized Europe] (Paris: Flammarion, 1983).

13. Borkenau, *World Communism*, p. 178.

14. For an analysis of the Pătrășcanu trial in East-Central European context, see George Hodos, *Show Trials: Stalinist Purges in Eastern Europe, 1948–1954* (New York: Praeger, 1987), pp. 93–III. See also Sanda Golopenția's informative introduction to Anton Golopenția, *Ultima carte* [The Last Book] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2001).

15. In the first phase, the “bourgeois” political parties were attacked; the third phase was directed against some of the Moscow's most faithful supporters who had been involved in Comintern operations and “were linked to Stalin throughout their personal histories.” See Carrère d'Encausse, *Le Grand Frère*, pp. 115–27.

16. His father, D. D. Pătrășcanu, who was well known in Romania, belonged to the Iași-based leftist group around the magazine *Viața Românească* (Romanian Life), but under the influence of his friend Constantin Stere, he joined the National Liberal Party at the beginning of the century.

17. See Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1951), pp. 256, 290; Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, pp. 40, 151–60, 354.

18. In *Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu: Moartea unui lider comunist. Studiu de caz* [Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu: The Death of a Communist Leader. A Case Study] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2001), Lavinia Betea (who in 2000 was kind enough to lend me a copy of the typescript of her book, cited below as “Betea, MS”) argues that the widespread belief that Pătrășcanu tried to negotiate the text of the armistice to obtain conditions more favorable to Romania, rather than simply accepting the Soviet terms, is untrue, but her contention is based entirely on a statement General D. Dămăceanu made in 1968. However, there were ten or eleven different statements by Dămăceanu around then, and one cannot rely on his testimony. See, in this respect, Scurtu and Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în secolul XX*, p. 446.

19. See “Declarația Lenei Constante” [Declaration of Lena Constante], April 22, 1950, Betea, MS, p. 187. A copy of this document is in my possession.

20. Pătrășcanu in fact said that even in the fall of 1944, Pauker, Luca, and Gheorghiu-Dej were very reluctant to assign him any important task in the name of the party. See “Greșelile mele ca activist de partid” [My Mistakes as Party Activist], in *Principiul bumerangului: Documente ale procesului Lucrețiu*

Pătrășcanu [The Boomerang Effect: Documents from Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu's Trial] (Bucharest: Editura Vremea, 1996), pp. 20–28.

21. New archival material shows that the incriminating statement “I am Romanian before I am a communist” was not actually made by Pătrășcanu but put into his mouth by an informer, Pavel Apostol. See Betea, *Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu: Moartea unui lider comunist*.

22. Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, pp. 151–56.

23. In addition to Pătrășcanu's wife, Elena (née Hertha Schwammen), Lena Constante, Harry Brauner, and Belu Zilber, all very close friends of the Pătrășcanu family, were arrested and interrogated. Elena Pătrășcanu was told that her husband had had an affair with Lena Constante, inducing her to make a statement against him. She received a fourteen-year prison term, but was let go in the 1956. See the order for her release in *Agresiunea comunismului în România: Documente din arhivele secrete: 1944–1989* [Communist Aggression in Romania: Documents from the Secret Archives, 1944–1989], ed. Gheorghe Buzatu and Mircea Chirîțoiu, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Paideea, 1998), pp. 102–3. Later she married Greek émigré communist stage director Yannis Veakis. On Pătrășcanu's turbulent inner circle, see Petre Pandrea, *Memoriile mandarinului valah* [The Memoirs of a Wallachian Mandarin] (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 2000). It should be noted, however, that Pandrea had personal reasons to dislike Elena Pătrășcanu, and his memoirs should be read with at least a grain of salt when it comes to his views as to who was really responsible for Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu's downfall.

24. Archive of the Romanian Service of Information (hereafter cited as ASRI), collection P, file 40002, vol. 3, p. 339–400.

25. See Robert Levy, “Did Ana Pauker Prevent a Rajk Trial in Romania?” *East European Politics and Societies* 9, 1 (Winter 1995): 143–78, and the chapter “The Pătrășcanu Case” in id., *Ana Pauker: Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist*; pp. 135–52.

26. It seems that there was an attempt to link the Pătrășcanu case with the “Pauker–Luca–Georgescu group,” as can be seen from a report by Ioan Șolțuțiu two months after the investigations were resumed. This hypothesis is advanced by Robert Levy in *Sfera Politicii* (Bucharest), no. 29–30 (July–August 1995): 39–42. For Șolțuțiu's report, in ASRI, collection Y, file 40002, 16: 2–16, see *ibid.*, no. 29–30 (July–August 1995): 43–45; no. 31 (September 1995): 42–45; and no. 32 (October 1995): 43–44. A possible link between the two trials was Egon Balas, a friend of Alexandru Iacob's, who was Vasile Luca's right hand at the Ministry of Finance and was also involved in the trial of his boss. Jacques Berman, who was involved in the Pătrășcanu trial, was forced to confess that he engaged in espionage together with Balas while the two were at the Romanian legation in London. See, in this respect, Egon Balas, *Will to Freedom: A Perilous Journey through Fascism and Communism* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000), pp. 312–16, and the declaration made by Jacques Berman on January 22, 1953, in *Principiul bumerangului*, pp. 140–63.

27. See “Raportul Comisei de Partid constituită în vederea clarificării situației lui Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu” [The Report of the Party Commission Estab-

lished to Clarify the Situation of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu], registered at the RCP chancellery as no. 1220 on September 26, 1968, p. 25.

28. Scrisoarea lui Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu din 13 Nov. 1952 [Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu's letter of November 13, 1952], ASRI, collection P, file 40002, 10: 401.

29. For Zilber's own account of the trial and his personal conduct during the investigation, see the two versions of his memoirs, *Actor în procesul Pătrășcanu* and *Monarhia de drept dialectic*. After the first was confiscated by the secret police, Zilber rewrote it, using the pseudonym Andrei Șerbulescu, but the outcome is different. The first version was later recovered from the former Securitate archives, and both have since been published.

30. Aside from Zilber's admission in his memoirs that he confessed to the alleged crimes, see also the testimony of Lena Constante, who was also implicated in this trial, in her book *The Silent Escape*. In addition, the party commission that at Ceaușescu's request investigated this trial in order to put all the blame on Gheorghiu-Dej, and more especially on Alexandru Drăghici, who had to be got rid of, emphasized all the methods through which the confessions were obtained. See "Raportul Comisiei de Partid constituită în vederea clarificării situației lui Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu" [The Report of the Party Commission Established to Clarify the Situation of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu].

31. During the preparations for the trial, Koffler wrote a series of grotesquely masochistic self-criticisms, admitting to being a sex maniac, a murderer, and a traitor. See "Autobiografie" [Autobiography], ASRI, collection P, file 40002, 45: 34–80. Among those who testified against Koffler at the trial were former members of the underground leadership (Ana Toma and Ilka Melinescu), who accused the former head of the party's financial operations of connections with Antonescu's secret police (the Siguranța).

32. Pătrășcanu and Koffler were condemned to death and executed on April 17, 1954. The others were given varying terms of imprisonment: Belu Zilber, Alexandru Ștefănescu, and Emil Calmanovici got life; Ion Mocsonyi-Stîrcea and Herant Torossian, fifteen years; Lena Constante and Harry Brauner, twelve years; Jacques Berman, ten years; and Victoria Sîrbu, eight years. For the documents of the trial, see *Principiul bumerangului*, pp. 381–61.

33. Pătrășcanu's *Problemele de bază ale României* [Fundamental Problems of Romania] (Bucharest, 1944) was a pragmatic political piece intended as a contribution to the ideology of the RCP. His other writings, particularly *Curențe și tendințe în filozofia românească* [Currents and Trends in Romanian Philosophy], reprinted in 1971 by the Political Publishing House in Bucharest, were clearly ideologically orthodox.

34. Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, p. 153.

35. Beria's trial might arguably have served as the model for the Pătrășcanu trial, as Belu Zilber suggests in *Actor în procesul Pătrășcanu*, pp. 123–24 (assuming, that is, that Beria was tried at all).

36. Miron Constantinescu revealed later on that he had been sent to Moscow in 1954 to obtain Soviet approval for the trial, but that Malenkov told him, "That's your business."

37. On the evolution of Eastern Europe in the post-Stalin era, see François Fejtő, *A History of the People's Democracies: Eastern Europe since Stalin* (New York: Praeger, 1971); Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, vol. 3: *The Break-down* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); Richard Löwenthal, *World Communism: The Disintegration of a Secular Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); Leopold Labedz, *International Communism after Khrushchev* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1965); Imre Nagy, *Un Communisme qui n'oublie pas l'homme* [A Communism That Does Not Forget the Man] (Paris: Plon, 1957); Tibor Meray, *Ce jour-là: 23 octobre 1956* [That Particular Day: October 23, 1956] (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1966); *Ten Years After: The Hungarian Revolution in the Perspective of History*, ed. Tamás Aczél (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966); for a “critical Marxist” approach, see Ferenc Fehér and Agnes Heller, *Hungary 1956 Revisited: The Message of a Revolution—A Quarter of a Century After* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983).

38. Ceaușescu especially stressed that Zilber must not be rehabilitated. See “Cuvîntul tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu la ședința Prezidiului Permanent al CC al PCR din ziua de 18 aprilie 1968” [The Speech of Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu at the Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the CC of the RCP on April 18, 1968], pp. 7–8. For his attacks on Drăghici and Gheorghiu-Dej, see also the discussions at the CC plenum on April 22–25, 1968. For the effect of Pătrășcanu’s rehabilitation, see the speech of Elena Pătrășcanu at the meeting of the party organization from the theaters “Barbu Delavrancea” and “Ion Vasilescu.” Copies of these documents are in my possession.

39. Nicolae Ceaușescu, “Cuvîntare la adunarea activului de partid al municipiului București pe 26 aprilie 1968” [Speech Delivered at the Meeting of the Party *Aktiv* of Bucharest Municipality on April 26, 1968], in *România pe drumul construcției socialiste: Rapoarte, cuvîntări, articole* [Romania on the Way to Completing Socialist Construction: Reports, Speeches, Articles] (Bucharest: Meridiane Publishing House, 1969), p. 178.

40. See Annie Kriegel, *Les Grands Procès dans les pays communistes: La Pédagogie infernale* [The Communist Countries’ Great Trials: The Infernal Pedagogy] (Paris: Gallimard, 1972).

41. The secretariat had four members: Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, and Teohari Georgescu. The politburo was comprised of these four and three other members: Chivu Stoica, Gheorghe Vasilichi, and Miron Constantinescu. See “Stenograma ședinței plenary a CC al PCR din ziua de 22 octombrie 1945” [The Transcript of the Plenum of the CC of the RCP on October 22, 1945], *Sfera Politicii* (Bucharest), no. 40 (1996): 29–34; no. 41 (1996): 26–29.

42. See “Ședința Secretariatului CC din 24 octombrie 1945” [The Meeting of the CC Secretariat on October 24, 1945]. A copy of this document, as preserved in the RCP secret archives, is in my possession.

43. Gheorghiu-Dej’s frustration at not having been included in the escape is confirmed by the memoirs of party members, including Alexandru Sencovici, in the archive of the former Institute of Political and Social Studies. I consulted

these documents in June and September 1994. Special thanks to Dr. Gheorghe Neacșu, who helped me find what I needed in the labyrinthine collections of the former Institute of Party History, and to Dr. Theodor Popescu, who generously offered his time and expertise during my research in Bucharest in 1994 and later.

44. Personal conversations with Corneliu Bogdan about Gheorghiu-Dej and the Soviet spy connection, spring 1989 and my correspondence with Mircea Opreșan, Ilie Zaharia, and Cristina Luca-Boico.

45. See Philippe Robrieux, *Maurice Thorez: Vie secrète, vie publique* (Paris: Fayard, 1975), pp. 145, 656. While she was a Comintern emissary in France, using the alias Marina, Ana Pauker belonged to the advisory collegial direction of the French Communist Party headed by the Czechoslovak militant Eugène Fried (Clément), along with Ernö Gerö, Georges Kagan, and others. For more on Fried, including his relationship with Ana Pauker, see Annie Kriegel and Stéphane Courtois, *Eugen Fried: Le Grand Secret du PCF* [Eugen Fried: The Great Secret of the French Communist Party] (Paris: Seuil, 1997).

46. See Gheorghe Buzatu, *Românii în arhivele Kremlinului* [The Romanians in the Kremlin Archives] (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 1996), pp. III–51, 358–70.

47. See Arkadi Vaksberg, *Hotel Lux: Les Partis frères au service de l'Internationale communiste* [Hotel Lux: The Fraternal Parties in the Service of the Communist International] (Paris: Fayard, 1993), pp. 12–14.

48. As to how Ana Pauker was regarded by anticommunist Romanians at the time, see “A Girl Who Hated Cream Puffs,” *Time*, September 20, 1948, pp. 31–34.

49. This episode illustrates George Orwell’s insight that “to Marxists nothing is more unpredictable than the past.” In the movie *Lupeni 29*, conceived by the scriptwriter Mihnea Gheorghiu especially for Gheorghiu-Dej’s daughter Lica, who, although lacking in talent, imagined herself an actress, Luca was fictionalized as Lucan, the embodiment of human abjectness. See Tismaneanu, *Arheologia terorii*, pp. 172–73.

50. Luca’s wife Elisabeta was a former volunteer in the International Brigades who had served as a hospital administration clerk during the Spanish Civil War. Believing that she was destined for a literary career, she later produced a few specimens of socialist realism. See Tismaneanu, *Arheologia terorii*, p. 174.

51. Several party old-timers spoke to me of Georgescu’s visit to Moscow in 1940 and the proposal made to him at Comintern headquarters that he become general secretary. This is confirmed by Teohari Georgescu in “Stenograma declarației lui Teohari Georgescu privind activitatea lui Ștefan Foriș și suprimarea acestuia [The Transcript of Teohari Georgescu’s Declaration Regarding the Activity of Ștefan Foriș and His Suppression], in *Cazul Ștefan Foriș*, ed. Cătănuș and Chiper, pp. 273–74.

52. See *Conferința Națională a Partidului Communist Român, 19–21 iulie 1972* [The RCP National Conference, July 19–21, 1972] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1972), p. 552.

53. The first editor in chief of the Cominform publication *For a Lasting Peace, for a People’s Democracy* was Pavel Iudin, who later became Stalin’s ambassador to

Mao's China. His successor—in fact, Stalin's true proconsul in Bucharest—was Mark Borisovich Mitin, a notorious Stalinist ideologue and member of the central committee of the CPSU.

54. This was primarily the case with Alexandru Moghioroș, Luca's protégé and close friend. A CC secretary deeply attached to Pauker (he had been convicted in her celebrated 1936 trial), Moghioroș cultivated special relations with his fellow Hungarian Luca. But, as the struggle at the top intensified, Moghioroș switched alliances and started to treat Luca in a highly condescending and aggressive way. In the spring of 1952, for instance, Luca, who had once entered Moghioroș's office at will, ceased to have easy access to him, and Moghioroș instructed the clerks to make him wait for hours before letting him in. (My mother, Hermina Tismăneanu, who worked in Moghioroș's office in 1951–52—she was chiefly charged with giving him Russian lessons whenever the “boss” had a free moment—gave me a personal account of the relations between Moghioroș and Luca.)

55. For Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's remarks, see “Stenograma ședinței Biroului Politic al PMR din ziua de 29 noiembrie 1961” [Transcript of a Meeting of the Politburo of the RWP on November 29, 1961], Executive Archive of the Central Committee of the RCP, pp. 4–6.

56. Interview with Gheorghe Apostol recorded in April 1988; broadcast by the BBC on April 25, 1990.

57. Testimony of my mother, Hermina Tismăneanu, who was among the translators.

58. My aunt, Nehama Tisminețki, who was a close friend of Mitin's wife, revealed the connection between Mitin and Gheorghiu-Dej to me.

59. *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy*, no. 187 (June 6, 1952).

60. “Stenograma ședinței Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 26 mai 1952” [Transcript of the Politburo Meeting on May 26, 1952], fond CC al PCR, dosar 40/1952, pp. 5–III.

61. Testimony of my mother, who was present at the meetings of this plenum.

62. Aurel Vijoli and Vasile Modoran were imprisoned and interrogated for two years, then freed. Alexandru Iacob was sentenced to twenty years of prison and would be released only in 1964, when there was a general amnesty. “Documentar referitor la procesul privind pe Luca Vasile” [Documentation Regarding Vasile Luca's trial], fond CC al PCR, Secția pentru controlul muncii la MFA, MAI și justiție [Department for the Supervision of Work within the Ministries of the Armed Forces, Internal Affairs, and Justice]. His wife, Magda Iacob, was released after one and a half years, but in a state of mental shock from which she would never recover. For more on Alexandru Iacob, see Balas, *Will to Freedom*.

63. Alexandru Iacob recalled that during his detention, he once met Luca, who told him that he had confessed everything because he had been promised that if he did, he would be released and allowed to be a simple worker. See “Stenograma discuției cu Alexandru Iacob” [Transcript of the Discussion with Alexandru Iacob], May 24, 1968.

64. “Stenograma ședinței plenare a CC al PCR din 19–20 august 1953” [Transcript of the CC Plenum on August 19–20, 1953]. A copy of this document is in my possession.

65. In a memorandum dated November 5, 1954, Luca appealed for commutation of his death sentence (ASRI, collection P, file 40005, 126: 1–72). Later, on February 3, from the prison of Rîmnicu Sărat, he wrote a second memorandum asking for a new investigation to prove his innocence. The copy of this document in my possession is heavily underlined and annotated by Gheorghiu-Dej. This memorandum was also published in *Sfera Politicii* (Bucharest), no. 33 (1995): 21–24; no. 34 (1995): 46–50; no. 35 (1995): 41–42; and no. 36 (1995): 29–31.

66. His family shared his terrible fate. His wife, Elisabeta Luca, was arrested and imprisoned for many years. Some of his adopted children were put in an orphanage; others were turned over to remote, relatively insignificant relatives, who were less exposed to the dialectical-revolutionary storms.

67. See “Raport al Comisiei de Partid care a examinat materialele în legătură cu procesul lui Vasile Luca” [Report of the Party Commission That Examined the Documents of Vasile Luca’s Trial], in Buzatu and Chirițoiu, *Agresiunea comunismului în România*, pp. 100–111.

68. For the charges against the “deviators,” see the “Scrisoarea CC al PCR” [Letter of the RCP Central Committee], *Scînteia*, June 2, 1952.

69. See, e.g., “Ordin nr. S/o 112 004 din 14 iunie 1952: Către Penitenciarul din Cluj” [Order no. S/o 112 004 on June 14, 1952: To the Cluj Prison], in Serviciul Român de Informații, *Cartea Albă a Securității* [The White Book of the Securitate], 2: 330–31 (Bucharest, 1994).

70. “Stenograma ședinței de la tov. Moghioroș din 12 iunie 1953 cu Ana Pauker” [Transcript of the Meeting with Ana Pauker That Took Place at Comrade Moghioroș’s on June 12, 1953]. A copy of this document is in my possession.

71. “Stenograma discuției tov. Vințe cu Ana Pauker pe data de 21 iunie 1956” [Transcript of a Discussion of Comrade Vințe with Ana Pauker on June 21, 1956], p. 10. A copy of this document is in my possession.

72. The connection between the party and Ana Pauker was maintained through my father, Leonte Tismăneanu, at the time deputy director of the Political Publishing House (the party publisher). This contact was, of course, the result of a politburo decision. My father told me that their meetings dealt only with issues related to Pauker’s work as a translator from Russian, French, and German. She never volunteered any opinion regarding her ouster, post-Stalin developments, etc. Later, during my father’s investigation for alleged “revisionist deviation” (1959–60), he was accused of having nurtured pro-Pauker views. Although a veteran of the Spanish Civil War and an unflinching Leninist militant, he was expelled from the party in 1960.

73. See “Referat cu privire la rezultatul anchetei lui Ana Pauker” [Report on Ana Pauker’s Investigation] and “Ședința Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 11 mai 1954” [The Politburo Meeting on May 11, 1954]. Copies of both documents are in my possession.

74. The investigation of Ana Pauker was resumed in 1956. See, e.g., “Stenograma discuției cu Ana Pauker din 18 iunie 1956” [Transcript of a Discussion with Ana Pauker on June 18, 1956]. Gheorghe Apostol, Petre Borilă, Alexandru Moghioroș, Constantin Pîrvulescu, and Ion Vințe all took part in this discussion. See also the declarations given by others about Ana Pauker in “Problema relațiilor și atitudinii Anei Pauker față de oameni” [The Problem of Ana Pauker’s Relations and Attitudes toward People]. Copies of these documents are in my possession; see also Levy, *Ana Pauker*, pp. 194–219.

75. “Proces verbal de interogatoriu al arestatului Teohari Georgescu” [Transcript of Teohari Georgescu’s Interrogation], June 12, 1953. A copy of this document is in my possession.

76. See King, *History of the Romanian Communist Party*, pp. 92–93.

77. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej’s closest adviser was Mark Borisovich Mitin, the editor in chief of *For a Lasting Peace, for a People’s Democracy* (see further n. 53 above).

78. For the Stalinist anti-Tito campaigns, see Adam Ulam, *Titoism and the Cominform* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), and Lilly Marcou, *Le Kominform: Le Communisme de guerre froide* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1977).

79. See, e.g., Marin Preda, *Cel mai iubit dintre pămînteni* [The Most Loved of Mortals] (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1980).

80. “Note Regarding the Conversation of I. V. Stalin with Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej and A. Pauker on the Situation within the RCP and the State of Affairs in Romania in Connection with the Peace Treaty,” no. 191, February 2, 1947, in *Vostochnaia Evropa v dokumentakh arkhivov, 1944–1953* [Eastern Europe in the Documents of the Archives, 1944–1953], ed. Galina P. Muraschko, Albina F. Noskova, and Tatiana V. Volokitina, 1: 564–65 (Moscow, 1997).

81. “Stenograma ședinței Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 29 noiembrie 1961” [Transcript of the Meeting of the Politburo on November 29, 1961], pp. 14–16. A copy of this document is in my possession.

82. Torańska, *Them*.

83. *Congresul al II-lea al Partidului Muncitoresc Român* [The Second Congress of the Romanian Workers’ Party] (Bucharest: Editura de Stat pentru Literatura Politică, 1956).

Chapter 5. Aftershocks of the CPSU’s Twentieth Congress, 1957–1960

1. See Amy W. Knight, *Beria, Stalin’s First Lieutenant* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

2. Beria’s son Sergo questions the official story of the trial supposed to have taken place in December 1953 in his memoir *Beria, mon père: Au cœur du pouvoir stalinien* [Beria, My Father: At the Heart of Stalinist Power] (Paris:

Plon/Critérien, 1999), contending that an MVD commando simply killed Beria in his own home in a gangster-style operation on June 26, 1953.

3. In 1957, an effort was made to resume an international institution for inter-party consultations and theoretical collaboration. The monthly journal *Problems of Peace and Socialism* (also known as the *World Marxist Review*) was established in Prague with the Soviet ideologue and CPSU CC member, Aleksei Rumyantsev as its first editor in chief. The French representative was Jean Kanapa, formerly a Stalinist diehard doctrinaire, later one of the main voices of Eurocommunism. The Romanian party's initial representative was my father, Leonte Tismăneanu, then chair of the department of scientific socialism at the University of Bucharest and deputy director of the Political Publishing House (the director was Valter Roman). Intense discussions took place among the editors regarding the Yugoslav Communist League's new program (1958) and the emerging Sino-Soviet divergences. My father was recalled from Prague in September 1958, charged with factionalism, and expelled from the party in 1960. Many of the Soviet staffers associated with the Prague-based journal later became members of Gorbachev's inner circle of party intellectuals (e.g., Fyodor Burlatsky, Georgi Shakhnazarov, and Ivan Frolov). The journal ceased publication in the late 1980s.

4. On the trial and executions staged at the Danube–Black Sea Canal, based on the Stalinist model of the 1929 Donbas sabotage case, see Doina Jela, *Cazul Nichita Dumitru* [The Nichita Dumitru Case] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1995). Work on the canal was halted on July 18, 1953. See “The Decision of the Council of Ministers and the Central Committee of the RWP,” July 17, 1953, a photocopy of which is in my possession.

5. See “Decizia Plenarei lărgite a CC al PMR din 19–29 august 1953” [Decision of the Enlarged CC Plenum on August 19–20, 1953], in *Rezoluții și hotărâri ale Comitetului Central al PMR* [Resolutions and Decisions of the CC of RWP] (Bucharest: ESPLP, 1952).

6. His replacement was the engineer Gheorghe Gaston Marin, a former French Resistance fighter, who held this position between 1955 and 1966. See Gheorghe Gaston Marin, *În serviciul României lui Gheorghiu-Dej: Însemnări din viață* [Serving Gheorghiu-Dej's Romania: Notes from My Life] (Bucharest: Evenimentul Românesc Publishing House, 2000).

7. Among the rehabilitated interwar intellectuals were the historians Andrei Oțetea, Constantin C. Giurescu, and Constantin Daicoviciu, the philosopher and poet Lucian Blaga, and the poet Tudor Arghezi.

8. Actually, the decision to postpone the Second RWP Congress was made in mid 1954 at a confidential meeting attended by Gheorghiu-Dej, Gheorghe Apostol, Iosif Chișinevschi, and Mark Borisovich Mitin. It was several months before this decision was made public. In the meantime, preparations for the congress continued as if it were to be held, according to the initial announcement, in late 1954. I owe this information on the secret decision to postpone the congress to my aunt, Dr. Nehama Tisminetsky, who got it from Mitin's wife, with whom she was on friendly terms.

9. See chapter 4 on the Pătrășcanu affair and its reverberations. Gheorghiu-Dej's closest collaborators in masterminding Pătrășcanu's judicial murder were the CC secretary and politburo member Iosif Chișinevschi and Minister of Internal Affairs Alexandru Drăghici, also a politburo member.

10. See Pavel Țugui's contention that the rehabilitation of the poet Tudor Arghezi was initiated by Apostol. Contrary to what Țugui argues in his book *Istoria și limba română în vremea lui Gheorghiu-Dej: Memoriile unui fost Șef de Secție a CC al PMR* [Romanian History and Language in Gheorghiu-Dej's Time: The Memoirs of a Former Head of Section of the Central Committee of the RWP] (Bucharest: Editura Ion Cristoiu, 1999), Arghezi's rehabilitation was simply part of Dej's strategy to co-opt important figures of the national intelligentsia, and he avoided any genuine cultural liberalization. This line was devised by Dej and his close associate Leonte Răutu, the head of the ideological directorate and Țugui's direct superior.

11. Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, pp. 231–33.

12. See *News from behind the Iron Curtain*, January 1956, pp. 8.

13. See "Cu privire la componența colectivelor ce se vor ocupa de pregătirea Congresului PMR" [Note Regarding the Committees That Are Going to Prepare the Romanian Workers' Party Congress], October 15, 1955. A copy of this document is in my possession.

14. On the occasion of Chișinevschi's fiftieth birthday anniversary in 1956, Ceaușescu was one of the very few top leaders invited to attend a special private reunion at the then number two's residence. The Chișinevschi and Ceaușescu couples used to take long walks together in the Herăstrău (then "Stalin") Park, in Bucharest's smartest residential neighborhood. Needless to add, as in all Stalinist witch-hunts, after Chișinevschi's ouster, it was Ceaușescu who took the lead in denouncing his former protector.

15. Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, pp. 240–41.

16. See Vladimir Tismaneanu, *The Crisis of Marxist Ideology in Eastern Europe: The Poverty of Utopia* (London: Routledge, 1988), and Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, vol. 3, *The Breakdown*.

17. For further details of the discussions between the members of the RCP delegation, see Paul Sfetcu, *13 ani în anticamera lui Dej* [Thirteen Years in Dej's Antechamber] (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 2000), pp. 273–74. It was around this time that Gheorghiu-Dej established a very close relationship with Petre Borilă, whom he included in his inner circle, where the most secret issues were discussed and fateful decisions were made. On the relationship between Gheorghiu-Dej and Borilă, I owe significant information to Mircea Răceanu, who had grown up in the USSR with Borilă's son Iuri, and whose mother, Ileana, a central committee member between 1955 and 1958, was one of Borilă's wife Ecaterina's close friends.

18. One of the best analyses of the origins of the Romanian-Soviet dispute can be found in Georges Haupt, "La Genèse du conflit soviéto-roumain" [The Genesis of the Soviet-Romanian Conflict], *Revue française des sciences politiques* (Paris) 18, 4 (August 1968): 669–84. See also Branko Lazitch, *Le Rapport*

Khrouchtchev et son histoire [The Khrushchev Report and Its History] (Paris: Seuil, 1976).

19. For Togliatti's interview, "9 domande sullo Stalinismo" [Nine Questions Regarding Stalinism], see Russian Institute, Columbia University, *The Anti-Stalin Campaign and International Communism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), pp. 97-139.

20. For the opinion of Gheorghe Apostol, Gheorghiu-Dej's most ardent supporter, at one of the following meetings of the politburo, see "Ședința Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 3, 4, 6, 12 aprilie 1956" [The Meeting of the CC Politburo on April 3, 4, 6, 12, 1956], *Sfera Politicii* (Bucharest), no. 27 (April 1995): 39.

21. For the arguments used by Gheorghiu-Dej and his supporters, on the one hand, and by the two main opponents, on the other, see "Stenograma ședinței plenare a CC al PMR din 23-25 martie 1956" [Transcript of the CC Plenum on March 23-25, 1956], a copy of which is in my possession.

22. My assessment of Chișinevschi's reasons for launching an attack on Gheorghiu-Dej has, in fact, been confirmed by his son, Gheorghe Chișinevschi, in his article "Iosif Chișinevschi și PMR-ul în anii cincizeci" [Iosif Chișinevschi and the Romanian Workers' Party in the 1950s], *Alergătorul de la Marathon*, no. 4 (1989): 191-99.

23. See "Ședința Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 3, 4, 6, 12 aprilie 1956" [The Meeting of the CC Politburo on April 3, 4, 6, 12, 1956], *Sfera Politicii* (Bucharest), no. 25 (February 1995): 18.

24. See Nicolae Ceaușescu, "Cuvîntare la consfătuirea cu activul de partid al municipiului București din 26 aprilie 1968" [Speech Delivered at the Meeting of the Party *Aktiv* of Bucharest Municipality on April 26, 1968], in *România pe drumul desăvîrșirii construcției socialiste*, p. 178. And see also Dennis Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995).

25. "Ședința plenară a CC al PMR, Ziua a treia, 25 martie 1956" [The CC Plenum, the Third Day, March 25, 1956], p. 95. A copy of this document is in my possession.

26. The fact that Gheorghiu-Dej staged this provocation with Jar's unconscious help was revealed to me by Sorin Toma in our private correspondence. After encouraging Jar to raise all his complaints during the meeting, Gheorghiu-Dej instructed Leonte Răutu and Miron Constantinescu to attack and discredit Jar. See Sorin Toma's very detailed and informative letter to me dated October 31, 1989. Pandrea, *Memoriile mandarinului valah*, pp. 86, 556-57, 561-62, also has interesting things to say on the subject.

27. See the debate of the party *aktiv* of the I. V. Stalin, Bucharest, district committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, *Scînteia*, May 23, 1956.

28. For the report regarding this meeting, see *Scînteia*, June 1, 1956. For an analysis of Jar's case, see also *News from behind the Iron Curtain*, July 1956, pp. 54-55.

29. See "Referat prezentat de Direcția de Propagandă și Cultură prin care se aprobă proiectul de salut al CC al PMR adresat Congresului Uniunii Scriitorilor

din RPR” [Memorandum of Agitprop for the approval of the draft of Romanian Workers’ Party’s Address to the Congress of the Writers’ Union], in Buzatu and Chirițoiu, *Agresiunea comunismului în România*, pp. 236–40. The document was signed by Leonte Răutu and, besides the address, in which it was clearly stated that the socialist realism offered a variety of genres and styles for the development of writers’ creativity, it also included a list of those who were to be elected to the leadership of the Writers’ Union.

30. For the attempts to rewrite the history of Romania in the post-Stalinist period, see Țugui, *Istoria și limba română în vremea lui Gheorghiu-Dej*.

31. Marieta Sadova, a theater director who had moved in the same circle as Mircea Eliade and Emil Cioran in the interwar period, but had remained in Romania after the war and been co-opted by the communist regime, was sent to Paris to contact them. Although she was asked to do this by Constanța Crăciun, then minister of culture, and Pavel Țugui, head of the culture section of the central committee between 1956 and 1960, it was used against her later in a trial in February 1960, in which a larger group of intellectuals was also implicated. See Țugui, *Istoria și limba română în vremea lui Gheorghiu-Dej*. See also Stelian Tănase, *Anatomia mistificării* [The Anatomy of Mystification] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997).

32. For the trial of one important group of prominent intellectuals, including the philosopher Constantin Noica, the writers Constantin Pillat, Al. O. Teodoreanu, Sergiu Al. George, Alexandru Paleologu, Nicolae Steinhardt, and Arșavir Aterian, see *Documente ale procesului C. Noica, C. Pillat, Al. Paleologu, A. Aterian, S. Al-George, Al. O. Teodoreanu* [Documents of the Trial of C. Noica, C. Pillat, Al. Paleologu, A. Aterian, S. Al-George, and Al. O. Teodoreanu] (Bucharest: Editura Vremea, 1996). See also Tănase, *Anatomia mistificării*. Between 1956 and 1960, there were many other intellectuals arrested and sentenced to various terms in prison, including the 1977 dissident Paul Goma and one of the two prominent intellectuals who joined him, Ion Negoïțescu; one of the writers who signed letters of protests in 1989, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș; the cultural historian Edgar Papu; and many others.

33. Among the vocal critics of Stalinist asphyxiation of the intelligentsia was the radiant young poet Nicolae Labiș. Attacked by Mihai Beniuc, himself manipulated by Leonte Răutu, Labiș continued to publish poems indicating disaffection with Stalinism and calling for a renewal of socialism in Romania along humanist lines, such as “Legenda pasiunii defuncte” [The Legend of Defunct Passion]. Information provided by Tita Chiper-Ivasiuc.

34. See “Sediința Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 24 octombrie 1956” [The CC Politburo Meeting on October 24, 1956], in 1956—*Explozia: Percepții române, iugoslave și sovietice asupra evenimentelor din Polonia și Ungaria* [1956—The Explosion: Romanian, Yugoslav, and Soviet Perceptions of the Events in Poland and Hungary], ed. Corneliu Mihai Lungu and Mihai Retegan (Bucharest: Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 1996), pp. 74–78.

35. See “Ședința Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 30 octombrie 1956” [The Meeting of the CC Politburo on October 30, 1956], in *1956—Explozia*, ed. Lungu and Retegan, pp. 143–45.

36. Actually, the revolutionary government in Budapest made no irredentist claims. See Paul E. Zinner, *National Communism and Popular Revolt: A Selection of Documents on Events in Poland and Hungary, February–November, 1956* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), pp. 398–484.

37. The RWP’s delegation to Budapest to evaluate the situation there included Aurel Mălnășan and Valter Roman, the father of Petre Roman, the first postcommunist prime minister of Romania. See “Stenograma ședinței din 2 noiembrie 1956 cu tov. Aurel Mălnășan și Valter Roman” [Transcript of the Meeting on November 2, 1956], in *1956—Explozia*, ed. Lungu and Retegan, pp. 166–80. For the message sent on November 5, 1956, to Kádár’s new government, see “Mesajul CC al PMR, al guvernului RPR și prezidiului MAN a RPR către Guvernul revoluționar muncitoresc-țărănesc al RPU, către clasa muncitoare ungară, către întreg poporul maghiar” [Message of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party, of the Government of the Romanian People’s Republic, and of the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly of the Romanian People’s Republic to the Workers’ and Peasants’ Revolutionary Government of the Hungarian People’s Republic, to the Hungarian Working Class, to the Entire Hungarian People], in *1956—Explozia*, ed. Lungu and Retegan, pp. 216–18.

38. See *Pravda*, November 10, 1956.

39. The Romanian Hungarian intellectuals were more exposed to the Marxist reformist ideas that circulated in Budapest. See Balas, *Will to Freedom*, pp. 327–47.

40. For Valter Roman’s role in the deportation of Nagy and his main collaborators in Romania, see Christian Duplan and Vincent Giret, *La Vie en rouge: Les Pionniers. Varsovie, Prague, Budapest, Bucarest, 1944–1968* [Life in Red: The Pioneers. Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, Bucharest, 1944–1968], pp. 333–39, 355–71.

41. See “Stenograma ședinței plenare a CC al PMR din 30 noiembrie–5 decembrie 1961” [Transcript of the CC Plenum on November 30–December 5, 1961], esp. pp. 477–84. A copy of this document is in my possession.

42. Mircea Vulcănescu would later end up in a communist prison, accused of collaboration with the Nazis, merely because he had been secretary of state at the Ministry of Finance during the war, when Romania was allied with Germany. Trying to save the life of a young man with pneumonia, Vulcănescu lay down on a wet concrete floor and let the other sleep on top of him, with the result that he also came down with pneumonia, which quickly killed him. See Ștefan Fay, *Socrateion* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1991).

43. See “Stenograma ședinței plenare a CC al PMR din 30 noiembrie–5 decembrie 1961” [Transcript of the CC plenum on November 30–December 5, 1961], pp. 214–15. A copy of this document is in my possession.

44. In Cluj, Constantinescu met the philosopher Lucian Blaga and the historian Constantin Daicoviciu; in Bucharest, the poet Tudor Arghezi and the historian Constantin C. Giurescu. On Constantinescu’s involvement in Blaga’s reha-

bilitation, see Lucian Blaga, *Luntrea lui Caron* [Charon's Boat] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1990), an autobiographic novel in which Constantinescu is easily recognizable in the character Constant Mironescu.

45. See Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, pp. 284–85.

46. See “Stenograma ședinței plenare a Comitetului Central al PMR din 28–29 iunie și 1–3 iulie 1957” [Transcript of the CC Plenum on June 28–29 and July 1–3, 1957], R. 2/1.

47. For Răutu's comments, see *ibid.*, R. 12/4. Moghioroș spoke of a meeting he had had in Baia Mare with old-time members of the party who told him that “Stalin was theirs, and would remain theirs.” See *ibid.*, R. 26/5.

48. *Ibid.*, R. 2/2.

49. *Ibid.*, R. 2/7.

50. Personal information received from Preoteasa's son Gheorghe.

51. It seems that this was a genuine accident and not a provoked one, because the rest of the delegates, among who were Leonte Răutu, Alexandru Moghioroș and Nicolae Ceaușescu, had minor injuries. See “Informație despre starea sănătății membrilor delegației de partid și guvernamentale a RPR” [Note on the State of Health of the Members of the Romanian People's Republic's Party and Governmental Delegation], in Buzatu and Chirițoiu, *Agresiunea comunismului în România*, pp. 160–61.

52. Pavel Țugui argues that Gheorghiu-Dej intended to remove Leonte Răutu from the Agitprop leadership and replace him with Grigore Preoteasa. See Țugui, *Istoria și limba română în vremea lui Gheorghiu-Dej*, pp. 137–38.

53. Ileana Răceanu criticized her husband only for character defects for which he could not be punished by the party, however, so it is highly likely that, once it was clear that he was lost, they jointly agreed that she should at least try to save her own skin.

54. For the point of view of the investigation commission regarding the anti-party character of the discussion outside the official party meetings in which Petrescu engaged, see “Cu privire la activitatea antipartinică a unor membri de partid” [Regarding the Antiparty Activity of Some Party Members], July 13, 1956. For the point of view of Petrescu, who tried to defend himself, arguing that he was treated less democratically than Miron Constantinescu and Iosif Chișinevschi, whose cases were long debated in the politburo, although they were responsible for greater mistakes than his, see his memorandum “Către Biroul Politic al CC al PMR” [To the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party], October 3, 1957. Copies of these documents from the archives of the CC politburo are in my possession. Petrescu would be rehabilitated by Ceaușescu, who included him in the executive committee at the Tenth Congress of the RCP in 1969, only a year before his death.

55. “Stenograma ședinței plenare a CC al PMR din 9–13 iunie 1958” [Transcript of the CC Plenum of June 9–13, 1958]. A copy of this document is in my possession.

56. For details of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania, see *România: Retragera trupelor sovietice—1958* [Romania: The Withdrawal of Soviet

Troops—1958], ed. Ioan Scurtu (Bucharest: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1996). See also Sergiu Verona, *Military Occupation and Diplomacy: Soviet Troops in Romania, 1944–1958* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992).

Chapter 6. Opposing Khrushchevism

1. Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, p. 316.
2. For an in-depth analysis of RWP's Third Congress, see *ibid.*, pp. 316–25.
3. Gheorghiu-Dej, Apostol, Bodnăraș, Borilă, Chivu Stoica, Ceaușescu, Drăghici, Maurer, Moghioroș, Coliu, Răutu, Sălăjan, Voitec, and Dalea attended the politburo meeting on November 29, 1961; see the transcript, “Stenograma ședinței Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din ziua de 29 noiembrie 1961,” a copy of which is in my possession.
4. “Report of the Delegation of the Rumanian Workers’ Party Which Attended the Twenty-second Congress of the CPSU—Submitted to the Plenum of the CC, RWP held between November 30 and December 5, 1961” (in English), in Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, *Articles and Speeches: June 1960–December 1962* (Bucharest: Meridiane Publishing House, 1963), p. 291.
5. Quoted in King, *History of the Romanian Communist Party*, p. 92.
6. Dej, *Articles and Speeches: June 1960–December 1962*, pp. 278–79.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Dej, Apostol, Bodnăraș, Borilă, Chivu Stoica, Ceaușescu, Maurer, Drăghici, Moghioroș, Coliu, Răutu, Sălăjan, and Voitec attended the politburo meeting on December 7, 1961; see the transcript, “Stenograma ședinței Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din ziua de 7 decembrie 1961,” pp. 6–7.
9. Personal communications to me from Cristina Luca-Boico and Leonte Tismăneanu.
10. RCP veterans agree that Dej had become increasingly paranoid, suspecting even his closest collaborators of fomenting plots to subvert his power.
11. For instance, in a confidential lecture he to students at the party academy in 1964, Ceaușescu emphasized the relevance of Stalinist ideology. His audience was apparently astonished to hear him praise Stalin’s theoretical legacy, particularly *Problems of Leninism*, which Ceaușescu referred to it as obligatory reading for anyone wanting to understand Marxism-Leninism. Private communication to me from persons who were present.
12. See Gheorghe Buzatu and Mircea Chirițoiu, *Agresiunea comunismului în România: Documente din arhivele secrete, 1944–1989* [The Communist Aggression in Romania: Documents from the Secret Archives, 1944–1989] (Bucharest: Editura Paideia, 1998), 1: 33. On the 1907 peasant rebellion, see Robert W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Roumanians from Roman Times to the Completion of Unity* (1934; reprint New York: Archon Books, 1963), pp. 386–87.
13. For a perceptive analysis of Khrushchev’s role in the Sino-Soviet split, see chapter 7, “Khrushchev and the Sino-Soviet Schism,” in Vladislav Zubok and

Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 210-35.

14. "Extras din stenograma convorbirilor care au avut loc la București între delegațiile CC al PMR și CC al PCUS în zilele de 24-25 iunie 1963" [Excerpt from the Transcript of the Discussions between the Delegations of the Central Committees of the RWP and the CPSU Held in Bucharest on June 24-25, 1963], Arhiva Biroului Politic al C.C. al P.M.R., nr. 1702/1963, protocol 2 (1645), 23-24.12.1963, cutia 26, p. 1.

15. "Extras din nota cu privire la discuțiile ce au avut loc cu prilejul vizitei în R.P.R. a tov. N. S. Hrușciiov în tren, mașină și cu alte ocazii în timpul deplasării la locurile de vânătoare între zilele de 3-7 octombrie 1963" [Excerpt from the Transcript of the Discussions Held in Train, Car, and on Other Occasions during the Visit of Comrade N. S. Khrushchev to Romania en Route to Hunting Grounds, October 3-7, 1963], p. 1.

16. See J.F. Brown, "Eastern Europe," in *International Communism after Khrushchev*, ed. Leopold Labedz (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1965), p. 79.

17. See Joseph Rothschild, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 162.

18. Vlad Georgescu, *The Romanians: A History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1991), p. 245.

19. See H. Gordon Skilling, *Communism National and International: Eastern Europe after Stalin* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1964), p. 152.

20. Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development*, pp. 203, 214.

21. E. B. Valev published an article in April 1964 on the creation of an "inter-state economic complex" to be composed of parts of the southern Soviet Union, southeastern Romania, and northern Bulgaria. See Georgescu, p. 245.

22. Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 48.

23. See Bîrlădeanu's own comments concerning his intervention in Lavinia Betea, *Alexandru Bîrlădeanu despre Dej, Ceaușescu și Iliescu* [Alexandru Bîrlădeanu on Dej, Ceaușescu, and Iliescu] (Bucharest: Editura Evenimentul Românesc, 1997), pp. 150-51.

24. See Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, p. 339.

25. Skilling, *Communism National and International*, p. 153, refers to the article published by the chairman of the Romanian Council of Ministers, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, in the November 1963 issue of the *World Marxist Review* under the title "The Firm Foundations of the Unity of the International Communist Movement."

26. See Gheorghiu-Dej's instructions to the RCP delegation to China in the spring of 1964 to try to persuade the Chinese communists to suspend their polemics against Moscow for at least six months, or, better, for a year, and then organize a world communist conference to discuss the controversial issues. See "Stenograma ședinței Biroului Politic al C.C. al P.M.R. din ziua de 28 februarie 1964" [Transcript of the Meeting of the Central Committee of the Politburo of

the Romanian Workers' Party on February 28, 1964], Arhiva Biroului Politic al C.C. al P.M.R., no. 207/28.III.1964, p. 4.

27. *Declarație cu privire la poziția Partidului Muncitoresc Român în problemele mișcării comuniste și muncitorești internaționale, adoptată de Plenara lărgită a C.C. al P.M.R. din aprilie 1964* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1964). For the paragraphs quoted, see Skilling, *Communism National and International*, pp. 153–54. See also Bîrlădeanu's remarks on the importance of the April 1964 Declaration in Betea, *Bîrlădeanu despre Dej, Ceaușescu și Iliescu*, pp. 152–58.

28. Actually, Gaston Marin paid three official visits to the United States: in 1957, in November 1963, and in May–June 1964. According to Gaston Marin's own account, his last official visit to the United States, in 1964, was the most important in terms of bilateral relations. See Gheorghe Gaston Marin, *În serviciul României lui Gheorghiu-Dej: Însemnări din viață* [Serving Gheorghiu-Dej's Romania: Notes from My Life] (Bucharest: Editura Evenimentul Românesc, 2000), pp. 212–29.

29. The results of the Romanian delegation's visit to France were discussed at the Politburo meeting on August 4, 1964. Romanian communist officials were extremely impressed by de Gaulle. See "Stenograma ședinței Biroului Politic al C.C. al P.M.R. din ziua de 4 august 1964" [Transcript of the Meeting of the Central Committee of the Politburo of the RWP on 4 August 1964], Arhiva Biroului Politic al C.C. al P.M.R., no. 1574/31.XII.1964, pp. 6–20.

30. David Binder, "Rumania Presses Pursuit of Independent Economy," *New York Times*, July 6, 1964, p. 1.

31. It was Gheorghiu-Dej's proposal, approved by the politburo, to invite delegations from all the "socialist" countries, including Yugoslavia and Cuba, to the August 23 celebrations. See "Stenograma ședinței Biroului Politic al C.C. al P.M.R. din ziua de 4 august 1964" [Transcript of the Meeting of the Central Committee of the Politburo of the RWP on August 4, 1964], Arhiva Biroului Politic al C.C. al P.M.R., no. 1574/ 31.XII.1964, p. 20.

32. See the discussion of "The Romanian Self-Assertion," in Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 442–55. Brzezinski later corrected his initial downplaying of the enduring features of local Stalinist traditions in Romania and pointed to Ceaușescu's rule as the epitome of extreme totalitarianism. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1989), pp. 134–35.

33. Ronald H. Linden, "Romanian Foreign Policy in the 1980s," in *Romania in the 1980s*, ed. Daniel Nelson (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1981), p. 229.

34. Mihai Beniuc, a once promising poet turned into party hack, had presided over countless witch-hunts. In February 1965, a month before Dej's unexpected death, the Conference of Romanian Writers allowed for unprecedented attacks on socialist realism. At the conference, Beniuc was scathingly criticized by his emboldened colleagues and lost his chairmanship. For a self-serving account of his role in the Stalinization of Romanian culture and alleged struggle against dogmatism, see Mihai Beniuc, *Sub patru dictaturi: Memorii (1940–1975)*

[Under Four Dictatorships: Memoirs, 1940-75] (Bucharest: Editura Ion Cristoiu, 1999).

35. See Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, p. 318.

36. Mihai Roller was a longtime associate of Chișinevschi and Răutu, director of the Institute of Party History. According to information provided by Sorin Toma, Roller suffered a stroke and died shortly after he was told that the June 1958 CC plenum had accused him of "factionalism" (the unconfirmed rumor was that he committed suicide). Together with such dilettantes as the "aesthetician" Nicolae Moraru, the party journalists Traian Șelmaru and Sorin Toma, and other former underground militants catapulted to the leadership of the "ideological front," Roller typified the most aggressive form of Romanian Zhdanovism. With regard to Roller's influence on Romanian historiography in the 1950s, see a detailed account in Țugui, *Istoria și limba română în vremea lui Gheorghiu-Dej*, esp. pp. 10-54.

37. Personal communication to me by Dr. Leon Bercu, Bucharest, 1973. Lica Gheorghiu never forgave Dr. Bercu for having concealed Dej's real diagnosis from her and refused to attend the funeral service for him at the "Filantropia" Jewish cemetery in the late 1970s (her children were present, however). It is to be assumed that Maurer and Ceaușescu feared that Lica might intervene with her father in favor of Gheorghe Apostol, whose daughter Geta was one of her closest friends. It is also noteworthy that relations between Lica Gheorghiu and Elena Ceaușescu were quite cold. On various occasions, the supercilious Lica had turned down Elena's overtures (personal communication from Lica Gheorghiu's son Gheorghe, a former high school classmate of mine, whom his grandfather, Gheorghiu-Dej, adopted in 1963). Lica had divorced her first husband, Gheorghe's father, Marcel Popescu, in 1958 (consequently, he lost his position as minister of foreign trade). In 1961, she married the engineer Gheorghe Rădoi, former director of the "Red Flag" truck factory in Brașov. Soon thereafter, Rădoi became minister of machine-building industry and deputy prime minister. He lost all his political positions, however, following Gheorghiu-Dej's death in 1965. Ceaușescu rehabilitated Marcel Popescu, whom he appointed deputy chairman of the Romanian Chamber of Commerce.

38. See Maurer's account in Lavinia Betea, *Maurer și lumea de ieri: Mărturii despre stalinizarea României* (Arad: Editura Iona Slavici, 1995), pp. 171-76.

39. See Betea, *Bîrlădeanu despre Dej, Ceaușescu și Iliescu*, pp. 180-84. One element to be kept in mind is the personal animosity between Bîrlădeanu and Maurer. On various occasions, in private conversations during the 1970s and 1980s with party old-timers, Bîrlădeanu described Maurer as a politically and morally corrupt individual. It was Bîrlădeanu who apparently opposed the idea of other would-be signatories of the "Letter of the Six" to approach Maurer and ask him to join them. As for the "procedural" elements of the post-Dej succession, I could not find a single document in the RCP operational archive indicating any collective discussion of them. Whatever debates may have taken place, they must have been informal and, to use Dej's favorite charge against his enemies, "factionalist."

40. Sorin Toma, who was of Jewish origin, joined the RCP in 1932, when he was eighteen. In the 1930s, he was married to Ana Grossman-Toma, a militant with an important role in both Ana Pauker's and Gheorghiu-Dej's entourages. During World War II he, fought with Soviet partisans and then the Red Army against the Nazis (1943–45). In 1946, he returned to Romania and was named deputy chief editor of the party newspaper *Scînteia*. From 1947 until 1960, he was the chief editor of *Scînteia* and a member of the central committee of the RWP (1949–60). His father, Alexandru Toma, a poet of meager talent but huge ambitions, was the official bard of the Stalinist epoch in Romania and wrote the words for the first anthem of the Romanian People's Republic. At the behest of the party leadership, in late 1940s, Sorin Toma wrote a vicious attack on one of Romania's most prominent poets, Tudor Arghezi. Sorin Toma fell victim to Dej's purges; he lost his position after 1960 and was expelled from the RWP in 1963. In 1988, he immigrated to Israel. For Toma's own explanation of his role in the attacks on Arghezi, see his open letter to the literary historian Mircea Zăciu, *Revista Vatra* (Tîrgu Mureş), December 1997–January 1998.

41. For an insightful analysis of the remarkably brief transitional moment from Dej to Ceauşescu, see Pavel Câmpeanu, "Înscăunarea" [The Enthronement], *Revista 22* (Bucharest), August 14–20 (2001): 15–16. Drawing on transcripts of politburo meetings, Câmpeanu, a party old-timer and one of the few original Romanian Marxist sociologists, demonstrates that there never was a serious Apostol alternative, and that Ceauşescu inherited Dej's mantle as party leader without any significant opposition from any of his colleagues. As a matter of fact, the central committee members invited to attend the first post-Dej plenum in March 1965 were presented with a *fait accompli*: Ceauşescu was the new leader—there was no question about it. This was, of course, guaranteed not only by support from Dej's "barons" (Maurer and Bodnăraş), but, even more important, by Ceauşescu's long-standing connections with the regional party leaders, many of whom he soon thereafter promoted to key central positions at the Ninth RCP Congress in July 1965. Câmpeanu further develops his analysis in his book *Ceauşescu: Anii numaratorii inverse* [Ceauşescu: The Reverse Countdown Years] (Iaşi: Polirom, 2002).

Chapter 7. Ceauşescu's Dynastic Communism, 1965–1989

1. I have tried to dispel some of the recurrent legends concerning Romania's "originality" in domestic and foreign affairs in my studies "Ceauşescu's Socialism," *Problems of Communism* 34, 1 (January–February 1985): 50–66, and "The Ambiguity of Romanian National Communism," *Telos*, no. 60 (Summer 1984): 65–79.

2. J. F. Brown, *The New Eastern Europe: The Khrushchev Era and After* (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 71. After 1968, Brown assessed Ceauşescu's performance in power more skeptically: see, e.g., J. F. Brown, "Romania Today," *Problems of Communism* 18, 1 (January–February 1969): 8–17.

3. “Sick Man of Communism,” *Economist* (London), October 26, 1985. The same scathing view of Ceaușescu’s neo-Stalinist autocracy could be found in articles published in the American, German, and French press. Note, e.g., “Romania: Un Communisme dynastique” [Romania: A Dynastic Communism], *L’Express* (Paris), January 4, 1985, and “Roumanie: Lugubre fin de règne” [Romania: A Gloomy Endgame], *ibid.*, December 20, 1985. The latter article depicts the most recent (and eccentric) measures adopted by a dictator faced with an endemic economic crisis and viscerally execrated by a people he pretended to represent.

4. In the 1970s, Ceaușescu supported the dogmatic course championed by Prime Minister Manea Mănescu, a professor of economics, against the proponents of economic decentralization and more investment in consumer goods industries. Personal interviews with Mihai Botez, a dissident mathematician and economic forecaster, in Washington, D.C., October 1987, and Philadelphia, March 1988. See also Botez’s contribution to the volume *Romania: A Case of “Dynastic” Communism* (New York: Freedom House, 1989), pp. 12–18.

5. See Robert C. Tucker, “On Revolutionary Mass-Movement Regimes,” in *id.*, *The Soviet Political Mind: Studies in Stalinism and Post-Stalin Change* (New York: Praeger, 1963), pp. 3–19.

6. For a discussion of the RCP’s position on the Bessarabian question and its slavish endorsement of Soviet expansionist designs, see Frunză, *Istoria Partidului Comunist Român*, pp. 52–128.

7. See Michael Shafir’s thorough examination of the “simulated change” practiced by the RCP leadership, in Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, pp. 47–63.

8. See “Report of the Delegation of the Rumanian Workers’ Party,” in Gheorghiu-Dej, *Articles and Speeches*, pp. 257–93; Haupt, “La Genèse du conflit soviéto-roumain.”

9. See Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceaușescu’s Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

10. See Paul Lewis, “Diplomats Cite Growing Signs of Ceaușescu’s Illness,” *New York Times*, December 17, 1985; “Ceaușescu’s Illness,” *Economist* (London), *Foreign Report*, August 1, 1985. The former foreign minister and candidate executive committee member Ștefan Andrei said in an interview with me in Bucharest in June 1994 that members of the top elite had favored Nicu as a possible successor (i.e., rather than Elena Ceaușescu).

11. For a perceptive analysis of Ceaușescu’s strategy of paying well-publicized visits to factories, collective farms, and other socialist institutions to give himself an aura of legitimacy, see Cristina Petrescu, “Vizitele de lucru: Un ritual al Epocii de Aur” [Ceaușescu’s Domestic Visits: A Ritual of the ‘Golden Epoch’], in *Miturile comunismului românesc* [Myths of Romanian Communism], ed. Lucian Boia, pp. 229–38 (Bucharest: Nemira, 1997).

12. Michael D. Kennedy, *Professionals, Power and Solidarity in Poland: A Critical Sociology of Soviet-Type Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 39, estimates that in 1971 alone, Gierek had 171 “grassroots meetings.” Michael

H. Bernhard, *The Origins of Democratization in Poland: Workers, Intellectuals, and Oppositional Politics, 1976–1980* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 42, ups the number to 187 such meetings.

13. Pensions were based on how long one had been in the party: the earlier one had joined, the higher one's pension was.

14. See *Congresul al IX-lea al Partidului Comunist Român 19–24 iulie 1965* [The Ninth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, July 19–24, 1965] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1966), p. 14.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 330–52.

16. Very few people noticed that at the opening of the congress, Elena Ceaușescu was in the first row, all dressed in white, sitting next to Alexandru Drăghici's wife, Martha (née Cziko), who seemed at the time to be her inseparable friend. In the summer of 1965, the two vacationed together at Karlovy Vary, in Czechoslovakia, putting on a show of mutual trust and comradeship. After Dej's death, the Ceaușescu and Drăghici couples met frequently to play billiards or bowl together. Gheorghiu-Dej's two hatchet men were preparing for the final showdown.

17. Nicolae Ceaușescu, Chivu Stoica, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Gheorghe Apostol, Alexandru Bîrlădeanu, Emil Bodnăraș, Petre Borilă, Alexandru Drăghici, Constantin Drăgan, Alexandru Moghioroș, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Leonte Răutu, Gogu Rădulescu, Leontin Sălăjan, and Ștefan Voitec were the fifteen members of the executive committee. There were ten candidate members: Iosif Banc, Maxim Berghianu, Petre Blajovici, Dumitru Coliu, Florian Dănălache, János Fazekás, Mihai Gere, Petre Lupu, Ilie Verdeț, and Vasile Vilcu. Nicolae Ceaușescu, Chivu Stoica, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Gheorghe Apostol, Alexandru Bîrlădeanu, Emil Bodnăraș, and Alexandru Drăghici formed the permanent presidium. The secretariat consisted of General Secretary Nicolae Ceaușescu and eight secretaries: Alexandru Drăghici, Alexandru Moghioroș, Mihai Dalea, Manea Mănescu, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Vasile Patilineț, Leonte Răutu, and Virgil Trofin. See *Congresul al IX-lea al Partidului Comunist Român*, p. 739.

18. See the memoirs of the former general in the secret police Grigore Răduică, *Crime în lupta pentru putere, 1966–1968: Ancheta cazului Pătrășcanu* [Crimes in the Power Struggle, 1966–1968: The Inquiry into the Pătrășcanu Case] (Bucharest: Editura Evenimentul Românesc, 1999).

19. See Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Congresul al IX-lea și geneza mitului Ceaușescu" [The Ninth RCP Congress and the Genesis of the Ceaușescu Myth], 22 (Bucharest), no. 33 (August 15–21, 2000): 12–13.

20. See Timothy Garton Ash, "Conclusions," in *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath*, ed. Sorin Antohi and Vladimir Tismaneanu (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000), p. 396.

21. See Ceaușescu, "Partidul Comunist Român—Continuator al luptei revoluționare și democratice a poporului român." pp. 145–46.

22. For interpretations of Pătrășcanu's fate, see Carrère d'Encausse, *Le Grand Frère*, pp. 118–20; Ghiță Ionescu, "Was Pătrășcanu a Potential Tito?" in *id.*, *Communism in Rumania*, pp. 151–56. An analogy between Pătrășcanu and

Gomułka may be a key to the understanding of this particularly tenebrous episode in the history of the RCP; see Brzezinski, *Soviet Bloc*, pp. 92–95.

23. However, Drăghici was never brought to justice for his misdeeds in the 1950s and was granted a substantial “personal pension” and other benefits reserved for the party’s old-timers. In fact, no trial of Stalinist torturers and masterminds of judicial frame-ups took place in Ceaușescu’s Romania.

24. Even an old-timer like Gheorghe Apostol was taken in by Ceaușescu’s simulated de-Stalinization. Immediately after the plenum of April 22–25, on April 30, 1968, Apostol wrote a short article entitled “Încotro ne îndreptăm” [In What Direction Are We Going], which was extremely critical of Ceaușescu’s anti-Dej campaign and his policy of hypocritical, selective rehabilitations, and submitted it to *Scînteia*. The article was never published; moreover, it provoked Apostol’s political decline, which culminated in the slanderous attack on him by Ceaușescu at RCP’s Tenth Congress (August 6–12, 1969). A copy of Apostol’s article is in my possession.

25. For interesting details regarding de Gaulle’s visit to Romania, see Sanda Stolojan, *Cu de Gaulle în România* [With de Gaulle in Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1994).

26. For more on Prague Spring, see my *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel* (New York: Free Press, 1992), pp. 90–106.

27. Cisař had, in fact, been the Czechoslovak ambassador to Romania between 1964 and early 1968, when Dubček promoted him as one of the chief ideologues of the Prague Spring. While in Bucharest, Cisař took intensive private English language classes with the same old gentleman who was my own first English teacher, Carol Popper.

28. See Valter Roman’s speech to party workers in Brașov County on the events in Czechoslovakia, October 1968. Petre Roman provided me with a copy of his father speech, which emphasized the need to condemn the compromised Comintern methods and strongly criticized Soviet neo-Stalinist policies. In this important address, Roman quoted Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea to the effect that “socialism and truth are inseparable” and defended the need for free confrontations of ideas within world communism.

29. On the 1968 events, see “Romania” in *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs, 1969*, ed. Richard F. Staar (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1970), pp. 714–27.

30. See the list of the central committee members and candidate members approved by the RCP Ninth Congress in *Congresul al IX-lea al Partidului Comunist Român 19–24 iulie 1965*, pp. 735–38.

31. On the dynamics of the RCP elite under Ceaușescu, see Trond Gilberg, “The Communist Party of Romania,” in *The Communist Parties of Eastern Europe*, ed. Stephen Fischer-Galati (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 281–325; Walter M. Bacon, “Romania,” in *1985 Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, ed. Richard F. Staar (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1985), pp. 318–33; and Vladimir Tismaneanu, “The Agony of a Marxist Regime,” *The World and I* 3, 3 (March 1988): 108–14.

32. For further details, see Popescu's memoirs, *Un fost lider comunist se destăinuie: Am fost și cioplitor de himere*. Personal interview with Dumitru Popescu, Bucharest, June 1994.

33. Niculescu-Mizil was a vocal exponent of Ceaușescu's neutralist stances in the Sino-Soviet conflict, and, for many intellectuals, he symbolized (together with Ion Iliescu) the promises of the semi-liberal phase of Ceaușescu's rule. For Mizil's post-1990 memoirs, see this book's bibliography.

34. Born Marta Cziko, Drăghici's wife had been arrested during the war and received a life sentence for underground communist activity.

35. See Ceaușescu's report to the congress in *Congresul al X-lea al Partidului Comunist Român 6–12 august 1969* [The Tenth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, August 6–12, 1969] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1969), pp. 24–25. The congress approved the following executive committee, expanded to twenty-one members: Nicolae Ceaușescu, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Maxim Berghianu, Emil Bodnăraș, Florian Dănălache, Constantin Drăgan, Emil Drăgănescu, János Fazekás, Petre Lupu, Manea Mănescu, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Gheorghe Pană, Dumitru Petrescu, Dumitru Popescu, Gheorghe Rădulescu, Leonte Răutu, Gheorghe Stoica, Virgil Trofin, Ilie Verdeț, Vasile Vîlcu, and Ștefan Voitec. There were eleven candidate members: Iosif Banc, Petre Blajovici, Miu Dobrescu, Aurel Duca, Mihai Gere, Ion Iliescu, Ion Ioniță, Karol Kiraly, Vasile Patilineț, Dumitru Popa, and Ion Stănescu. The permanent presidium was composed of nine members: Nicolae Ceaușescu, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Emil Bodnăraș, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Gheorghe Pană, Dumitru Petrescu, Gheorghe Rădulescu, Virgil Trofin, and Ilie Verdeț. The secretariat consisted of General Secretary Nicolae Ceaușescu and six secretaries: Mihai Gere, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Gheorghe Pană, Vasile Patilineț, Dumitru Popescu, and Virgil Trofin. *Ibid.*, pp. 757–58.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

37. The congress approved the following executive committee, expanded to twenty-three members: Nicolae Ceaușescu, Emil Bobu, Emil Bodnăraș, Cornel Burtică, Elena Ceaușescu, Gheorghe Cioară, Lina Ciobanu, Emil Drăgănescu, János Fazekás, Petre Lupu, Manea Mănescu, Paul Niculescu, Gheorghe Oprea, Gheorghe Pană, Ion Pășan, Dumitru Popescu, Gheorghe Rădulescu, Leonte Răutu, Virgil Trofin, Iosif Uglar, Ilie Verdeț, Vasile Vîlcu, and Ștefan Voitec. There were thirteen candidate members: Ștefan Andrei, Iosif Banc, Chivu Stoica, Mihai Dalea, Miu Dobrescu, Mihai Gere, Nicolae Giosan, Ion Iliescu, Ion Ioniță, Vasile Patilineț, Mihai Telescu, Ioan Ursu, and Richard Winter. The secretariat consisted of General Secretary Nicolae Ceaușescu and six secretaries: Ștefan Andrei, Cornel Burtică, Gheorghe Pană, Dumitru Popescu, Iosif Uglar, and Ilie Verdeț. See *Congresul al XI-lea al Partidului Comunist Român, 25–28 noiembrie 1974* [The Eleventh Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, November 25–28, 1974] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975), pp. 841–42.

38. See *Programul Partidului Comunist Român de făurire a societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate și înaintare a României spre comunism* [The Romanian Communist Party's Program for Establishing the Multilaterally Developed So-

cialist Society and Romania's Advancement toward Communism], in *Congresul al XI-lea al Partidului Comunist Român*, pp. 614–749. Regarding the teleological approach to “national history,” see esp. pp. 618–35.

39. See *Congresul al IX-lea al Partidului Comunist Român, 19–24 iulie 1965* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1966), p. 92.

40. The congress approved the following executive committee, expanded to twenty-seven members: Nicolae Ceaușescu, Iosif Banc, Emil Bobu, Cornel Burcă, Virgil Cazacu, Elena Ceaușescu, Lina Ciobanu, Ion Coman, Nicolae Constantin, Constantin Dăscălescu, Ion Dincă, János Fazekás, Ludovic Fazekás, Cornelia Filipaș, Alexandrina Găinușe, Petre Lupu, Paul Niculescu, Gheorghe Oprea, Gheorghe Pană, Ion Pășan, Dumitru Popescu, Gheorghe Rădulescu, Leonte Răutu, Aneta Spornic, Virgil Trofin, Ilie Verdeț, and Ștefan Voitec. There were eighteen candidate members: Ștefan Andrei, Petre Dănică, Miu Dobrescu, Gheorghe Dumitrache, Petru Enache, Eva Feder, Mihai Gere, Nicolae Giosan, Suzana Gâdea, Ion Ioniță, Ștefan Mocuța, Ana Mureșan, Elena Nae, Marin Rădoi, Ion Stoian, Iosif Szasz, Ion Ursu, and Richard Winter. The secretariat consisted of General Secretary Nicolae Ceaușescu and eight secretaries: Iosif Banc, Virgil Cazacu, Constantin Dăscălescu, Ludovic Fazekás, Dumitru Popa, Dumitru Popescu, Ilie Rădulescu, and Marin Vasile. See *Congresul al XII-lea al Partidului Comunist Român, 19–23 noiembrie 1979* [The Twelfth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, November 19–23, 1979] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1981), pp. 899–900.

41. Pîrvulescu had been a member of the RCP since the founding congress, and of the central committee since 1929. Arrested in 1934, he escaped and went to the USSR, where he stayed during World War II. He returned to Romania in 1944, where he ran the RCP, together with Emil Bodnăraș and Iosif Rangheț, while Ana Pauker was still in the USSR and Gheorghiu-Dej was in prison. Pîrvulescu was subsequently chairman of the party control commission, 1945–61, and a member of the politburo, 1952–60, but he lost his positions after the CC plenum of November–December 1961, where he was criticized for complicity with Iosif Chișinevschi and Miron Constantinescu. He lived long enough to witness the breakdown of the communist regime in December 1989. His wife, Suzana Pîrvulescu (1898–1942), was also a communist militant and was jailed as such in 1936–39.

42. The congress approved the following executive committee, composed of twenty-three members: Nicolae Ceaușescu, Iosif Banc, Emil Bobu, Virgil Cazacu, Elena Ceaușescu, Lina Ciobanu, Ion Coman, Nicolae Constantin, Constantin Dăscălescu, Ion Dincă, Miu Dobrescu, Ludovic Fazekás, Alexandrina Găinușe, Manea Mănescu, Paul Niculescu, Constantin Olteanu, Gheorghe Oprea, Gheorghe Pană, Ion Pășan, Dumitru Popescu, Gheorghe Rădulescu, Ilie Verdeț, and Ștefan Voitec. There were twenty-five candidate members: Ștefan Andrei, Ștefan Bîrlea, Nicu Ceaușescu, Leonard Constantin, Gheorghe David, Marin Enache, Petru Enache, Mihai Gere, Maria Ghițuică, Nicolae Giosan, Suzana Gâdea, Nicolae Mihalache, Ioachim Moga, Ana Mureșan, Elena Nae, Marin Nedelcu, Cornel Pacoste, Tudor Postelnicu, Ion Radu, Ion Stoian, Ghe-

orghe Stoica, Iosif Szasz, Ioan Totu, Ion Ursu, and Richard Winter. The secretariat consisted of General Secretary Nicolae Ceaușescu and nine secretaries: Iosif Banc, Emil Bobu, Ion Coman, Silviu Curticeanu, Petru Enache, Constantin Radu, Ion Radu, Ion Stoian, and Ilie Verdeț. See *Congresul al XIII-lea al Partidului Comunist Român 19–22 noiembrie 1984* [The Thirteenth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, November 19–22, 1984] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1985), pp. 742–43.

43. Foreign Broadcast Information Service [hereafter cited as FBIS], *Eastern Europe*, December 3, 1984, p. H/3.

44. *Ibid.*, p. H/2.

45. Ceaușescu's nationalism inspired Isaiah Berlin to write:

It is... significant... that the creation of states founded on Marxist doctrines should, nevertheless, display acute national feeling... The fact that Ceaușescu, perhaps the most impeccably Leninist-Stalinist of all recent leaders of communist states, should have chosen to make a doctrinal issue of what has, in practice, for many years been the line of many communist governments and parties in the east and west is surely of some importance. The conflict between Marxist discipline and nationalist forces, which is fairly constant factor in contemporary communism—indeed, the entire topic of Marxism and nationalism, both its theoretical aspects and in practice—deserves closer study than it has obtained. (Berlin, *Crooked Timber of Humanity*, pp. 253–54)

46. Trond Gilberg, "Romania's Growing Difficulties," *Current History*, November 1984, p. 270. Gilberg's approach to the effects of Ceaușescu's irrational personality cult is convincing. The alternative to the monopolization of power by the Ceaușescu-Petrescu clan would have been the formulation of a general strategic challenge to the ossified dogmas venerated by the autocracy.

47. With regard to the nature of Soviet-type regimes and the problems of legitimacy, see Ferenc Fehér, Agnes Heller, and György Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), and *Political Legitimation in Communist States*, ed. T. H. Rigby and Ferenc Fehér (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982.)

48. *Scinteia*, October 9, 1982; Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 78. Former Prime Minister Ilie Verdeț was not the president's brother-in-law. His wife, Reghina, was originally from Transylvania, just as he was, and there was no blood relationship between the Verdeț and Ceaușescu families. Neither Manea Mănescu nor his wife was related to presidential couple.

49. No one has better described Dăscălescu's infatuated ignorance and insolent behavior than the Romanian poet and translator Ion Caraion, who witnessed the premier's tantrums during the Writers' National Conference in July 1981. See Ion Caraion, *Insectele tovarășului Hitler* (The Insects of Comrade Hitler) (Munich: Ion Dumitru Verlag, 1982), pp. 97–106.

50. Mihail Florescu died in Bucharest in February 2000.

51. FBIS, *Eastern Europe*, November 29, 1984, p. H/4.

52. Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 83. Trofin died in 1983, and there are reliable indications that he committed suicide. No official party

obituary was published, another indication of what I called “the short memory of the nomenklatura” in one of my Radio Free Europe broadcasts.

53. Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 168.

54. For further details, see Paul Goma, *Culoarea curcubeului '77: Cutremurul oamenilor* [The Color of the Rainbow '77: The Earthquake of the People] (Oradea: Multiprint, 1993).

55. See Vladimir Socor, “Prisoner of Conscience: Radu Filipescu,” Radio Free Europe, *Romanian SR/17*, November 17, 1984, pp. 21–23; Nicholas G. Andrews, “Romania under Communism: Waiting It Out,” *Christian Science Monitor*, March 11, 1985; David B. Funderburk, “Defiance in Romania? Look Again, Anderson,” *Washington Post*, September 7, 1985. The latter piece, by the former U.S. ambassador to Romania, examines abuses of human rights by the Ceaușescu regime. Western media extensively analyzed the austerity measures adopted by Ceaușescu, with scant mention of the fate of the population. For accurate analyses, see Robert Gillette, “Romania: A New Winter of Despair,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 28, 1985; and on human rights, see Juliana Geran Pilon, “Why Exclude Romania?” *New York Times*, November 2, 1985.

56. Walter D. Connor, “Dissent in Eastern Europe: A New Coalition?” *Problems of Communism*, January–February 1980, pp. 1–17; Vlad Georgescu, “Romanian Dissent: Its Ideas,” in *Dissent in Eastern Europe*, ed. J.L. Curry (New York: Praeger, 1985), pp. 182–94, which contains interesting references to Professor Mihai Botez’s ideas from his unpublished manuscript “Toward a Science of Communism.”

57. I owe invaluable information on the Brașov riots to Vasile Gogea and Leonard Oprea.

58. For a perceptive analysis of the patterns of workers’ protest in communist Romania, see Dragoș Petrescu, “A Threat From Below? Some Reflections on Workers’ Protest in Communist Romania,” *Xenopoliana* (Iași), nos. 1–2 (1999): 142–68.

59. See Mihai Gere, “Full Equality for All the Citizens of Romania,” *România Liberă* (Bucharest), January 25, 1986, in FBIS, *Eastern Europe*, January 28, 1986, p. H8. For an entirely different assessment of the situation of the Hungarian ethnic minority in Romania, see Gaspar Miklos Tamás, *Censorship, Ethnic Discrimination and the Culture of the Hungarians in Romania* (New York: International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 1985.)

60. Vasile Nichita, “Historical Significance of the Ninth RCP Congress,” *Era Socialistă* (Bucharest), May 25, 1985, pp. 22–27, in Joint Publications Research Service, *EPS*, August 6, 1985, p. 109.

61. “Latter-day Caesar” was the title of an Austrian TV documentary broadcast in Vienna in January 1986 that focused on Ceaușescu’s personality cult, exposing the ridiculous glorification of Ceaușescu and his wife, his pharaonic economic projects, and the destruction of the historic center in Bucharest as a result of the president’s decision to “eternalize” his rule through the construction of an enormous new government complex. The documentary also illustrated Romania’s economic, food, and energy crises and Ceaușescu’s barbaric austerity

measures. The Romanian Embassy in Vienna protested the broadcasting of a “tendentious, unfriendly” description. See FBIS, *Eastern Europe*, January 23, 1986, p. H1. On Ceaușescu’s architectural gigantomania, see Jackson Diehl, “Maybe One Day They’ll Call It Ceaușescu’s Versailles,” *Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, January 20, 1986, p. 17.

62. Dan Ionescu, “A Touch of Royalty,” Radio Free Europe, *Romanian SR/2*, January 22, 1985, p. 13.

63. Bernard-Henri Lévy has debunked the deep ideological affinities between the nationalist-authoritarian right (Charles Maurras and his present-day disciples) and the crypto-Stalinist, communist, or socialist left, including CERES (the Centre d’études, de recherches et d’éducation socialiste) and other segments of the French Socialist Party. See Bernard-Henri Lévy, *L’Idéologie française* [The French Ideology] (Paris: Grasset, 1981), and id., *Questions de principe* [Questions of Principle] (Paris: Denoël/Gonthier, 1983). Similarities between “the French ideology” in question and the Romanian socialist-nationalist doctrine are more than striking.

64. Quoted in *Nicolae Ceaușescu*, p. 175.

65. See Corneliu Vadim Tudor, “Suflet în sufletul neamului” [Soul in the Soul of His People], *Săptămîna* (Bucharest), July 26, 1985, p. 7.

66. FBIS, *Eastern Europe*, January 16, 1986, p. H2.

67. See Slobodan Stankovic, “Professor Accuses East European Leaders of Narcissism,” Radio Free Europe, *Yugoslav SR/II*, December 11, 1985, p. 23.

68. “It is a sad country that needs [such] heroes,” to paraphrase Bertold Brecht’s *Life of Galileo*.

69. “News Media Hail Ceaușescu on Birth Anniversary,” FBIS, *Eastern Europe*, January 29, 1986, p. H2.

70. Ibid., p. H1. As for Ceaușescu himself, he looked quite robust at his sixty-eighth birthday party. Instead of a celebratory toast, he urged his ministers and all Romanians “to work harder, produce more and export rather than consume” (*Economist*, March 8, 1986, p. 52.) For certain analysts, this tone suggested a widening gulf between the general secretary and the party. See Anneli Maier, “Ceaușescu at 68,” Radio Free Europe, *Romanian SR/3*, February 24, 1986, pp. 3–7.

71. See, in this respect, the entry on “Doctrina Ceaușescu” [The Ceaușescu Doctrine], in *Mică enciclopedie de politicologie* [Brief Encyclopedia of Political Science], ed. Ovidiu Trăsnea and Nicolae Kallos (Bucharest: Scientific and Encyclopedical Publishing House, 1977), pp. 136–45.

72. See Dorin Tudoran, *Frig sau Frică: Reflecții despre condiția intelectualului român* [Frost or Fear: Reflections on the Condition of the Romanian Intellectual] (Daphne, Ala.: Europa Media, 1988), original Romanian manuscript, p. 48. A prominent poet and journalist, Dorin Tudoran while in Romania openly denounced totalitarian control over culture and the opportunism of the official intellectual establishment. Harassed and besmirched, he eventually applied for emigration to the United States. Only his hunger strike and international pressure forced the Romanian authorities to allow Tudoran and his family

to leave that country in July 1985. An abridged version of the abovementioned essay was published in France in 1984. See Dorin Tudoran, “De la condition de l’intellectuel roumain,” *L’Alternative* (Paris), nos. 29 and 30, September–October and November–December 1984. I am indebted to Dorin Tudoran for information and insights into the quandary of the Romanian intelligentsia.

73. The controversial Soviet dissident historian Roy Medvedev offers a general critique of the Marxist-Leninist instrumentalization of the concept of socialist democracy in his book *On Socialist Democracy* (New York: Norton, 1977), but it seems to me that Medvedev tends to underestimate the intrinsic incompatibility between Soviet-type regimes and *any* form of genuine pluralism. As for the mechanisms of political mobilization and their effects on Ceaușescu’s neo-Stalinist regime, see Steven Sampson’s studies: “Muddling through in Romania” (paper presented at the Second International Congress of Romanian Studies, Avignon, France, 1983); “Is Romania the Next Poland?” *Critique* (Glasgow), no. 16 (1983): 139–66; some of the mechanisms of collective “decompression” were analyzed by Sampson in his study “Rumors in Socialist Romania,” *Survey* (London) 28, 4 (Winter 1984): 142–64.

74. See Anneli Maier (with the Romanian Unit), “The Ceaușescu Era—An Era of Restrictions,” Radio Free Europe, *Romanian SR*, June 26, 1985; and see also Paul Lewis, “Economy Tight, Romanians Face a Long Winter,” *New York Times*, December 15, 1985, an accurate description of the militarization of the economy, persecution of religious sects, Pol Pot–like resettling of pensioners from the city in the countryside, and other exploits of the “most beloved son of the Romanian people.”

75. Mass terror aside, Ceaușescu’s regime tended to perpetuate features typifying “mature Stalinism,” including the system of personal dictatorship and “a heterogeneous value system which favored economic, status, and power stratification, fostered extraordinary cultural uniformity, and was tied to extreme nationalism.” See Seweryn Bialer, *Stalin’s Successors: Leadership, Stability and Change in the Soviet Union* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 10.

76. See Michael Shafir, “Political Culture, Intellectual Dissent, and Intellectual Consent: The Case of Romania,” *Orbis*, Summer 1983, particularly his interpretation of Ceaușescu’s neo-Stalinist July 1971 “theses” (pp. 418–20). Shafir indicates only one group of writers (the “oneiric” core of intellectual dissent and resistance) as consistent and articulate opponents of Ceaușescu’s anticultural dogmatism. I think he tends to overlook the far-reaching effects of the attitudes in 1971–72 of writers such as Eugen Jebeleanu, Geo Bogza, Alexandru Paleologu, Ion Caraion, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, Nicolae Manolescu, Mircea Zăciu, and Dan Hăulică. In the conflict between “national Stalinists” and “liberal evolutionists,” the former tried to capitalize on Ceaușescu’s opportunist nationalism, whereas the latter, whether explicitly or implicitly, emphasized the autonomy of aesthetics from the party’s suffocating interference. “Protochronism” was the party-sponsored ideology that claimed Romanian precedence in major scientific and cultural discoveries. It was actually the underpinning of Ceaușescu’s nationalist tyranny. The symbolic theme of “protochronism” and the de-

bate surrounding it, including implicit pro-Western, anti-nationalist stances, is luminously explored in Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*.

77. For a perceptive diagnosis of Stalinism, see *Stalinism. Its Impact on Russia and the World*, ed. G. R. Urban (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), particularly Urban's interviews with Leszek Kolakowski, Milovan Djilas, Adam B. Ulam, and Robert C. Tucker, as well as Leonard Shapiro's "Epilogue: Some Reflections on Lenin, Stalin and Russia."

78. See *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, ed. Tom Bottomore (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 464.

79. More detailed approaches to these issues can be found in Jeremy T. Paltiel, "The Cult of Personality: Some Comparative Reflections on Political Culture in Leninist Regimes," *Studies in Comparative Communism* 16 (Spring/Summer 1983): 49–64; Graeme Gill, "Personality Cult, Political Culture and Party Structure," *ibid.*, Spring/Summer 1984, pp. III–21.

80. Anneli Maier, "Elena Ceaușescu Marches On and Up," Radio Free Europe, *Romanian SR/17*, December 17, 1985, pp. 21–25.

81. The poet Virgil Teodorescu in *Luceafărul* 1 (January 4, 1986): 1.

82. Ion Gheorghe, *ibid.*

83. See Anneli Maier, "Elena Ceaușescu's Birthday," Radio Free Europe, *Romanian SR/1*, January 10, 1986, p. 40. With respect to Elena Ceaușescu's status in the party hierarchy and the political-social position she stood for, see Mary Ellen Fischer, "Women in Romanian Politics: Elena Ceaușescu, Pronatalism, and the Promotion of Women," in *Women, State, and Party in Eastern Europe*, ed. Sharon L. Wolchik and Alfred G. Meyer (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1985), pp. 121–37. Elena Ceaușescu's name has been closely associated with the merciless pro-birth policy of the regime. In 1984, a decree was promulgated to force women to take monthly gynecological tests in order to improve the birthrate. For a thorough analysis, see Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

84. Gerovital is a supposedly rejuvenating drug, highly praised in Romania.

85. This poem was published together with other controversial verses by Ana Blandiana in the Bucharest cultural magazine *Amfiteatru* (edited by the Union of Communist Students' Association). Stelian Moțiu, the editor of *Amfiteatru* was demoted to a minor journalistic position. For the whole text of Blandiana's poems, see Crisula Ștefănescu, "Poetry and Truth, Romanian Style," Radio Free Europe, *Romanian SR/3*, February 8, 1985, pp. 13–14.

86. See *Scînteia tineretului*, February 19, 1985; *Scînteia*, June 25, 1983; Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 77.

87. It is precisely this last issue that may have led Gorbachev to rethink the Soviet attitude toward Romania. Moscow was too aware of the fragility of the body politic and theoretical created by Ceaușescu to regard it as a real obstacle to Soviet "desires for the homogeneity of the bloc," as some analysts tended to assume (see Vladimir V. Kusin, "Gorbachev and Eastern Europe," *Problems of Communism*, January–February 1986, pp. 50–51). For an insightful firsthand ac-

count of Gorbachev's relations with Ceaușescu and other East European leaders, see Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*.

88. See Michel Voslensky, *Nomenklatura: The Soviet Ruling Class* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), pp. 243-319.

89. After 1968, Ceaușescu enunciated the doctrine of his being the guardian of the Romanian historic tradition dating back to the time of the "anti-imperialist" Dacian chieftain Burebista and predicted "the attainment of communism within the historic borders of Romania and protection of the people's security against hostile actions by imperialists and revisionists." See Stephen Fischer-Galati, "Marxist Thought and the Rise of Nationalism," in *Security Implications of Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Jeffrey Simon and Trond Gilberg (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986), p. 76.

90. See Ion Mihai Pacepa, "Ceaușescu: America's Most Favored Tyrant," *Wall Street Journal*, January 13, 1986. The credibility of Pacepa's claims regarding close cooperation between the Romanian and Soviet intelligence services is supported by additional information in Thierry Wolton, *Le KGB en France* [The KGB in France] (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1986), pp. 97-110, 229-39. Private correspondence between the author and General Pacepa further clarified the real relations between Ceaușescu and the Kremlin during the Brezhnev years.

91. "Speech by RCP General Secretary Nicolae Ceaușescu to RCP Central Committee Plenum Held in Bucharest, November 13-14, 1985," FBIS, *Eastern Europe*, November 26, 1985, p. H11.

92. Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" (1852), in Marx, *Surveys from Exile*, vol. 2 of *Political Writings*, ed. David Fernbach (London: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 198, also quoted in Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 82.

93. For the makeup of the RCP elite and the impact of the Ceaușescu clan, see René Al. de Flers and Vladimir Socor, "The RCP's New Central Committee: Changes and Political Trends," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, RAD Background Report*, no. 6 (January 11, 1986); René de Flers, "Socialism in One Family," *Survey* (London) 28, 4 (Winter 1984): 165-74. Deputy Prime Minister Gheorghe Petrescu was not the same person as Elena-Petrescu Ceaușescu's brother, himself a party veteran and a member of the RCP's central committee. Neither were Ion Ioniță (former minister of defense) and Miu Dobrescu (a member of the party's executive committee) relatives of Ceaușescu's.

94. René de Flers, "Are There Problems in the Secret Service?" *Radio Free Europe, Romanian SR/4*, February 22, 1985, pp. 25-27.

95. See Voslensky, *Nomenklatura*, pp. 256-60.

96. In his essay (see n. 34), Dorin Tudoran deals extensively with these issues, offering a poignant appraisal of the moral torments of Romanian intellectuals.

97. For the 1956 intellectual turmoil, see Paul E. Zinner, *National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe* (A Selection of Documents on Events in Poland and Hungary, February-November 1956) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956).

98. See “Speech by Nicolae Ceaușescu at the Working Meeting on Organizational and Political-Educational Activities” (held in Mangalia, August 4, 1983), FBIS, *Eastern Europe*, August 9, 1983, p. H11.

99. For an insightful approach Ceaușescuism, see Trond Gilberg, *Nationalism and Communism in Romania: The Rise and Fall of Ceaușescu’s Personal Dictatorship* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 49–57.

100. See Jan B. de Weydenthal, *The Communists of Poland: An Historical Outline* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), p. 134, and Tadeusz Szafar, “Anti-Semitism: A Trusty Weapon,” in *Poland: Genesis of a Revolution*, ed. Abraham Brumberg (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), pp. 109–22. As for Romania, see Ion Lăncrăjan, *Cuvînt despre Transilvania* [A Word on Transylvania] (Bucharest: Sport-Turism Publishing House, 1982); Corneliu Vadim Tudor, *Saturnalii* [Saturnalia] (Bucharest: Albatros Publishing House, 1983); for a general assessment of this trend, see Michael Shafir, “The Men of the Archangel Revisited: Anti-Semitic Formations among Communist Romania’s Intellectuals,” *Studies in Comparative Communism*, nos. 2–3 (1983): 225–43. Ion Caraion and Dorin Tudoran, who had both been active in the fight with the exponents of this eclectic mixture of Marxism-Leninism and National Socialism, have confirmed the close connection between this vocal minority and the “national demiurge.”

101. After the 1989 revolution, Central Committee Secretary Bobu was tried and received a life sentence for his “participation in the genocide of the Romanian nation.”

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

103. See Vladimir Tismaneanu, “Tremors in Romania,” *New York Times*, December 30, 1987, and Mark Almond, *Decline without Fall: Romania under Ceaușescu* (London: Institute for European Defense and Strategic Studies, 1988).

104. See Ernest Gellner, “Conclusions,” in *Perestroika: The Historical Perspective*, ed. Catherine Merridale and Chris Ward (London: Edward Arnold, 1991), p. 231. On Gorbachev’s role in the collapse of communist power, see also Leslie Holmes, *Post-Communism: An Introduction* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1997), pp. 24–26; Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1998).

105. See Michael Shafir, “Eastern Europe’s ‘Rejectionists,’” Radio Free Europe Research, *RAD Background Report*, no. 121 (July 3, 1989): 1–6.

106. *Scînteia*, January 27, 1987.

107. For Bîrlădeanu’s comments on the “Letter of the Six,” see Betea, *Bîrlădeanu despre Dej, Ceaușescu și Iliescu*, pp. 210–27.

108. See Vladimir Tismaneanu, “The Rebellion of the Old Guard” and the full text of the “Letter of the Six” in *East European Reporter* 3, 4 (Spring/Summer

1989): 23–25. Special thanks to Mircea Răceanu for invaluable information on the history of the “Letter of the Six.”

109. For more on this, see Cristina Petrescu, “Is There Something More to Say About Dissidence in Ceaușescu’s Romania,” afterword to Dan Petrescu and Liviu Cangeopol, *Ce-ar mai fi de spus: Convorbiri libere într-o țară ocupată* [What Remains to Be Said: Free Conversations in an Occupied Country] (1990), new, rev. ed. (Bucharest: Nemira, 2000), pp. 311–39.

110. Personal interviews with participants in the revolutionary uprising conducted by me on visits to Romania in February–March and June 1990.

111. For an insider’s view of the proceedings of RCP’s Fourteenth Congress, see Silviu Curticeanu, *Mărturia unei istorii trăite. Imagini suprapuse* [The Testimony of a Lived History: Superposed Images] (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 2000), pp. 381–98.

112. See Nicolae Ceaușescu’s report presented at the Fourteenth RCP Congress, *Scnteia*, November 21, 1989 (English translation in FBIS, *Eastern Europe*, November 22, 1989, pp. 59–84). For the antireformist direction of the congress, see Alan Riding, “Romanian Leader Refuses Change,” *New York Times*, November 21, 1989, and “In Romania, Fear Still Outweighs Hope,” *ibid.*, November 24, 1989.

113. That Ceaușescu was personally an admirer of Stalin’s model of socialism appeared clearly in his off-the-record statements to Ken Auchincloss of *Newsweek* in 1988. See Gail Kligman, “When Abortion Is Banned: The Politics of Reproduction in Ceaușescu’s Romania” (report for the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, 1992), p. 51.

114. Ceaușescu’s conspiratorial delusions about a supposed Malta pact between the two superpowers to get rid of him have become a leitmotif of the nationalist revision of Romania’s recent history. According to magazines like *România Mare* and *Europa*, the Timișoara uprising was the outcome of a well-prepared plan to destabilize Romania. Similar viewpoints appear in memoirs of former party leaders and high Securitate officers (e.g., Paul Niculescu-Mizil and the former secret police general Nicolae Pleșiță).

115. Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolutions of ’89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 20. However, ten years afterward, Ash would write: “Curiously enough the moment when people in the West finally thought there was a revolution was when they saw television pictures of Romania: crowds, tanks, shooting, blood in the streets. They said: ‘That—we know *that* is a revolution,’ and of course the joke is that it was the only one that wasn’t” (Ash, “Conclusions,” in *Between Past and Future*, ed. Antohi and Tismaneanu, p. 395).

116. See Florin Constantiniu, *O istorie sinceră a poporului român* [A Sincere History of the Romanian People] (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 1997), 538–43.

117. See Matei Calinescu and Vladimir Tismaneanu, “The 1989 Revolution and Romania’s Future,” *Problems of Communism* 40, 1–2 (January–April 1991): 42–59. Theories abound about the various conspiracies that, in a way or another, prompted the end of Ceaușescu’s dictatorship. So far, however, the only certain

elements are that the Securitate and the army switched sides and abandoned Ceaușescu during the early hours of December 22, 1989. For a lucid overview of the Romanian discussions on the “occult forces” behind the revolutionary uprising, see Richard Andrew Hall, “The Uses of Absurdity: The Staged War Theory and the Romanian Revolution of 1989,” *East European Politics and Societies* 13, 3 (Fall 1999): 501–42.

118. On various occasions, Iliescu expressed regrets about the Ceaușescus’s execution but said that it had been indispensable in order to avoid civil war. In a personal interview with me in June 1994, Virgil Măgureanu, Iliescu’s close associate and post-1990 director of the Romanian Service of Information, said Silviu Brucan had taken the decision to execute the Ceaușescus. There is no hard evidence to substantiate this allegation. Whatever one may think about Brucan, his role in the first post-Ceaușescu ruling team was that of an ideologue with little influence on practical decisions.

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

Epilogue. The RCP’s Afterlife

1. See, e.g., the first (and only) two issues of *Scînteia poporului* [The People’s Spark], the successor newspaper to the defunct RCP’s *Scînteia* [The Spark] on December 23 and 24, 1989. Symptomatically, an appeal published on the left side of the front page on December 24 is addressed to “workers, citizens, members of the Communist Party.” On the right side, the paper published the first information report of the National Salvation Front Council, presented on television the previous day by Ion Iliescu. Starting December 25, *Scînteia poporului* changed its name to *Adevărul* [The Truth]. During the interwar period, *Adevărul* was an influential left-wing, democratic daily.

2. See, e.g., Petre Roman’s frequent statements regarding the role of the Romanian Service of Information (SRI) in the downfall of his government. Tape of the last meeting of the Roman government, September 1991, broadcast by the independent TV station SOTI.

3. Excellent profiles of the Romanian political parties have appeared on a regular base in *Sfera politicii*, a monthly published in Bucharest, and the weekly *Revista 22*, published by the Group for Social Dialogue, has carried interviews with major political actors, as well as analyses of the various strategies and platforms.

4. Ken Jowitt, “No More Normans in Europe” (MS), quoted with the author’s permission.

5. On Noica and his disciples, see Matei Calinescu’s interventions in *Romania: A Case of Dynastic Communism* (New York: Freedom House, 1989); Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*, and Alina Mungiu Pippidi, “Romania’s Intellectuals,” *East European Politics and Societies* 10, 2 (Spring 1996): 333–64.

6. My interviews with members of the Group.

7. *Revista 22* is still an important tribune for Romania's independent thinking.

8. As a matter of fact, a whole "revisionist" literature has emerged that depicts the Securitate as a professional and truly patriotic organization. See William Tokot, "Sindromul maltez: Falsificări istorice naționaliste în scrierile unor foști securiști" [The Maltese Syndrome: Historical Nationalist Falsifications in Former Securitate Members' Writings], German translation in *Halbjahreschrift für sudosteuropäische Geschichte, Literatur und Politik*, Fall 1995. One of the most egregious illustrations of this trend is Pavel Coruț, *Fiul Geto-Daciei* (Bucharest: Editura Gemenii, 1995).

9. See "Proclamația de la Timișoara," *România Liberă*, March 20, 1990 (English translation, FBIS, *Eastern Europe*, April 4, 1990, 60–63). For the survival of Timișoara's civic culture under communism, see Victor Neumann, *Ideologie și fantasmagorie* [Ideology and Phantasmagoria] (Iași: Polirom, 2001), pp. 149–75.

10. See Olivier Wéber, "La Revolution confisquée," *Le Point* (Paris), April 30, 1990, pp. 46–47.

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

12. See Alexandre Paléologue, M. Sémo, and C. Tréan, *Souvenirs merveilleux d'un ambassadeur des golans* (Paris: Balland, 1990), esp. pp. 219–28, and Edward Behr, *Kiss the Hand You Cannot Bite: The Rise and Fall of the Ceaușescus* (New York: Willard Books, 1991).

13. See Jean-François Revel, "Roumanie: Flagrant délit," *Le Point* (Paris), March 12, 1990, p. 87.

14. For Iliescu's biography and his role in the repression of students in the 1950s, see *Revista 22*, October 9–15, 1992, p. 16.

15. See David Binder, "An Aristocrat among the Revolutionaries," *New York Times*, December 27, 1989.

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

17. *România Liberă* would later withdraw its charges against Mazilu.

18. For the destruction of the Romanian democratic parties during the years of unbound Stalinism, see Gheorghe Boldur-Lățescu, *Genocidul comunist în România* [The Communist Genocide in Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1992).

19. For a thoughtful analysis of Romania's postcommunist political tremors, see Katherine Verdery and Gail Kligman, "Romania after Ceaușescu: Post-Communist Communism?" in *Eastern Europe in Revolution*, ed. Ivo Banac (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 117–47. For the climate of anguish and deception under the Iliescu regime, see William McPherson, "Intrigue, Illusion and Iliescu: Reaching for Reality in Romania," *Washington Post*, September 13, 1992. For a general assessment of political developments in Romania, especially during 1994–95, see my article "Democracy, Romanian-style," *Dissent*, Summer 1995, pp. 318–20.

20. The PDSR platform for the 1996 elections insisted on the need to avoid both "capitalism" and "totalitarianism." Personal interview with Dan Marțian, vice chairman of the PDSR, Washington, D.C., December 1995. The anticapitalist stances vanished from the party's official documents during the elections in November–December 2000.

21. In the September 1992 elections, the PDSR, then still called the Democratic National Salvation Front, got 27.72 percent of the votes for the Chamber of Deputies and 28.29 percent for the Senate. In the second run for of the presidential elections in October 1992, the incumbent Ion Iliescu received 47.43 percent of the votes, while the candidate of the Democratic Convention, Emil Constantinescu, received 31.24 percent. For excellent data regarding Romania's postcommunist politics, see Domnița Ștefănescu, *Cinci ani din istoria României: O cronologie a evenimentelor. Decembrie 1989–Decembrie 1994* [Five Years of Romania's History: A Chronology of Events, December 1989–December 1994] (Bucharest: Editura Mașina de Scris, 1995).

22. For Iliescu's political views, see his book *Revoluție și reformă* [Revolution and Reform] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1994).

23. See Thomas Carothers, *Understanding Democracy Assistance: The Case of Romania* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1996).

24. See Vladimir Pasti, *România în tranziție: Căderea în viitor* [Romania in Transition: The Fall into the Future] (Bucharest: Editura Nemira, 1995).

25. In 1995–96, all polls indicated support for King Michael's return by 12–15 percent of the population. Iliescu's popularity, although declining, remained quite high. As for Emil Constantinescu, his main challenger and the de facto leader of the opposition Democratic Convention, he made a statement that indicated the limits of the anti-Iliescu forces political imagination: "If Iliescu were not to run in the next [1996] elections, I would win." In fact, Iliescu ran, and Constantinescu won. The situation was quite different in 2000, when, realizing that he had little chance to obtain even a plurality of votes in the presidential elections, Constantinescu decided not to run again, and Iliescu managed to win. The relations between the former king and Ion Iliescu became warmer in 2000: the former sovereign visited Bucharest in the spring, recovered some of his family's properties, and participated in several official events.

26. My interviews with Corneliu Coposu in Bucharest in June 1994 and in Washington, D.C., in February 1995. In the September 1992 elections, the Con-

vention received 20.01 percent for the Chamber, and 20.16 percent for the Senate. The Convention president and presidential candidate in both the 1992 and 1996 elections, Emil Constantinescu, announced in 1995 that he had joined the PNT-CD.

27. See Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe* (New York: Random House, 1991).

28. See *Nations in Transit: Civil Society, Democracy and Markets in East Central Europe and the New Independent States* (New York: Freedom House, 1995), p. 112.

29. By the end of 1995, the split between Iliescu and Vadim Tudor became public and led to the elimination of the România Mare Party representatives from the government. Tudor reacted angrily and accused Iliescu of having given in to pressures from Zionist and other anti-Romanian circles in the West. See “PRM Newspaper Accuses, Threatens Iliescu,” Foreign Broadcast Information Service, EEU, pp. 63–65. This was more than just a family quarrel, and other rearrangements of forces may occur that will distance the PDSR from its erstwhile political allies, including Gheorghe Funar’s PUNR. In the 2000 election campaign, Iliescu made clear that he would not accept any coalition with Tudor’s extremist party, a pledge he respected. For an analysis of the results of the 2000 elections, see Vladimir Tismaneanu and Gail Kligman, “Romania’s First Post-communist Decade: From Iliescu to Iliescu,” *East European Constitutional Review* 10, 1 (Winter 2001): 78–85.

30. The business elite in Romania is deeply divided: on the one hand, there are those linked to the Democratic and National Liberal parties and their pro-Western strategy of opening the country to foreign investment; on the other, there are the exponents of new corporations and companies linked with the secret police and enjoying government support for shabby financial operations. The Romanian political analyst Andrei Cornea’s has proposed the term “directocracy” to describe the ruling social group in Iliescu’s Romania. See Andrei Cornea, *Mașina de fabricat fantasme* [The Machine to Fabricate Phantasms] (Bucharest: Editura Clavis, 1995). An interesting phenomenon is the rise of this alliance between one portion of the business and financial elite, the ruling party and its acolytes, and the government bureaucracy. The success of Iliescu’s party in attracting support from the unions is an indication of a corporatist trend in contemporary Romanian politics.

31. A massive exercise in this direction, *Cartea Albă a Securității* [The White Book of the Securitate], five huge volumes, was published in 1995 by the SRI.

32. I owe this distinction to Dorel Șandor (personal interview, Washington D.C., October 14, 1995), who served as secretary of state in the Stolojan government (1991–92) and now runs the Center for Political Studies and Comparative Analysis in Bucharest—an independent think tank.

33. A concept proposed by M. Steven Fish regarding Yeltsin’s Russia. See his book *Democracy from Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

34. For instance, the extremely popular satirical weekly *Academia Cațavencu* published its 1996 yearbook under the title *Cartea neagră a insecurității* [The

Black Book of Insecurity] a play on the title of the five volumes released by Măgureanu's service.

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

36. Until Iliescu's defeat in 1996, PSM representatives held important positions in the Ministry of Labor. Păunescu's political biography is deserves a separate study: he started as an iconoclastic poet and journalist in the late 1960s but moved toward increasingly nationalist stances in the 1970s. He organized huge youth gatherings at which folk music accompanied paeans to Ceaușescu's "genius"—the so-called "Cenaclul Flacăra al tineretului revoluționar." Păunescu was reelected senator on the PDSR list in 2000. He is currently running his own TV show and edits at least two magazines.

37. See *Nations in Transit*, p. 109.

38. During the early 1990s, Iliescu himself often engaged in polemics and denounced "a certain part of the media," especially the dailies *România Liberă* and *Ziua*. His language in criticizing opponents indicated a monolithic mentality: critics were perceived as inherently malicious, as were journalists who published critical stories about officials, even if true.

39. See the interview with Tudor Mohora, the PSM's secretary in charge of propaganda, *Flacăra*, no. 91, September 1–7, 1992. In the early 1980s, Mohora served as president of the Union of Communist Students' Associations.

40. This is the case with one of Romania's boldest monthlies, *Cuvîntul*, which serialized a secret party report prepared in 1967–68 for the rehabilitation of the former politburo member and justice minister Lucrețiu Patrașcanu, executed after a pseudo-trial in April 1954. The lay reader is simply lost in the abundance of names and data, and the editors have not provided the needed background information to assess their meaning. The same can be said of the independent daily *România liberă*'s series of articles on *procesul comunismului* (the trial of communism), where testimonies of victims were published without any attempt to document the institutional and sociological foundations of political repression.

41. An outstanding exploration of the cultural reverberations of Ceaușescuism is Verdery's *National Ideology under Socialism*.

42. See chapter 7 n. 103.

43. Eugen Barbu died in 1992.

44. The most active publications of the "green Left" (or "red Right" as this trend is often called) are the weeklies *România Mare* (run by Corneliu Vadim Tudor), *Europa*, and *Totuși iubirea* (directed by Adrian Paunescu). For an examination of the extreme nationalist ideology of these publications, see Vladimir Tismaneanu and Mircea Mihaies, "Infamy Restored," *East European Reporter* 5, 1 (January–February 1992): 25–27.

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

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

47. See Edmund Mokrzycki, "The Vicious Circle of Utopias in Eastern Europe" (paper presented at the conference "Utopian Revisions: Nationalism and Civil Society in Eastern Europe," Institute for the Humanities, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, October 29-30, 1992).

48. See *Dreapta națională* [The National Right], October 9-15, 1995, p. 1.

49. See *Eastern Europe Newsletter* (London), December 15, 1995, pp. 2-6; see also the interview with Prime Minister Adrian Năstase, *Revista 22*, April 1-7, 2003, pp. 8-10.

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

51. The mayor of Cluj, Gheorghe Funar, is one example, but there are other demagogues, including nationalist generals.

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Index

- Academy of Social and Political Sciences, 209
- Action Program (CPC), 201
- Adam, Iacob Feuerstein, 74
- Adevărul*, 254
- Adler, Demö. *See* Ardeleanu, Ion
- Agitprop cadres, 76
- Agitprop Department: Chişinevschi and, 76–77, 79, 110, 120, 150, 159; Constantinescu and, 76; Crăciun and, 76–77; Foriş and, 76; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 139; Goldberger and, 282n62; Preoteasa and, 76; Răutu and, 76–77, 79, 110, 120, 145, 148–52, 175–76; Roller and, 184; Roman, Valter, and, 76–77; Toma and, 76–77, 79, 175
- Agiu, Constantin, 90
- agrarian reform, 108–9, 291n4
- agriculture, 108, 170, 178–79, 249
- Aidit, Dipa Nusantara, 197
- Aiud prison, 36, 79, 130
- Aladar, Berger, 67
- Aladar, Imre, 57, 61, 71, 74, 125
- Alba Iulia assembly, 45
- Albanian Communist Party, 143, 279n37
- Albanian Workers' Party, 169–73
- Alia, Ramiz, 197
- Alliance of Free Democrats (Hungary), 239
- Allied powers, 86
- Althusser, Louis, 31
- Amin Dada, Idi, 30
- Amnesty International, 212
- Anastasiu, Călin, 238
- Andreescu, Gabriel, 211
- Andrei, Ştefan, 21, 30, 166, 255, 273n7, 311n10
- “Andrei Zhdanov School for the Social Sciences,” 110
- Andropov, Yury V., 227
- Angelescu, Mircea, 166
- anti-abortion measures, 191, 320n83
- anticapitalism, 37, 41, 60, 110, 251–53, 277n11
- anti-Ceauşescuism, 248
- anticommunism, 41, 246, 250, 277n11, 325n16
- antifascism, Stalinist, 72–84, 124
- antifascist coup (August 1944), 26, 85–86, 88, 113, 126; anniversary of, 183, 308n31
- anti-intellectualism: of Ceauşescu, 166, 249; of communism, 155; of Gheorghiu-Dej, 157; of Iliescu, 251; of RCP, 64, 112, 198; of RWP, 177
- antiliberalism, 253
- anti-Nazi resistance, 87, 113
- antiparty elements, 127, 129, 147, 163–66, 174, 305n54
- antisemitism, 41, 77, 127, 131, 133–34, 137, 166, 213, 277n11
- anti-Sovietism, 98, 131, 202, 282n62
- anti-Soviet Stalinists, 24–27
- anti-Tito campaigns. *See* Tito, Josip Broz
- antitotalitarianism, 137, 154, 157

- anti-Westernism, 251–53
 anti-Yugoslav campaign, 128
 Antonescu, Ion, 83–86, 92, 99, 235, 247, 294n31
 Apostol, Gheorghe, 255–56; Ceaușescu and, 120, 176, 227–28, 313n24; Chișinevschi and, 102; as communist trade union leader, 86, 160; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 140–41, 147, 301n10; Gheorghiu-Rădoi, Lica, and, 309n37; historical legacy of, 20; Hungarian revolution and, 153; as Organizational Bureau member, 131; Pătrășcanu's murder and, 119–20; Pauker-Luca-Georgescu purge and, 87, 129, 287n2, 297n56, 299n74; prison nucleus and, 79, 83, 123, 126; purge of, 203–4; RCP Ninth Congress and, 193, 195; RWP politburo and, 131, 141, 145, 285n85; RWP Second Congress and, 300n8; succession struggle and, 185–86, 310n41
 April 1964 declaration, 11, 181–82, 190, 195, 197, 202
 Aragon, Louis, 61
 Arato, Andrew, 2
 Arbore, Ecaterina, 42, 52, 54, 61, 64, 74, 256, 283n70
 Arbore, Zamfir, 42, 283n70
 Ardeleanu, Ion, 39, 47–48, 65, 82, 277n17, 282n60
 Ardeleanu, Iosif (Demö Adler), 79, 156
 Argezi, Tudor, 110, 151, 183, 291n8, 300n7, 301n10, 304n44, 310n40
 artistic freedom, 109–10, 147
 Ash, Timothy Garton, 198, 230, 323n115
 Asiatic despotism, 64, 280n45
 Astrakhan, 61
 Attila, Jozsef, 81
 austerity policies, 189
 Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy, 56
 autonomy, 26, 168, 179–80, 181, 182, 193, 201
 Averbuch, Sheiva. *See* Nikolski, Vanda
 Averescu government, 51
 Axis powers, 86
 Babenko, Simion, 123
 Bacovia, George, 151, 183
 Bădulescu, Alexandru. *See* Moscovici, Gelber
 Bădulescu, Ana, 54
 Bakonsky, A. E., 150
 Bălănescu, Mircea (Eugen Bendel), 76
 “balcony scene,” 202–3
 Balkan Communist Federation, 51–52
 “Balkan Soviet Federation,” 68
 Banat, 69
 Banc, Iosif, 196, 209
 Bancic, Olga, 150
 Barbu, Eugen, 183, 225, 249, 328n43
 Bărbulescu, Vasile, 223
 Bârlea, Ștefan, 166
 Beniuc, Mihai, 110, 151–53, 183, 303n33, 308n34
 “Bent Twig” (Berlin), 53
 Bercu, Leon, 185, 309n37
 Berghianu, Maxim, 26, 196
 Beria, Lavrenti, 8, 118, 122, 136–37, 294n35, 299n2
 Berlin, Isaiah, 53, 316n45
 Berlinguer, Enrico, 32, 216
 Berlin revolt, 137
 Berlin Wall, 28
 Berman, Jacob, 77, 111, 117, 134, 294n32
 Bernath, Andrei, 79
 Bessarabian question, 24, 37–38, 43, 44, 59, 69, 80, 124–25, 190, 311n6
 Bessler, Paula, 74
 Bierut, Boleslaw, 122, 123
 Bișu, Vasile, 165
 Birlădeanu, Alexandru, 126; Ceaușescu, Elena, and, 206; CMEA and, 180; “Letter of the Six” and, 227–28, 309n39; Maurer and, 309n39; “patriotic faction” myth and, 275n28; RCP Ninth Congress and, 193; succession struggle and, 185; Western relationships and, 182, 308n29
 Blaga, Lucian, 163, 183, 300n7, 304n44
 Blajovici, Petre, 196
 Blandiana, Ana, 219, 320n85
 Bloch, Ernst, 61
 Bloch-Constantinescu, Sulamita, 162
 Bloc of Democratic Parties, 287–88nn9,10
 “Blum Theses” (Lukács), 64
 BMT. *See* Workers’ and Peasants’ Bloc
 Bobu, Emil, 30, 205, 209, 226, 249, 322n101
 Bodnăraș, Emil, 256–57; archives of, 10, 289n19; Ceaușescu and, 120, 176, 185–86, 193, 204, 288n16; Foriș-Koffler purge and, 83, 97–98, 99, 100, 113; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 98, 100, 147, 288n16; Hungarian revolution and,

- 153–54, 156; Khrushchev and, 289n19; Pătrășcanu's murder and, 120; Pauker, Ana, and, 162; Pauker-Luca-Georgescu purge and, 174; RWP politburo and, 131, 141, 145; Sănătescu/Rădescu/Groza governments and, 91; SSI and, 92; succession struggle and, 310n41; underground leadership and, 86, 97–98
- Bodnarenko, Pantelci, 20, 83, 99, 100, 123, 205, 289n22
- Bogdan, Corneliu, 92, 296n44
- Bogza, Geo, 150, 319n76
- Bokassa, Jean Bedel, 30
- Bolshevik Revolution, 41–50, 277n17
- Bolshevism, 41, 69, 107–10, 202, 218
- Bonaparte, Louis, 222
- Borilă, Petre, 257; Ceaușescu's purge of, 196, 203; Chișinevschi purge and, 160; Comintern's Leninist school and, 123; CPSU Twentieth Congress and, 143, 301n17; as émigré communist, 102, 125; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 147, 175, 301n17; historical legacy of, 20; Hungarian revolution and, 156; International Brigades and, 285n82; Pauker-Luca-Georgescu purge and, 87, 132, 174–75, 299n74; RWP politburo and, 131, 141–42, 145; as Soviet agent, 135; Spanish Civil War and, 102, 142, 175, 203
- Borkenau, Franz, 49, 95, 111
- Boștină, Constantin, 210
- Botez, Demostene, 183
- Bottomore, Tom, 218
- “bourgeois decadentism,” 109–10
- “Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” (Lenin), 52
- Brahaș, Cornel, 252
- Brainer, Bela, 72, 79, 83, 283n65
- Brâncu, Zina (Haia Grinberg), 79, 80
- Brandler, Heinrich, 65, 122
- Brașov prison, 58, 79
- Brașov riots, 212, 317n57
- Brătescu, Gheorghe, 92
- Brătianu, Dinu, 91
- Brauner, Harry, 117, 293n23, 294n32
- Brecht, Bertolt, 61, 76
- Brezhnev, Leonid, 3, 188, 195, 197, 200, 227, 275n27
- Brezhnev Doctrine, 202
- Brîncu, Zina, 101, 112, 126
- Brown, J. F., 178, 188
- Brucan, Silviu, 23, 29, 175, 227–28, 241, 243, 273n2, 274n17, 324n118
- Brzezinski, Zbigniew, 183
- Bucharest Polytechnical University, 243
- Bucharest University, 161, 210, 300n3
- Budapest School, 209
- Bughici, Simion, 131, 133, 165
- Bugnariu, Tudor, 76, 163
- Buican, Alexandru (Arnoldi), 48, 61, 65, 67, 76, 159, 285n82
- Bukharin, Nikolai, 45, 50, 61, 75, 278n31
- Bukharinists, 148
- Bukovina question, 24, 69, 80
- Bulan, Iakov, 205
- Bulan, Tatiana, 205
- Burcă, Mihai, 165, 203, 285n82
- Burks, R. V., 66
- Burtică, Cornel, 166, 209
- Byzantine schemes, 126, 127, 198
- Byzantinism, 208, 213, 218, 220
- Cadre Department, 128
- Călinescu, George, 123, 183
- Călinescu, Matei, 2
- Callimachi, Scarlat, 76
- Calmanovici, Emil, 117, 294n32
- Cămpeanu, Pavel, 288n18, 310n41
- Cămpeanu, Radu, 243
- canal project, 36, 139, 147, 300n4
- Cangeopol, Liviu, 211
- capitalism. *See* anticapitalism
- Caraiou, Ion, 316n49, 319n76, 322n100
- Carandino, Nicolae, 93
- Caransebeș prison, 83, 100, 101, 126, 159
- Cârnecki, Magda, 238
- Carol, King of Romania, 59, 80
- Carothers, Thomas, 244–45
- Carrillo, Santiago, 32, 216, 271n1
- “Casa Scînteii” printing office, 160
- Castroism, 34
- CCP (Chinese Communist Party). *See also* Sino-Soviet schism: RCP Ninth Congress and, 195; RWP Second Congress and, 141
- CDR (Democratic Convention of Romania), 235, 237, 244
- Ceaușescu, Elena, 258; chemical research institutes and, 205–6, 209; cult of personality and, 208, 214, 219; Drăghici and, 205, 312n16; execution of, 6, 20, 231, 242; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 205; Gheorghiu-Rădoi, Lica, and, 309n37;

Ceaușescu, Elena (*continued*)

loyalty to, 192; personnel appointments and, 204–6, 209, 226, 249; pro-birth policy and, 320n83; Stănculescu, Atanasie, and, 28; succession and, 273n7, 311n10

Ceaușescu, Florea, 223

Ceaușescu, Ilie, 29, 223

Ceaușescu, Ion, 223

Ceaușescu, Nicolae, 257–58; Apostol and, 120, 176, 227–28, 313n24; archives of, 10; balcony scene and, 202–3; birthday of, 214–15, 318n70; Bodnăraș and, 120, 176, 185–86, 193, 204, 288n16; Brezhnev and, 188; Chișinevschi and, 141, 160, 190; Constantinescu, Miron, and, 120, 161–64, 177, 199; cult of personality and, 21, 188, 191, 198, 206, 208, 213–15, 220, 222, 316n46, 317n61; de-Stalinization and, 190, 192, 199, 201, 313n24; Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Constantin, and, 284n75; Doncea group purge and, 165–66; downfall and execution of, 6, 19–20, 231, 237, 242, 324n118; Drăghici and, 120, 147–48, 176–77, 194, 196; dynastic communism of, 187–232; economic policy and, 108, 188–89, 198, 202, 216, 219, 249, 311n4, 319n74; factionalism and, 164, 281n46; Filipovici rehabilitated by, 74; Georgescu, Teohari, and, 127; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 23–24, 175–77, 192, 199, 201, 249, 306nn9,11; Gheorghiu-Rădoi, Lica, and, 309n37; Gorbachev and, 189, 202, 226, 228, 229, 320n87; Hungarian revolution and, 153; Ibárruri and, 271n1; Iliescu and, 18–19, 26, 166, 204, 242, 314n33; Khrushchev and, 177–78, 187; legitimacy crisis and, 189–91, 311n11; Luca and, 130; Maurer and, 176, 204, 288n16; myth of, 194, 197, 199, 202–4, 217, 249, 321n89; national communism and, 183, 187–88, 190, 316n45, 319n75, 320n87; national Stalinism and, 18–36; Niculescu-Mizil and, 26, 176, 195, 196; as Organizational Bureau member (May 1952), 131; Pătrășcanu rehabilitated by, 119–20, 312n22; party history and, 12–13, 38, 44–45, 47–48, 53, 59, 65–66, 70–71, 96, 120, 191, 282n60; Pauker-Luca-Georgescu

purge and, 174, 176; Pauker, Marcel, and, 176, 280n42; Petrescu, Dumitru, rehabilitated by, 103; Pîrvulescu and, 203, 207, 227–28; plane crash and, 165, 305n51; Preoteasa and, 165; prison nucleus and, 78–79, 83, 123, 126; purges by, 166–67, 177, 203–4, 209, 211; Rădulescu and, 196, 209, 215; Răutu and, 194; RCP leadership and, 141; RCP Ninth Congress and, 193–98; RCP plenum anniversary speech (May 1966), 194, 198, 284n75, 285n87; RCP plenum speech (June-July 1957), 280n42; rehabilitations by, 57, 74, 103, 105, 119–20, 199–201, 294n30, 295n38, 305n54, 309n37; “Romanian ideology” of, 105; Rozvan rehabilitated by, 57; RWP plenum speech (June-July 1957), 163–64; RWP politburo and, 131, 141, 145, 285n85; Sino-Soviet schism and, 178, 181; as Stalinist, 134, 135, 163–64, 177, 187–91, 306n9, 323n113; Stoica, Gheorghe, and, 104, 199, 203; succession struggle and, 24, 185–86, 310n41; Tudor, Corneliu Vadim, and, 235; UTC and, 86, 166; Western views of, 187–88, 191, 203

Ceaușescu, Nicolae A., 223

Ceaușescu, Nicu, 259; as apparent successor, 220, 226, 273n7, 311n10; death of, 6; loyalty to, 192; prison term of, 6, 30; RCP leadership and, 207, 209–10; UTC and, 209–10

ensorship, 109, 201

Center for Military History, 29

Central Committee Building, 10, 20, 231, 243

Central Council of Artisans’ Cooperatives, 211

central plan, 107–10

chauvinism, 22, 44, 114, 224, 251, 253

Chernenko, Konstantin, 227

Chernyaev, Anatoly, 31

Chervenkov, Vulko, 95, 98, 122

Chinese Communist Party. *See* CCP

Chinese People’s Republic, 141

Chirițoiu, Mircea, 9–10

Chirot, Daniel, 23

Chișinevschi, Gheorghe, 8, 302n22

Chișinevschi, Iosif, 259; Agitprop Department and, 76–77, 79, 110, 120, 150, 159; Apostol and, 102; archives of, 10;

- cadre policies and, 88; Ceaușescu and, 141, 164, 190; Comintern's Leninist school and, 123, 159; Constantinescu and, 155, 157, 161–62; CPSU Twentieth Congress and, 143; Drăghici and, 102; as émigré communist, 102, 104, 158–59; Foriș conspiracy and, 159; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 102, 114, 122, 128, 141, 159, 160, 301n14; Gheorghiu-Dej, attack on, 145–47, 157–58, 160, 164, 169–70, 302n22; historical legacy of, 20; as “non-Jewish Jew,” 77; Pătrășcanu and, 116, 119, 140, 301n9; Pauker-Luca-Georgescu purge and, 129; prison nucleus and, 79, 83, 126, 158; purge of, 155, 160, 169–70, 173–74; Răutu and, 158, 159, 160; RWP Second Congress and, 141, 300n8; RWP politburo and, 131–35, 141; Sănătescu/Rădescu/Groza governments and, 91; as Soviet agent, 135; as Stalinist, 134–35
- Chișinevschi, Liuba, 59, 101, 124, 131, 160
- Chivu Stoica, 170; Ceaușescu and, 120; as Grivița strike leader, 122; as Organizational Bureau member (May 1952), 131; prison nucleus and, 83, 123; purge of, 203; RCP politburo and, 295n41; resignation of, 199; RWP politburo and, 131, 141, 145; succession struggle and, 185–86
- Christian Democratic Party, 243
- Chu Teh, 141
- Ciobanu, Lina, 205
- Ciobanu, Maria. *See* Filipovici, Elena
- Cioculescu, Șerban, 183
- Cioflină, Dumitru, 10
- Cioran, Emil, 151, 303n31
- Cisai, Cestmir, 202, 313n27
- Civic Alliance Party, 244
- civil society, 40, 109–10, 238–41
- class conflict, 94
- class enemies, 95, 105, 111, 154
- classless society, 108
- Clementis, Vladimir, 81
- Cluj uprising, 25
- CMEA (Council of Mutual Economic Aid), 171, 178–80, 182, 190, 193
- coalition government, 86
- Codreanu, Corneliu Zelea, 41, 60, 220
- Cohn, Moscu. *See* Stoica, Gheorghe
- Cold War, 88, 94
- Coliu, Dumitru, 102, 131, 155, 170, 175, 177
- collaborationism, 67, 93, 212
- collective farms, 108, 131
- collectivization: beginning of, 109; Ceaușescu and, 249; completion of, 35, 170, 177, 291n5; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 167; Khrushchev and, 142
- Colev, Dimitar. *See* Coliu, Dumitru
- Coman, Ion, 30
- Comecon. *See* CMEA
- Cominform (“Information Bureau of Communist and Workers’ Parties”), 3, 137; anti-Tito campaigns, 171
- Comintern (Communist International), 3, 6, 42, 45, 47, 122; Third Congress (June–July 1922), 48; Fourth Congress (November–December 1922), 51; Fifth Congress (June–July 1924), 54, 278n31; Sixth Congress (August 1928), 67; Seventh Congress (July–August 1935), 72; directives of, 79, 285n87; Leninist school of, 123, 159; national nihilism and, 64–71; RCP and, 26, 52–58, 274n24
- command economy, 108, 198, 216, 249
- Communist International of Youth (KIM), 102
- Communist Manifesto, The* (Marx and Engels), 52
- Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, 201
- Communist Party of Romania. *See* RCP (Romanian Communist Party)
- Communist Youth Union. *See* UTC
- Composers’ Union, 110
- Conducător. *See* Ceaușescu, Nicolae
- Conference of the Writers’ Union, 201
- Congress of Dealul Spirii, 44
- Constante, Lena, 105, 117, 293n23, 294n30, 294n32
- Constantinescu, Alexandru (Alec), 48
- Constantinescu, Emil, 234–35, 237, 238, 246, 248, 326n25
- Constantinescu, Horia, 162
- Constantinescu, Miron, 260; Agitprop Department and, 76; anti-Stalinist campaign and, 140, 152; cadre policies and, 88; Ceaușescu’s indictment of, 161, 164, 177; Ceaușescu’s rehabilitation of, 120, 162, 199; Chișinevschi and, 155, 157, 161–62; CPSU Twentieth Congress and, 143–44; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 99, 129, 132, 152, 161–62, 289n21,

- Constantinescu, Miron (*continued*)
 302n26; Gheorghiu-Dej, attack on, 145–47, 157–58, 160, 164, 169–70; Hungarian revolution and, 153; as intellectual, 112, 148, 160–62, 304n44; Luca, Vasile, and, 128; Pătrășcanu and, 105, 113, 163, 294n36; Pauker, Ana, and, 127, 161–62; Pauker-Luca-Georgescu purge and, 129; prison nucleus and, 126; purge of, 155, 162–64, 169–70, 173–74; Răutu and, 162; RCP politburo and, 295n41; RWP politburo and, 131, 141; RWP Second Congress and, 141; “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School and, 291n10; Togliatti, Palmiro, and, 144, 162; UTC and, 161
- Constantinescu-Iași, Petre, 90, 110
- Constantiniu, Florin, 82
- constitutional monarchy, 58, 92, 245
- consumer goods industries, 139–40, 311n4
- Coposu, Corneliu, 234, 243, 245, 326n26
- Cornea, Doina, 211
- “cosmopolitanism,” 109
- Coșoveanu, Iacob, 165
- Council of Consumers’ Cooperatives, 204
- Council of Science and Instruction, 219
- Council of Working People of Hungarian Nationality in Romania, 212
- CPSU, 5; CPP and, 177; Fabian and, 63; RWP and, 169; Twentieth Congress of, 25, 142–48, 163, 171, 177; Twenty-second Congress of, 171, 172, 180; Twenty-third Congress of, 195. *See also* Sino-Soviet schism
- Crăciun, Constanța, 76–77, 94, 97, 112, 159, 161, 303n31
- Craiova trial, 76, 101, 124
- Cristescu, Gheorghe (Plăpumar): BMT and, 67; Dealul Spirii trial and, 49; as delegate to Third International, 45–47; RCP leadership and, 50, 56, 57, 73; RCP Second Congress (1922) and, 51, 54–55, 278n27; Social Democratic Party and, 59
- Cristescu, Poliana, 210
- Crohmălniceanu, Ov. S., 150
- Croitoru, Nicolae, 210
- Cuban missile crisis, 177–78
- cultural dogmatism, 144
- Cultural Revolution, 206, 224
- culture, Romanian: Ceaușescu and, 191–92, 197–98; Chișinevschi and, 158, 159; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 150–51; national communism and, 183; Răutu and, 109–10, 176, 301n10; RCP and, 27; Stalinization and, 109–10, 291nn8,9, 308n34
- Cunescu, Sergiu, 244
- currency reform, 128, 129
- Cuvîntul*, 10, 328n40
- Cuvîntul Liber*, 76
- Cuza, A. C., 41
- Czechoslovak Charter 77 group, 22, 211
- Cziko, Martha. *See* Drăghici, Martha
- Dahrendorf, Ralf, 245
- Daicoviciu, Constantin, 183, 300n7, 304n44
- Daniel, Yuli, 200
- Danieliuk-Stefanski, Alexander. *See* Stefanski-Gorn, Alexander
- Danube-Black Sea Canal project, 36, 139, 147, 300n4
- Darkness at Noon* (Koestler), 49, 75, 114
- Dăscălescu, Constantin, 21, 29, 209, 316n49
- Davidoglu, Mihail, 149–50
- Dealul Spirii, Congress of (May 1921), 42, 44, 47–48
- Dealul Spirii trial, 48, 48–49
- December 1989 revolution, 3, 225–32, 236, 240, 243, 322n102, 323n110, 323n117
- December 21 Association, 241
- decommunization, 248
- Dej. *See* Gheorghiu-Dej, Gheorghe
- Deletant, Dennis, 14
- democracy: Ceaușescu and, 191, 236; coalition government and, 86; Gorbachev and, 3; Hungarian revolution and, 154, 156; in interwar period, 58; Luca, Vasile, and, 126; in postcommunism period, 248, 253–54
- Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR), 29, 235, 237, 244, 251, 326n25
- Democratic National Salvation Front (DNSF), 250–51, 326n21
- Democratic Party (PD), 234, 252, 327n30
- democratic socialism, 31, 55, 138, 201, 202
- Democratic Students’ Front, 77, 284n79
- Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), 251, 252
- “democratization” policy, 149
- denazification, 87, 94
- Deng, Xiaoping, 195, 197, 275n27
- de-Sovietization, 184, 201

- de-Stalinization: Ceaușescu and, 190, 192, 199, 201, 313n24; dialectics of, 5, 6; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 139–41, 145–46, 149–50, 167, 171–73, 280n42; intellectuals and, 148–52; Khrushchev and, 3, 139, 142–44, 146, 148, 157, 162, 163, 187; Novotny, Antonin, and, 201; pseudo, II, 137, 171–74, 280n42; RWP and, 143, 148, 157–58, 162, 171–74, 180, 184; Tito and, 137–38, 139
- Deszo, Iasz, 67
- Deutscher, Isaac, 64, 77, 80, 280n45
- Dic-Dicescu, Ion, 54, 74
- “dictatorships of the proletariat,” 32, 49, 55, 64, 94, 107, 109, 172
- diktat, 5, 90
- Dimitrov, Gheorghiu, 89, 101, 125
- Dincă, Ion, 30, 205
- Dinescu, Mircea, 211
- dissent, 21, 211–15, 224
- dissidents, 239, 243, 247
- Djilas, Aleksa, 33
- DNSF (Democratic National Salvation Front), 250–51
- Dobrescu, Paul, 29
- Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Alexandru (Sașa), 261, 283n71; Dealul Spirii trial and, 49; as delegate to Third International, 45–47; execution of, 42, 49, 74; as intellectual, 112; “intellectualist deviation” and, 55; as interwar RCP activist, 61; Jilava prison hunger strike and, 62; Kharkov meeting and, 68; RCP executive committee (1922) and, 50; as RCP political advisor, 52; RCP Second Congress (1922) and, 51; as refugee, 64; rehabilitation of, 283n71; Vienna RCP politburo and, 67
- Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Constantin, 38, 42, 43–44, 75, 124, 276n4, 284n75
- Doftana prison, 58, 78–79, 83, 100, 103, 122–23, 124, 126, 158, 159
- Doinaș, Ștefan Augustin, 303n32, 319n76
- Doncea, Constantin: Ceaușescu’s rehabilitation of, 199; as émigré communist, 104, 126; as Grivița strike leader, 78, 81, 103–4, 122–23, 166; International Brigades and, 285n82; prison nucleus and, 81, 286n92; purge of, 165–66
- Drăgan, Constantin, 196
- Drăghici, Alexandru: Ceaușescu, Elena, and, 205, 312n16; Ceaușescu and, 120, 147–48, 176–77, 194, 196; Ceaușescu’s indictment of, 120, 199, 201, 294n30; Chișinevschi and, 102; massive purge (post-1958) and, 166; Pătrășcanu and, 115, 116, 140, 301n9; Pauker, Ana, and, 124; Pauker-Luca-Georgescu purge and, 174; prison nucleus and, 79, 83, 123, 126; RCP leadership and, 141; RWP politburo and, 131, 141, 145, 285n85; Stalinist terror and, 199, 313n23; Stoica, Gheorghe, and, 104; succession struggle and, 185
- Drăghici, Martha, 205, 312n16, 314n34
- Dragomirescu, Mihail, 161
- Dragoș, Nicolae, 225
- Dreapta Națională, 252
- Dreptatea*, 93
- Dubček, Alexander, 30, 32, 34, 200, 201, 202, 313n27
- Dubinski, N., 73
- Dumbrăveni prison, 58, 79, 101
- Dumitrescu, Geo, 150
- Dumitriu, Petru, 150
- dynastic communism, 187–232
- dynastic socialism, 36, 198
- Dzhurov, Dobri, 28
- East European Politics and Societies*, 8
- economic policy: Ceaușescu and, 108, 188–89, 198, 202, 216, 219, 249, 311n4, 319n74; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 108, 170–72, 179–80, 193; Khrushchev and, 178–80; “right-wing deviators” and, 131
- Economist*, 22, 189
- Editura Politică, 77, 132, 243, 275n30
- Ehrlich, Manea, 73
- elections, 128, 250–51
- electoral fraud, 92, 287–88nn9, 10
- Eliade, Mircea, 151, 161, 303n31
- Émigré Bureau (Moscow), 103, 174–75
- émigré communists, 7, 100–104, 125, 126, 127, 156, 174, 180
- Eminescu, Mihai, 110
- Enache, Petru, 208, 209
- Entente, 42
- Era Nouă*, 76
- Era Socialistă*, 63
- ethnic minorities, 16, 40, 272n12; Ceaușescu and, 194, 212, 227; Hungarian, 212, 246–47, 251, 317n59; RCP and, 65–67, 125, 278n27
- ethnocentrism, 22, 251, 253
- Eurocommunism, 3, 4, 6, 31, 200, 215–16, 300n3

- Europa*, 323n114, 328n44
Evenimentul zilei, 253–54
 “Everything” (Blandiana), 219–20
- Fabian, David: Comintern Fifth Congress and, 54; as delegate to Third International, 45–47; execution of, 64, 74; Filipovici and, 63; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 280n42; Holostenko and, 63; as interwar RCP activist, 61; Jilava prison hunger strike and, 62; national nihilism and, 70; RCP executive committee (1922) and, 50; RCP Second Congress (1922) and, 51, 278n27; as refugee, 63–64; translations, 64
- factionalism: Ceaușescu and, 164, 166, 228; Leninist meaning of, 121–22; post-communism and, 241–47; RCP and, 65, 72, 95–97, 102, III, 125, 281n46; Roller, Mihail, and, 309n36; Tismăneanu, Leonte, and, 300n3
- fascism, 40–41, 57, 62, 161. *See also* Iron Guard
- Fazekás, János, 26, 204
- Ferdinand, King of Romania, 50
- Filipescu, Radu, 211–12
- Filipovici, Elena: Ceaușescu’s rehabilitation of, 74; Dealul Spirii trial and, 49; execution of, 49–50; Fabian and, 63; home secretariat and, 72; as interwar RCP activist, 61; RCP Fifth Congress and, 71; Stefanski-Gorn and, 283n64
- Fine Artists’ Union, 110
- Finkelstein, David. *See* Fabian, David
- Fischer, Ernst, 138
- Fischer, Mary Ellen, 14
- Fischer, Peter. *See* Năvodaru, Petre
- Fischer, Ruth, 122
- Florescu, Eugen, 210, 225
- Florescu, Gheorghe, 131
- Florescu, Mihail, 203, 205, 209, 285n82
- Florian, Mircea, 161
- Fluieraș, Ioan, 45–46, 60
- For a Lasting Peace, for a People’s Democracy*, 25, 122, 127, 128, 129, 137, 296n53
- Foriș, Ștefan (Marius), 261; Agitprop Department and, 76; Bulan, Tatiana, and, 205; Ceaușescu’s rehabilitation of, 199; conspiracy against, 113, 117–19, 126, 286n100; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 83–84, 100, 173, 286n98; as interwar RCP activist, 61; murder of, 84, 99–100, 106, 126, 145, 159; RCP leadership and, 73, 81, 97, 98, 124, 283n68; *Scinteia* on, 184; Sîrbu, Victoria, and, 117
- French Communist Party, 122, 143, 296n45
- French *maquis*, 150, 203
- French Resistance, 149–50, 205
- Frunză, Victor, 48, 54, 283n68, 288n15
- Furet, François, 200
- Găinușe, Alexandrina, 205
- Galăț steel plant, 170
- Garaudy, Roger, 31
- Gaulle, Charles de, 200, 313n25
- Găvănescu, Pantelimon, 210
- Gazeta Literară*, 151
- Gellner, Ernest, 226
- Geminder, Bedřich, 134
- Genad, Eugen, 165
- Genad, Heinrich, 165
- Geneva, spirit of, 138
- Georgescu, Alexandru, 52, 55
- Georgescu, Ida, 54
- Georgescu, Paul, 150
- Georgescu, Teohari: cadre policies and, 88; Ceaușescu’s rehabilitation of, 200; Chișinevschi compared to, 159; Foriș-Koffler purge and, 127; Foriș’s murder and, 100; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 127, 288n18, 296n51; Pătrășcanu and, 106, 114–16, 118; prison nucleus and, 83, 126–27; RCP leadership and, 295n41; rise and fall of, 120–21, 127–33, 145; RWP leadership and, 93; Sănătescu/Rădescu/Groza governments and, 90–91, 109; Tămădău episode and, 92–93; traditional parties and, 92. *See also* Pauker-Luca-Georgescu faction
- Gere, Mihai, 196, 212
- German Communist Party, 65, 122
- German Democratic Republic, 74
- Gerő, Ernő, 95, 152, 296n45
- Gestapo, 150
- Ghelerter, Leon, 59, 60
- Gheorghe, Ion, 219
- Gheorghe, Petre, 83, 98, 286n98
- Gheorghiu, Mihnea, 183, 209, 296n49
- Gheorghiu-Bujor, Mihai, 43
- Gheorghiu-Dej, Gheorghe, 260–61; anti-Albanian stance of, 171, 173; anti-Soviet Stalinism and, 25–26; Apostol

- and, 140–41, 147, 30110; archives of, 7, 10–12; Bodnăraş and, 98, 100, 147, 288n16; Bodnarenko and, 289n22; Borilă and, 147, 175, 30117; cadre policies and, 88; canal project and, 139; Ceauşescu, Elena, and, 205; Ceauşescu and, 23–24, 175–77, 192, 306nn9–11; Ceauşescu compared to, 249; Ceauşescu's indictment of, 199, 201, 294n30; children named for, 290n25; Chişinevschi and, 102, 114, 122, 128, 141, 159, 160, 30114; Chişinevschi-Constantinescu attack on, 145–47, 157–58, 160, 164, 169–70, 302n22; in coalition government, 86; Constantinescu and, 99, 129, 132, 152, 289n21, 302n26; CPSU Twentieth Congress and, 143–46, 30117; cult of personality and, 139, 146, 168, 172; death of, 132, 185, 193–95, 285n85, 309n37, 310n41; de-Stalinization and, 139–41, 145–46, 149–50, 167, 171–73, 280n42; Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Constantin, and, 284n75; Doncea group purge and, 103, 165–67; economic policy and, 108, 170–72, 179–80, 193; factionalism and, 95–96; Foriş and, 83–84, 100, 173, 286n98; Georgescu, Teohari, and, 127, 288n18, 296n51; as Griviţa strike leader, 78, 81, 122, 165; historical legacy of, 20; Hungarian revolution and, 152–55, 167; Ibárruri and, 271n1; Jar and, 149–50, 302n26; Khrushchev and, 123, 144, 163, 167, 177–81, 280n42; Koffler and, 286n98; Luca and, 106, 126, 130, 298n65; Maurer and, 288n16; Mitin and, 129, 297n58; Nagy and, 153; national Stalinism and, 28, 34, 168–86, 181–83; party history and, 11, 59, 62, 173–76; Pătrăşcanu and, 75, 104–6, 113–20, 140, 173, 292–93nn20, 21, 30119; Pauker, Ana, and, 101, 106, 123, 288n18; Pauker-Luca-Georgescu purge and, 120–35, 173; Preoteasa and, 164–65, 305n52; prison nucleus and, 79, 81, 83–84, 98–100, 122–24, 126, 295–96nn43, 44; Răutu and, 132–33, 163, 175–76, 302n26, 305n52; RCP leadership and, 86, 295n41; rehabilitations by, 140, 30117, 30110; Roman, Valter, and, 103, 153, 175; RWP Second Congress and, 141, 300n8; RWP Third Congress and, 169–71; RWP leadership and, 93–94; Sănătescu/Rădescu/Groza governments and, 90–91; Sino-Soviet schism and, 178, 181; Stalin and, 104, 123, 129, 288n18; as Stalinist, 111, 134–35, 190–91; Tito and, 4, 99, 123, 132, 152–53, 171, 299n78; Toma, Ana, and, 289n22; Toma, Sorin, and, 310n40; traditional parties and, 92; Vasilichi and, 175
- Gheorghiu-Rădoi, Lica, 185, 205, 296n49, 309n37
- Gherea, Constantin. *See* Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Constantin
- Gherea, Saşa. *See* Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Alexandru
- Gherla prison, 36
- Gherstein, H., 54
- Gibianskii, Leonid, 89
- Gide, André, 60
- Gierek, Edward, 192, 311n12
- Gilberg, Trond, 208, 316n46
- Giurescu, Constantin C., 183, 300n7, 304n44
- Glanstein-Muşat, Alexandru, 92
- glasnost, 22, 143, 227
- Goga, Octavian, 151, 183
- Goldberger, Nicolae (Miklos), 61, 65, 72, 156, 282n62
- Goldmann, Lucien (Gică), 75–76, 284n76
- Goldstein, Dori (Klimenko), 70
- Goldstein, Max, 49
- Goma, Paul, 211, 303n32
- Gomulka, Wladyslaw, 13, 32, 80, 113, 118, 128, 134, 143, 179, 199, 312n22
- Goncearuk, Petea, 116, 123
- Gorbachev, Mikhail: Ceauşescu and, 189, 202, 226, 228, 229, 320n87; glasnost and, 22; Iliescu, Ion, compared to, 242; intellectuals and, 300n3; “socialism with a human face” and, 3, 30–32
- Gorniski, Ni., 48
- Gottwald, Klement, 95, 111, 122, 123, 128
- Government and Opposition*, 8
- Gramsci, Antonio, 31, 57, 64, 76, 96
- Grand National Assembly, 108, 160, 162, 177, 210, 291n5
- Great Depression, 16, 60
- Great Purge, 75, 97, 101, 102, 199, 274n24, 283n65, 283n68

- Great Terror, 42, 49–50, 57, 58, 64, 74–75, 80
- Greek Civil War, 91
- Greek Communist Party, 4, 145, 215
- Grivița railroad strike, 78, 81–82, 83, 102, 103, 113, 122, 165–66
- Grofu, Dumitru, 74
- Grossman-Toma, Ana. *See* Toma, Ana
- Group for Social Dialogue, 238–39, 241, 324n3
- Groza, Petru, 76, 90–91, 108, 109, 261–62, 287n8
- Grünberg, Lăzar, 79
- Grünstein, Herbert, 74
- Gulag, 67, 73, 81, 137
- Gusti, Dimitrie, 161
- Halıtkı, Emil, 72
- Haupt, Gheorghe, 26, 150
- Havel, Václav, 245
- Havemann, Robert, 138
- Hegel, G. W. F., 35
- Heghial-Marxist dialectics, 157
- Heigel, Ion, 70
- Helsinki Conference, 211
- Herseni, Traian, 161, 183
- High Party School (CPSU), 204
- historical parties, 89, 91–93, 109
- historiography, 147, 151, 207, 291n7, 303n30, 309n36
- History Institute, 162
- History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) Short Course*, 78, 123, 158
- Hitler, Adolph, 62, 63, 73, 84, 142
- Holostenko, Vitali (Barbu), 49, 63, 68, 70, 125, 281n55
- home secretariat (RCP): Fabian and, 63; Great Purge and, 283n65; RCP Fifth Congress and, 72; Schein and, 67–68, 281n52
- Honecker, Erich, 31, 221, 227
- Horn, Gyula, 245
- Hoxha, Enver, 14, 24, 143, 169, 171, 173, 219, 271n4
- human rights, 211, 317n55
- human rights groups, 22, 239, 243, 247
- Hungarian Committee, 127
- Hungarian Communist Party, 65, 80, 141, 157, 286n90
- Hungarian Democratic Union, 244
- Hungarian revolution, 4, 33, 34, 150, 152–57, 164, 167, 200
- hunger strikes, 62, 318n72
- Husák, Gustav, 221, 227
- Hutschneker, Erich. *See* Spiru, Basil
- Iacob, Alexandru, 130, 293n26, 297nn62,63
- Iacobi, Mihail. *See* Florescu, Mihail
- Iacobovici, Eugen, 71, 72, 282n63
- Iakovovits, Jenö. *See* Iacobovici, Eugen
- Iași-Chișinău line, 86
- Iași group, 238
- Ibărurri, Dolores, 101, 125, 141, 197, 271n1
- “ideological nationalization,” 183
- Idéologie française, L’* (Lévy), 213
- Ignat, Nestor, 112, 175
- IKKI, 55, 65, 67, 281n52
- Iliescu, Alexandru, 83, 274n24
- Iliescu, Ion: archives of, 10; Ceaușescu and, 18–19, 26, 166, 204, 242, 314n33; as Ceaușescu successor, 29, 231, 234, 239, 242–43, 324n118; communist ideals and, 36; election strategies and, 249–51, 326n25, 328n38; interviews with, 272n11; Ioniță and, 281n46; Niculescu-Mizil and, 281n46; as president, 8, 234, 236, 244–47, 248, 322n102, 325n16; as president (re-elected), 235, 253, 254; RCP archives and, 9; Tudor and, 327n29; UTC and, 242, 246, 325n14
- Iliescu I (1990–1996), 236–37, 244–47
- Independent Group for Democracy, 241
- industrialization: Ceaușescu and, 189, 197, 202; CMEA and, 179–80; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 110, 139, 168, 170; Stalinization and, 108–9
- “inginerul Ceaușu.” *See* Bodnăraș, Emil
- Institute for Chemical Research (ICECHIM), 205, 206
- Institute for Specialized Teaching Staff, 162
- Institute of Party History, 10, 279n35, 281n55, 295n43, 309n36
- Institute of Politics and International Relations, 57
- intellectuals, Czech, 202
- intellectuals, Hungarian, 139, 150, 152; in Transylvania, 155
- intellectuals, Marxist, 138
- intellectuals, Polish, 150, 152

- intellectuals, Romanian: Ceaușescu and, 164, 191–92, 206, 209, 211–12, 216, 223–25, 228–29, 318n72, 319n76; Chișinevschi and, 159; Constantinescu as, 160–61; de-Stalinization and, 147, 148–52, 167, 302n26, 302–3n29–33; Hungarian revolution and, 155, 304n39; national communism and, 190; Pătrășcanu persecuted as, 110–20; persecution of, 22, 25, 274n22; in post-communism period, 239–40, 253; rehabilitations of, 140, 183, 300n7, 301n10, 308n34; Stalinization and, 109–10, 112; unrest of (1956), 35
- intellectuals, Russian, 200
- intellectuals, Western, 138
- International Brigades: Borilă and, 142, 203–4; Florescu and, 209; Luca, Elisabeta, and, 296n50; RCP and, 78, 285n82; Roman, Valter, and, 102–3, 175; Stoica, Gheorghe, and, 283n65; Tismaneanu's parents and, 17, 74, 78, 283n67
- international communism: Ceaușescu and, 221; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 127; Khrushchev and, 142–43; maximalists and, 42–47; RCP and, 52–54, 72–84, 88–89, 95–97, 168; RWP and, 171
- interrogations: Hungarian revolution and, 155–56; of Luca, 130; of Pătrășcanu, 115; of Pauker, Ana, 131–32
- “Întreprinderea 13 Decembrie,” 132
- Ionel, Vasile, 29
- Ionescu, Ghiță, 14, 24, 118, 163, 169, 285n82
- Ionescu, Nae, 161
- Ioniță, Ion, 26, 204, 281n46, 321n93
- Iordăchescu, Theodor, 93–94
- Iorga, Nicolae, 183
- Iosifescu, Silviu, 161
- Iron Guard, 58, 60, 89, 174, 220, 235, 247, 277n11, 279n39, 284n79, 329n50
- irredentism, 44, 153, 224, 304n36
- Italian Communist Party, 143
- Jacobin-Bolshevik model, 200
- Jakes, Milos, 28, 31
- Janos, Vincze. *See* Vințe, Ion
- Jar, Alexandru (Pashkela), 149–50, 152, 302n26
- Jebeleanu, Eugen, 150, 209, 319n76
- Jewish Antifascist Committee, 142
- Jewish Democratic Committee, 127
- Jews: Chișinevschi and, 159; de-Stalinization and, 149; as émigré communists, 134; Florescu, Mihail, as, 209; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 127; in Hungary, 281n49; Pauker, Ana, as, 124, 133; political culture and, 40–41, 77–78, 272n12, 284n80; in Transnistria camps, 83, 131. *See also* antisemitism
- Jilava prison, 36, 58, 62, 79
- Jiu Valley miners' strike, 212
- Joja, Athanasie, 161
- Jowitt, Ken, 14, 21, 24, 179, 238, 288n18
- Jurcă, Nicolae, 39
- Kádár, János, 113, 153–54, 156, 304n37
- Kafka, Franz, 180
- Kaganovich, Lazar, 122, 139, 163
- Kállay Gyula, 156
- Kapital, Das* (Marx), 52, 161
- Kapo, Hysni, 170, 183
- Kardelj, Edvard, 32, 197
- Katelineț, Semion, 129
- Katz, Solomon. *See* Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Constantin
- Kautsky, Karl, 38, 276n4
- Kavtaradze, Sergei, 122
- Kersten, Krystyna, 100
- Kharkov meeting, 68
- Khrushchev, Nikita: anti-Albanian stance of, 170–71, 172; April 1964 declaration and, 11; Beria, Lavrenti, and, 118, 137; Bodnăraș and, 289n19; Ceaușescu and, 23, 177–78; CPSU Twentieth Congress and, 142–48; Cuban missile crisis and, 177; de-Stalinization and, 3, 139, 142–44, 146, 148, 157, 162, 163, 187; economic policy and, 178–80; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 123, 144, 163, 167, 177–81, 280n42; ouster of, 200, 223; RCP's break with, 25–26; on Romanian students, 154; RWP Third Congress and, 169–71; “secret speech” of, 142–45, 147, 157; Sino-Soviet schism and, 178, 181
- Khrushchevism, 11, 168–86
- Kim Il Sung, 178
- King, Robert R., 14, 88
- Kirichenko, Alexei, 141
- Kis, Danilo, 56

- KKE Kostas Kollyiannis faction, 215
- Köblös, Elek, 284n72; Comintern Fourth Congress and, 51; Dealul Spirii trial and, 49; disappearance of, 74; Holostenko and, 63; as interwar RCP activist, 61; Luca and, 125; national nihilism and, 70; RCP leadership and, 55, 57, 67, 68, 73, 281n52
- Koestler, Arthur, 2, 49, 50, 56, 61, 75, 114
- Koffler, Remus: conspiracy against, 117–19, 126; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 286n98; murder of, 83, 126, 145, 294n32; trial of, 117–19, 294n31; underground leadership and, 81, 97, 98
- Kohout, Pavel, 211
- Kolakowski, Leszek, 138, 216
- Kolarov, Vasil, 52, 101, 125
- Konitz, Jacques, 51
- Konrád, George, 56
- Korosi-Krizsan, Sándor. *See* Georgescu, Alexandru
- Kostov, Traicho, 106, 128
- Kostrzewa, Wera, 61
- Kosygin, Alexei, 200
- Kremlin doctors, 136–37
- Krizsan, Alexandru, 54
- kulak (*chiabur*), 109, 131, 140
- Kun, Béla, 43, 50, 57, 63, 71–72, 125, 158
- Labiş, Nicolae, 152, 154, 303n33
- Lăncrănjan, Ion, 225
- Landler, Jenö, 65
- land reform, 90
- Left. *See* political culture
- Left-wing Communism* (Lenin), 63
- legitimacy crisis, 189–91, 311n11, 316n47
- Lenin: death of, 54, 278n31; Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Constantin, and, 44, 47, 276n4; Rakovsky and, 43; RCP activists and, 61; “Testament” of, 142
- “Leningrad Affair,” 142
- Leninism: Ceauşescu and, 141, 177, 202, 218, 232; Chişinevschi and, 158, 160; CPSU Twentieth Congress and, 143, 146; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 168; post-communism and, 245, 247–50; RCP and, 70; RWP and, 184; to “storm heaven at a bound,” 43; twenty-one conditions of, 42, 45–47
- Leninist Comintern School (Moscow), 79, 159
- Lenin’s Mausoleum, 172
- Lenski (Leszczynski), Julian, 61
- “Letter of the Six,” 19, 227–28, 242, 309n39
- Levin, Mişa, 93
- Lévy, Bernard-Henri, 213, 318n63
- Levy, Robert, 116, 134, 293n26
- “liberal-anarchic” tendencies, 148
- liberalization: Ceauşescu and, 5, 22, 25, 147–48, 164; Constantinescu and, 162; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 140, 149, 167, 171–74, 301n10; national Stalinism and, 33; Poland and, 152; pseudo, 171–74, 184; Răutu and, 150–51; Romanian students and, 154
- Lichtblau, Alexandru, 48
- Lichtblau, Leon, 64, 67
- Linden, Ronald H., 183
- “liquidationism,” 87
- Liu, Shaochi, 195
- Luca, Elisabeta, 285n82, 296n50, 298n66
- Luca, Vasile, 262; Ceauşescu’s rehabilitation of, 190, 200; Constantinescu, Miron, and, 128; as émigré communist, 102, 104, 114, 124, 125, 158–59; Foriş’s murder and, 100; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 106, 126, 130, 298n65; home secretariat and, 70; as interwar RCP activist, 61; Köblös and, 125; Kun and, 125; Moghioroş and, 130, 297n54; Pătrăşcanu and, 115, 118, 126, 292n20; RCP leadership and, 86, 295n41; rise and fall of, 120–21, 125–34, 145, 297nn62,63, 298nn66; Rozvan and, 125; RWP leadership and, 93; Sănătescu/Rădescu/Groza governments and, 91; Soviet citizenship and, 80; traditional parties and, 92. *See also* Pauker-Luca-Georgescu faction
- Luca-Boico, Cristina, 288n16, 289n21, 306n9
- Luka, László. *See* Luca, Vasile
- Lukács, György, 31, 57, 61, 64, 76, 96, 105, 157, 209, 280n44
- Lupeni strike, 125–26, 296n49
- Lupta de clasă*, 63, 77
- Lupu, Eugen, 42
- Luxemburg, Rosa, 43, 44, 80, 276n4
- Luximin. *See* Pauker, Marcel
- Macovescu, George, 159, 209
- Măgureanu, Virgil, 9, 29, 246, 322n102, 324n118

- Malenkov, Georgi, 94, 118, 122, 137, 139, 140, 163, 294n36
- Malraux, André, 60
- Mănescu, Corneliu, 227–28
- Mănescu, Manea, 29, 196, 209, 263, 311n4, 316n48
- Maniu, Iuliu, 45, 58, 87, 90, 91, 93, 95, 244
- Manole, Manole H., 79, 285n82
- Manole, Ofelia, 79, 110, 159, 165, 205
- Manuilsky, Dmitri, 101, 125, 158
- Mao Zedong, 34, 143, 169, 171, 173, 178, 195, 206
- Marcuse, Herbert, 31
- Marcusohn, Hermina. *See* Tismăneanu, Hermina
- Marin, Gheorghe Gaston (Grossman), 175, 182, 203, 272n8, 300n6, 308n28
- Marin, Timotei, 54, 61, 64, 74
- Marina. *See* Pauker, Ana
- market economy, 6, 198, 202, 252
- Marty, André, 122
- Marx, Karl, 22, 77, 161, 202, 222
- Marxism, 13, 77, 153, 156, 158, 161, 188–89, 202, 280–81nn44,45
- Marxist-Leninist doctrine, 32, 112, 143, 167, 218
- Maslow, Arkady, 122
- Maurer, Ion Gheorghe, 262–63; antifascist campaigns and, 76; archives of, 7; Bîrlădeanu and, 309n39; Ceaușescu and, 176, 193, 204, 288n16; Chișinevschi purge and, 160; Foriș conspiracy and, 113; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 288n16; Gheorghiu-Rădoi, Lica, and, 309n37; as intellectual, 112, 123; Pauker, Ana, and, 204; Pauker-Luca-Georgescu purge and, 174; as politburo member (1961), 170; Sănătescu/Rădescu/Groza governments and, 91; Sino-Soviet schism and, 178, 181; succession struggle and, 185–86, 310n41; underground leadership and, 97; Western relationships and, 182, 308n29
- maximalists, 42–47
- Mazilu, Dumitru, 243, 325nn16,17
- McAdams, A. James, 20
- Meciar, Vladimir, 245
- Menshevism, 75
- Mezincescu, Eduard, 159
- MGB (Soviet Ministry of State Security), 136–37
- Michael, King of Romania, 90, 92, 94, 287n8, 326n25
- Micu-Chivu, Ecaterina, 205
- Mihalache, Ion, 87, 93
- Mikoyan, Anastas, 183
- militaristic model, 72, 282n61
- Military Academy (Bucharest), 205
- Milošević, Slobodan, 28, 33, 245
- Milosz, Czeslaw, 32, 77
- Minc, Hilary, 77
- Mironov. *See* Pătrășcanu, Lucrețiu
- Mirzescu Law, 56, 96
- Mișcarea*, 254
- Mislea prison, 58, 79, 101
- Mitin, Mark Borisovici, 122, 129, 296n53, 297n58, 300n8
- Mladenov, Petar, 21, 28
- Mocsony-Stîrcea, Ion, 117, 294n32
- Moczar, Mieczyslaw, 225
- modernity, 27, 40, 60, 252
- Modoran, Vasile, 130, 297n62
- Moghioroș, Alexandru: Ceaușescu and, 196; Chișinevschi and, 157, 160; Constantinescu and, 157; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 129, 147; historical legacy of, 20; Luca and, 130, 297n54; as Organizational Bureau member (May 1952), 131; Pauker, Ana, and, 124, 162; Pauker-Luca-Georgescu purge and, 87, 174, 287n2, 299n74; plane crash and, 165, 305n51; prison nucleus and, 79, 83, 123, 126; RWP plenum speech (June–July 1957), 164, 305n47; RWP politburo and, 131, 141, 145, 285n85
- Moghioroș, Stela, 129, 205
- Mohora, Tudor, 210, 328n39
- Mokrzycki, Edmund, 250–51
- “Moldavian” Soviet Autonomous Republic, 54
- Molojec, Boleslaw, 100
- Molojec, Zygmunt, 100
- Molotov, 122, 129, 139, 144, 163
- monarchist trend, 245
- MOPR, 77
- Moraru, Nicolae, 110, 112, 159, 175, 309n36
- Moscovici, Gelber, 48, 54, 61, 64, 68
- Moscovici, Ilie, 55, 60, 62
- Moscow Emigré Bureau. *See* Émigré Bureau (Moscow)
- Moscow show trials. *See* trials
- Moscow State Publishing House, 103
- Moscu, Ghiță. *See* Moscovici, Gelber

- “multilaterally developed socialist society,”
212, 227
- “multinational imperialist country,” 11, 24
- multiparty politics, 33, 241–47
- “Murdered Albatross, The” (Labiş), 154
- Mureşan, Ana, 208
- Murgulescu, Ilie, 123
- Muşat, Mircea, 39, 47–48, 65, 82, 277n17,
282n60
- “Muscovites”: Ceauşescu and, 190;
Gheorghiu-Dej and, 36, 96, 119, 123,
133, 145, 175; “home” communists and,
22, 104; Luca as, 106; Pauker, Ana,
as, 88, 106, 125. *See also* Pauker-Luca-
Georgescu faction
- Năvodaru, Petre (Peter Fischer), 76, 161
- Nagy, Imre: deportation to Romania, 4,
17, 304n40; execution of, 17, 25;
Gheorghiu-Dej and, 153; Hungarian
revolution and, 155–56; intellectuals
and, 152; national communism and,
32, 34; Rákosi and, 135, 138, 139; revi-
sionism and, 13; Rozvan and, 57; “so-
cialism with a human face” and, 30
- National Antifascist Committee, 76
- National Bank of Romania, 108, 128, 130
- national communism: Ceauşescu and,
187–88, 190, 198, 202–4, 207, 217–18,
316n45, 319n75; Gheorghiu-Dej and,
132, 168–86, 178–79; national Stalin-
ism and, 32–35; RCP and, 95–97
- National Council for Science and Technol-
ogy, 206, 209
- National Council of the Audiovisual, 247
- national history. *See* historiography
- National Liberal Party (NLP), 59, 86,
92–94, 113
- National Liberal Party (PNL), 235, 243,
252, 327n30
- national nihilism, 64–71, 281n53
- National Peasant Christian and Demo-
cratic Party. *See* PNȚCD
- National Peasant Party (NPP), 56, 59, 60,
86, 87, 92, 92–94, 97, 113, 243–44,
287–88nn9,10
- national question, 52–53, 55
- National Salvation Front. *See* NSF
- national Stalinism, 18–36, 133–35, 275n28,
280n42, 319n76
- National Union of the Romanian Stu-
dents, 92
- Natolinian group (Poland), 34
- Natta, Alessandro, 216
- Naum, Grigore, 285n82
- Nazi Germany, 87
- Nazi-Soviet Pact, 79–80, 279n39
- Neciu, Dumitru, 100
- Negoiaş, Vasile, 165
- Negoiaşescu, Ion, 211, 303n32
- Negulescu, P. P., 161
- Nenişescu, Costin D., 205
- neo-Bolshevism, 238–39
- neoiobăgie*, 43, 75
- neo-Iron Guardists, 252, 254
- nepotism, 112, 227
- Network of Free Initiatives (Hungary), 239
- Neuilly Treaty, 40, 69
- Neuländer, Ernest. *See* Roman, Valter
- Neumann, Heinz, 65
- New Course, 139
- “New Man,” 36
- new serfdom, theory of, 43, 75
- New York Times*, 182
- Nicolau, Alexandru, 54, 74
- Niculescu-Mizil, Paul, 263–64; Ceauşescu
and, 26, 176, 195, 196, 314n33, 323n114;
Iliescu and, 281n46; “patriotic fac-
tion” myth and, 275n28; purge of,
204; Răutu and, 194
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, 16
- nihilism, national, 64–71
- Nikolai Rubashov (in *Darkness at Noon*), 49
- Nikolski, Alexandru (Feodorov), 20, 70
- Nikolski, Vanda, 61, 72, 102, 283n64
- Nikonov, Serghei (Nicolau), 123
- 1989 revolution, 3, 225–32, 236, 240, 243,
322n102, 323n110, 323n117
- Nixon, Richard, 5, 203
- NKVD, 98, 101
- Noica, Constantin, 238, 303n32
- nomenklatura biographies, 21–22, 273n10
- Nonaligned Movement, 207
- Novicov, Mihai, 110
- Novotny, Antonin, 118, 144, 179, 199, 201
- Nowotko, Marceli, 100
- NPP. *See* National Peasant Party
- NSF (National Salvation Front), 29, 234,
237, 238–43, 246, 250, 325n16
- nuclear war, 178
- Nuovi argomenti*, 144
- Ochab, Edward, 134
- October Revolution, 41

- Oigenstein, Lev. *See* Răutu, Leonte
oil refinery strikes, 78, 82
old guard (RCP), 2, 7, 48; elimination of,
26, 74, 97, 274n24
Omagiu, 213
One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich
(Solzhenitsyn), 180
Onescu, Cornel, 26, 196
Opaschi, Victor, 29
Organizational Bureau (Orgburo), 130, 131
Oroveanu, Anca, 238
Orwell, George, 173, 191, 296n49
Oțetea, Andrei, 162, 183, 300n7
Ozias, Saul, 48
- Pacepa, Ion Mihai, 221, 321n90
Pacoste, Cornel, 166, 209, 210
Paleologu, Alexandru, 303n32, 319n76
Pană, Gheorghe, 26, 204
Pandrea, Petre, 277n11, 293n23
Pantiușa. *See* Bodnarenko, Pantelei
Parhon, C. I., 76, 123
Party History Museum, 200
Party of Romanian Social Democracy. *See*
PDSR
Party of Social Democracy, 6
party police. *See* Securitate
Pașcu, Ioan Mircea, 10, 29
“Pasionaria, La,” 101, 271n11
Patilineț, Vasile, 19, 26, 196, 199, 273n3
Pătrășcanu, Elena, 293n23
Pătrășcanu, Lucrețiu, 265–66; archives of,
10; armistice negotiations and, 113–14,
292n18; cadre policies and, 88; Ceaușescu’s
rehabilitation of, 119–20, 199,
201, 294n30; Chișinevschi and, 116,
119, 140, 301n9; in coalition govern-
ment, 86; Comintern Fourth Con-
gress and, 51; Constantinescu and,
105, 113, 163, 294n36; defiance of,
104–6; Drăghici and, 115, 116, 140,
301n9; as ethnic Romanian, 66–67,
283n65; Foriș conspiracy and, 113;
Gheorghiu-Dej and, 75, 104–6,
113–20, 173, 292–93nn20,21, 301n9;
historical research of, 76; home secre-
tariat and, 72; as intellectual, 64,
74–75, 112; as interwar RCP activist,
61; justice system and, 92, 109; Luca
and, 115, 118, 126, 292n20; murder of,
104, 128, 140–41, 145, 152, 160, 196,
294n32; national nihilism and, 69; or-
- deal of, 21, 110–20, 140, 292n14,
292–93nn20,21, 293n23, 293n26,
294nn29,30, 294nn35,36; Pauker, Ana,
and, 292n20; political culture and,
279n39; Preoteasa and, 113; prison nu-
cleus and, 83; RCP leadership and,
48, 58, 86, 274n24; rehabilitation of,
119–20, 312n22, 328n40;
Sănătescu/Rădescu/Groza govern-
ments and, 90; *Schnteia* on, 184;
Stefanski-Gorn and, 283n64; under-
ground leadership and, 97; writings
of, 118, 294n33
“patriotic faction” myth, 28, 275n28
Pauker, Ana, 264–65; antifascist campaigns
and, 76; archives of, 7, 10–11;
Bodnăraș and, 162; Brătescu,
Gheorghe, and, 92; cadre policies
and, 87–88, 287n2; Ceaușescu’s reha-
bilitation of, 190, 199–200; children
named for, 290n25; Constantinescu
and, 127, 161–62; as émigré commu-
nist, 100–102, 104, 114, 124, 125, 126,
138–59, 296n45; factionalism and,
95–96; Foriș’s murder and, 100;
Gheorghiu-Dej and, 101, 106, 123,
288n18; historical legacy of, 20; inter-
rogations of, 87; as interwar RCP ac-
tivist, 61; Maurer and, 204; as Molda-
vian Jew, 66; as Organizational
Bureau member (May 1952), 131; party
history and, 131; Pătrășcanu and, 104,
114–16, 118, 292n20; Pauker, Marcel,
and, 48, 81, 290n26; Preoteasa and,
165; RCP leadership and, 295n41,
296n48; RCP Second Congress
(1922) and, 51; rise and fall of, 98,
120–22, 124–34, 145, 298n72, 299n74;
RWP leadership and, 93–94;
Sănătescu/Rădescu/Groza govern-
ments and, 91; self-criticism of,
290n26; Stalinist terror and, 111; Togli-
atti and, 101, 125; Toma, Ana, and,
289n22; traditional parties and, 92. *See*
also Pauker-Luca-Georgescu faction
Pauker-Luca-Georgescu faction, 11, 87, 96,
104, 116, 120–35, 145, 147, 173–76,
285n85, 293n26
Pauker, Marcel (Luximin), 265; Ceaușescu
and, 280n42; Comintern Fourth Con-
gress and, 51; execution of, 50, 74, 176;
as intellectual, 55, 64; internationalism

- Pauker, Marcel (*continued*)
 and, 53; as interwar RCP activist, 61;
 Jilava prison hunger strike and, 62;
 Pauker, Ana, and, 81, 101, 124, 290n26;
 RCP leadership and, 57, 62, 67, 73, 86;
 RCP Second Congress (1922) and, 51,
 278n27; Romanian Socialist-Communist
 Party and, 48; Rozvan and, 57;
 Stoica, Gheorghe, and, 103
- Păunescu, Adrian, 225, 247, 249, 251,
 328n36, 328n44
- Pavel, Ștefan, 165
- PD (Democratic Party), 234, 252, 327n30
- PDSR (Party of Romanian Social Democ-
 racy), 234–36, 244, 246–47, 249–50,
 251, 253, 254, 326nn20,21
- Peace Conference in Paris (1946), 114
- peasantry, 39, 108–9, 131, 170, 177
- Penescu, Nicolae, 93
- Peng Chen, 170
- “people’s democracy,” 88, 92, 94, 107, 137
- perestroika, 21, 143, 226, 239
- permanent presidium (RCP), 195–96
- Personism, 254
- personality cult: Ceaușescu, Elena, and,
 208, 214, 219; Ceaușescu and, 21, 188,
 191, 198, 206, 208, 213–15, 220, 222,
 316n46, 317n61; Gheorghiu-Dej and,
 139, 146, 168, 172; Stalin and, 142
- Petre, Lupu (Pressman), 196
- Petrescu, Camil, 151
- Petrescu, Constantin Titel, 55, 60, 93, 97
- Petrescu, Dan, 211, 228
- Petrescu, Dumitru (Gheorghe): Ceauș-
 escu’s rehabilitation of, 103, 199; as
 émigré communist, 103–4, 125, 126; as
 Grivița strike leader, 78, 81, 103–4,
 122–23, 166; at Ministry of Finance,
 129; prison nucleus and, 81, 286n92;
 purge of, 166, 305n54; rehabilitation
 of, 305n54
- Petrescu, Elena. *See* Ceaușescu, Elena
- Petrescu, Gheorghe, 223, 321n93
- Petroveanu, Mihail, 150
- Pintilie, Gheorghe, 99–100. *See also*
 Bodnarenko, Pantelei
- Pintilie, Ilie, 122, 124
- Pioneer Organization, 210
- Pîrvulescu, Constantin, 266; Ceaușescu
 and, 203, 207, 227–28; Chișinevschi-
 Constantinescu purge and, 157; Com-
 intern’s Leninist school and, 123; ex-
 plusion of, 170; Foriș-Koffler purge
 and, 83, 99; Pauker-Luca-Georgescu
 purge and, 87, 299n74; as politburo
 member, 147; prison nucleus and, 83;
 RWP politburo and, 131, 141; under-
 ground leadership and, 86, 97–98,
 114, 315n41
- Pitești experiment, 36
- Ploiești oil refineries strike, 78
- pluralism: “fake,” of Groza regime, 91,
 287n8; in Hungary, 153, 156; national
 communism and, 33–34; political cul-
 ture and, 41; problematic, 250–51; in
 Romania, 237
- PNL. *See* National Liberal Party
- PNȚCD (National Peasant Christian and
 Democratic Party), 234–35, 243–45
- Poarta Albă prison, 36
- Podgorny, Nikolai, 180
- police terror, 142
- Polish Communist Party, 72, 80, 286n89
- Polish Workers’ Party (PPR), 100
- political culture, 30, 244, 251–53, 275n31,
 276n4, 324n3, 325n18, 328n44; of Left,
 37–41, 60–61, 77–78, 80, 284n80,
 286nn89,90; of Right, 40–41,
 277nn11,12, 279n39
- political prisoners, 58, 62, 184, 234,
 243–44, 252
- Political Publishing House, 285n82,
 298n72, 300n3
- political trials. *See* trials
- Poltzer, Georges, 64
- Polytechnical Institute (Bucharest), 205
- Popescu, Dumitru, 20, 195, 204, 291n10
- Popescu-Pușuri, Ion, 79
- poporanism*, 38
- Popovici, Constantin, 45–47, 60
- Popp, Ilonka. *See* Răceanu, Ileana
- populism, 38, 251, 252
- Pospelov, Piotr, 142
- Postanski, Mișa (Posteucă), 123
- postcommunism, 34, 233–54, 326n19,
 326n21
- Potemkin*, 43
- Prague Spring, 200–203, 291n11,
 313nn26,27
- Prahova Valley oil industry strikes, 82
- Pravda*, 45
- Preoteasa, Grigore, 267; Agitprop Depart-
 ment and, 76; Comintern directives
 and, 79, 274n24; Gheorghiu-Dej and,

- 164–65, 305n50–52; as intellectual, 112; Pătrășcanu and, 113; UTC and, 161
- primitive magic, 64, 280n45
- “Principles for the International Division of Labor” (CMEA), 179
- print media, 253–54. *See also names of newspapers*
- Prisoner of the Month (Amnesty International), 212
- prison nucleus, 36, 58, 78–79, 81, 83, 98–100, 122–24, 126–27, 285n85, 295n43
- privatization, 35, 253
- PRM (România Mare Party), 235
- Problems of Communism*, 2, 8
- Problems of Leninism* (Stalin), 123, 158, 306n9
- Pro-Democrația initiative, 247
- Profintern (International of “Red” Trade Unions), 51
- proletariat, 109, 112, 125, 158
- propaganda machine. *See* Agitprop Department
- Protiv, Ion. *See* Pauker, Marcel
- protochronism, 217, 319n76
- PSM. *See* Socialist Party of Labor
- Puławska group (Poland), 34
- PUNR (Romanian National Unity Party), 247, 252
- Purcaru, Ilie, 219
- Rabinsohn, Ana. *See* Pauker, Ana
- Răceanu, Grigore, 79, 165–66, 227–28, 274n24, 305n53
- Răceanu, Ileana, 79, 97, 165, 301n17, 305n53
- Rădăceanu, Eugenia, 205
- Rădăceanu, Lothar, 60, 93–94, 205
- Radek, Karl, 48, 50, 105
- Rădescu, Gheorghe, 89
- Rădescu, Nicolae, 90
- Radio Moscow’s Romanian Service, 17, 74, 102, 126, 278n24
- Radoshovetskaya, Esther. *See* Moghioros, Stela
- Răduică, Grigore, 199
- Rădulescu, Gheorghe (Gogu), 267; Ceaușescu and, 196, 209, 215; Democratic Students’ Front and, 284n79; International Brigades and, 285n82; prison term of, 30; UTC and, 161
- Rădulescu-Motru, Constantin, 161
- railroad workshops strikes, 78, 81–82
- Rajk, László, 106, 113, 116, 128, 134, 139
- Rákosi, Mátyás: Ceaușescu compared to, 223; factionalism and, 95; Gheorghiu-Dej compared to, 98, 123; Nagy and, 135, 138, 139; as “non-Jewish Jew,” 77; Rajk and, 106; RWP Second Congress and, 141; “salami” tactics of, 94; Stalinist terror and, 111
- Rákosism, 139
- Rakovsky, Christian, 42–44, 45, 50, 61–62, 74, 124
- Ralea, Mihai, 60, 76, 123, 161, 183
- Rangheț, Iosif: cadre policies and, 87, 88; Foriș-Koffler purge and, 99; Luca and, 130; Pătrășcanu’s interrogation and, 115; prison nucleus and, 79, 83, 126; RCP leadership and, 86, 98
- Rangheț, Sanda, 205
- Raskovic, Jovan, 214
- Rațiu, Ion, 244
- Răutu, Leonte, 267–68; Agitprop Department and, 76–77, 79, 120, 145; anti-intellectual bias of, 110, 112, 148–49, 150–51, 152, 175–76, 301n10, 302n29, 303n33; Bulan, Tatiana, and, 205; Ceaușescu and, 194; Chișinevschi and, 158, 159, 160; Constantinescu and, 162; Doncea group purge and, 166–67; as émigré communist, 102, 125, 126; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 132–33, 163, 175–76, 302n26, 305n52; Hungarian revolution and, 154; International Brigades and, 285n82; national communism and, 183; Niculescu-Mizil, Paul, and, 194; as “non-Jewish Jew,” 77; as Organizational Bureau member (May 1952), 131; Pauker-Luca-Georgescu purge and, 174–75; plane crash and, 165, 305n51, 52; Preoteasa and, 165; prison nucleus and, 79; Radio Moscow’s Romanian Service, 17; RCP leadership and, 196; RCP Ninth Congress and, 193; RWP plenum speech (June–July 1957), 164, 305n47; RWP Second Congress and, 141; Soviet citizenship and, 80; as Stalinist, 134; “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School and, 291n10
- RCP (Romanian Communist Party), 85, 194; afterlife of, 232, 233–54; anniversary (45th) of, 194,

RCP (*continued*)

- 198, 284n75; antifascism and, 72–84; archives of, 7–12; First Congress (May 1921), 42, 44, 47–48; Second Congress (October 1922), 50–52, 124, 278n27; Third Congress (August 1924), 52, 54–56; Fourth Congress (1928), 64–71; Fifth Congress (1931), 58, 71–72, 96, 158, 282n58, 282n60, 282–83nn63,64, 288n14; Sixth Congress (February 1948), 93; Ninth Congress (July 1965), 27, 193, 194–98, 201, 203, 207, 211, 275n27, 282n62, 310n41, 313n30; Tenth Congress (August 1969), 204, 206, 305n54, 313n24, 314n35; Eleventh Congress (November 1974), 206–7, 314n37; Twelfth Congress (November 1979), 203, 207, 209, 315n40; Thirteenth Congress (November 1984), 207, 209, 210, 315n42; Fourteenth Congress (November 1989), 27, 28, 209, 229, 323n111; disappearance of, 19–20, 29, 241–42, 243; electoral fraud and, 287–88nn9,10; epilogue of, 237; inferiority complex of, 24, 25–26; “internationalist traditions” of, 203; legitimating campaign of, 81–82; membership of, 57–58, 279nn36,37; name changes of, 93, 194; national communism and (*see* national communism); party coup (at Ninth Congress), 195–97; “patriotic faction” myth and, 28, 275n28; pensions and, 312n13; plenum (October 1945), 121; plenum (January 1950), 127; plenum (February–March 1952), 127; plenum (May–June 1952), 11, 129–31; plenum (June 1958), 11; plenum (March 1965), 310n41; plenum (April 1968), 199, 313n24; three centers of, 85, 97–104, 111; underground (1921–1944), 37–84, 189. *See also* RWP
- RCPP (Romanian Communist Party Program), 207
- Rebreanu, Liviu, 151, 183
- Red Army. *See* Soviet Army
- “red-brown” parties, 4, 249
- Red Professors’ School, 57
- “Rehabilitations Commission,” 105, 294n30
- re-Stalinization, 198, 206
- retrospective determinism, 198
- Revái, Jozsef, 77, 280n44
- revisionism, 19, 22, 80, 138, 144, 148–49, 154, 166, 169, 273n2
- Revista* 22, 238, 325n7
- Revolutionary Institutional Party (Mexico), 254
- Right. *See* political culture
- “right-wing deviators”: Ceaușescu and, 176; Constantinescu and, 162; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 174; Pauker-Luca-Georgescu purge and, 127, 128–29, 131, 141, 298n68
- “right-wing opportunism,” 69, 284n75
- Roitman, Iosif. *See* Chișinevschi, Iosif
- Rolland, Romain, 60
- Roller, Mihail, 79, 110, 112, 159, 162, 175, 184, 291n7, 309n36
- Roman, Petre, 30, 234, 237, 243, 244, 252, 275n30, 313n28, 325n16
- Roman, Valter: Agitprop Department and, 76–77; Chișinevschi purge and, 160; as émigré communist, 102–3, 125, 126, 300n3; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 103, 153, 175; Hungarian revolution and, 156, 304n37, 304n40; International Brigades and, 285n82; Pauker-Luca-Georgescu purge and, 175; Prague Spring and, 313n28; Spanish Civil War and, 203
- România Liberă*, 165, 243, 254, 328n40
- România Liberă broadcasting station, 103, 126, 156
- România Mare*, 253, 323n114, 328n44
- România Mare Party (PRM), 235, 246, 327n29
- Romanian Academy, 110, 162
- Romanian Academy Library, 7, 10
- Romanian Army, 102–3
- Romanian Communist Party. *See* RCP
- Romanian Émigré Bureau (Moscow), 100, 102
- Romanian Helsinki Citizens’ Initiative, 239
- Romanian Military Revolutionary Committee, 43
- Romanian National Party, 56
- Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR), 247, 252
- Romanian Orthodox Church, 39
- Romanian People’s Republic, 94, 183, 184, 310n40
- Romanian Service of Information (SRI), 9, 29, 91, 92, 246, 254

- Romanian Social Democratic Party. *See* RSDP
- Romanian Socialist-Communist Party, 48
- Romanian-Soviet dispute, 143, 178, 189–90, 301n18
- Romanian State Archives, 9–10
- Romanian Workers' Party. *See* RWP
- Romanian Writers' Union. *See* Writers' Union
- Roșca, D. D., 183
- Roth, Wilhelm (Willi), 68
- Rothchild, Joseph, 178
- Rotman, Dora, 72
- Rozvan, Eugen, 279n35; as delegate to Third International, 45–47; execution of, 57, 74; as intellectual, 57, 64; as interwar RCP activist, 61; Luca and, 125; Nagy and, 57; national nihilism and, 69–70; Pauker, Marcel, and, 57; RCP executive committee (1922) and, 50; RCP Second Congress (1922) and, 51; rehabilitations by, 57
- Rozvan, Ștefan, 56
- Rozvanyi, Jenő. *See* Rozvan, Eugen
- RSDP (Romanian Social Democratic Party), 42, 44, 93–94, 194
- Rusev, Iordan Dragan. *See* Borilă, Petre
- Russification, 147, 159, 192
- RWP (Romanian Workers' Party): anniversary (30th) of, 128; First Congress (February 1948), 93, 125; Second Congress, 79, 140, 141, 145–46, 165, 300n8; Third Congress, 147, 160, 168, 169–72, 306n2; Fourth Congress (July 1965), 193, 194; Chișinevschi and, 159–60; Constantinescu, Miron, and, 152; CPSU Twentieth Congress and, 142–48; creation of, 93; de-Stalinization and, 148, 157–58, 162, 171–74; Hungarian revolution and, 153–57, 304n37, 304n40; name changes of, 93, 194; national communism and, 183–84; plenum (November 1946), 114; plenum (March 1949), 109; plenum (March 1952), 162; plenum (May–June 1952), 131, 162; plenum (August 1953), 139; plenum (April 1954), 140–41; plenum (March–April 1956), 145–46; plenum (June–July 1957), 157–65; plenum (June 1958), 165–67, 309n36; plenum (November–December 1961), 11, 104, 144, 146, 160, 161–62, 168, 172–76, 177, 280n42, 306n9; plenum (April 1962), 177; plenum (March 1963), 180; plenum (April 1964), 11, 181–82, 190, 195, 197, 202. *See also* RCP
- Sablin, 45
- “sacrificial curves” for reducing wages, 82, 286n95
- Sadoveanu, Mihail, 123
- Sălăjan, Leontin, 153
- Sănătescu, Constantin, 89, 90
- Șandru, Ovidiu, 83, 165
- Săptămîna*, 211
- Sasu, Ion, 210
- satellitization, 88, 184
- Săvulescu, Traian, 123
- scapegoats, 118, 137, 162
- Schein, Solomon, 67, 68, 278n27, 281n52
- Schwammen, Hertha. *See* Pătrășcanu, Elena
- scientific research, 110, 205–6
- Scînteia*: Ceaușescu supported by, 194, 214–15; Constantinescu as editor, 161; Gheorghiu-Dej supported by, 184; Popescu as editor, 195; Răutu as editor, 102; Toma as editor, 77, 99, 110, 131, 310n40
- Scînteia tineretului*, 210
- SCP. *See* Social Democratic Party
- Scurtu, Ioan, 9
- secession, right to, 55, 112
- secret police: Bodnarenko and, 83; Ceaușescu and, 147–48, 192, 193, 226; Chișinevschi and, 159; Constantinescu, Miron, and, 146; in Czechoslovakia, 291n11; Drăghici, Alexandru, and, 196; Luca, Vasile, and, 130; post-communism and, 237, 246, 248, 252. *See also* Securitate
- “secret speech” (Khrushchev), 142–45, 147, 157
- Securitate: archives and, 289n19; Bodnarenko and, 289n22; Ceaușescu and, 7, 21, 189, 193, 194, 223, 226, 230, 249; Constantinescu, Miron, and, 146; Drăghici and, 142, 166; intellectuals, Hungarian, and, 155; origins and role of, 20; Patilineț and, 19; Pauker, Ana, and, 81; postcommunism and, 239–40, 246, 248, 322n102, 325n8; Răduică, Grigore, and, 199; Stoica, Gheorghe, and, 199. *See also* secret police

- self-criticism: Gheorghiu-Dej and, 173;
Luca and, 129; Pauker, Ana, and, 129,
290n26; postcommunism and, 248;
RWP and, 145, 154; Stalinist terror
and, 201–2
- self-determination, 43, 55, 69, 112
- Șelmaru, Traian, 110, 175, 309n36
- Sencovici, Alexandru, 72, 130, 160,
280n42, 283n65, 295n43
- Șerbulescu, Andrei. *See* Zilber, Belu
- Shafir, Michael, 2, 14, 38, 39, 44, 179, 211,
276n4, 319n76
- Shcherbakov, Aleksandr, 89
- Shelepin, Aleksandr, 223
- Shepilov, Amitri, 163
- Short Biography* (Mitin), 122
- show trials. *See* trials
- Shutov, Nikolai, 129
- Sighet prison, 36, 244
- Siguranța, 62–63, 68, 98, 294n31
- Silent Escape, The* (Constante), 105
- Silone, Ignazio, 46–47
- Sino-Soviet schism, 3, 6, 178, 181, 197, 201,
215, 307n26, 314n33
- Sinyavsky, Andrei, 200
- Sîrbu, Victoria (Mira), 97, 117, 294n32
- Skilling, H. Gordon, 181
- Sladek, Mary, 9
- Slánský, Rudolf, 17, 95, 98, 116, 128, 134
- Smeral, Bohumil, 68, 69
- social democracy, 42, 50, 65, 71, 97
- Social Democratic Party (SDP): coalition
government and, 86; Cunesco,
Sergiu, and, 244; Dobrogeanu-
Gherea, Constantin, and, 44; elec-
toral fraud and, 287n9; founding of,
55; interwar history of, 59–60;
Rakovsky and, 43; RCP and, 61; as
RCP successor, 6, 18
- socialism, 3, 128, 138, 151, 156
- socialism, Romanian, 41–50, 55, 277n17;
Ceaușescu and, 22, 249; Dobrogeanu-
Gherea, Constantin, and, 38–40,
276n4; in interwar period, 59–60;
Labiș, Nicolae, and, 303n33; Rozvan
and, 57, 279n35
- Socialismul*, 49, 53
- “socialism with a human face,” 30, 34, 206
- Socialist Party of Labor (PSM), 237, 247,
248, 328n36, 328n39
- Socialist Party of Romania, 55
- socialist populism, 251–52
- socialist realism, 110, 149, 151, 192, 225,
296n50, 302n29, 308n34
- Socialist Unity Front (Frontul Unității So-
cialiste), 206
- Socialist Workers' Party. *See* Social Demo-
cratic Party
- Social Unity Party (SED), 20
- sociology, 162–63, 310n41
- Socor, Vladimir, 2
- Solidarity (Poland), 202, 229
- Solomon, Barbu, 93
- Șoltuțiu, Ion, 116–17, 293n26
- Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr, 180
- Sorel, Georges, 60
- Souvarine, Boris, 142
- sovereignty, 168
- Soviet agents: Gheorghiu-Dej and, 123,
129, 135, 291n11, 296n44; prison nu-
cleus and, 83, 123; Sino-Soviet schism
and, 181; underground leadership
and, 97–98
- Soviet Army: August 1944 coup and, 26,
84, 85–86, 88, 94, 126; Hungarian rev-
olution and, 153–55; RCP and, 87, 100,
124, 125; Roman, Valter, and, 103; Ro-
manian occupation by, 25, 59, 91,
288n18; Stalin's crimes against, 142;
withdrawal of, 167, 289n19, 305n56
- Soviet International Department, 88
- Soviet-Romanian relations. *See* Romanian-
Soviet dispute
- Spanish Civil War: Borilă and, 102–3, 142,
175, 203; Burcă, Mihai, and, 203;
Doncea, Constantin, and, 103;
Ibárruri, Dolores, and, 101; Jar,
Alexandru, and, 150; Luca, Elisabeta,
and, 296n50; Molojec, Boleslaw, and,
100; RCP and, 78, 285n82; Roman,
Valter, and, 203; Stoica, Gheorghie,
and, 103, 203, 280n42; Tismaneanu's
parents and, 17, 74, 78, 283n67,
298n72; Vida, Geza, and, 203
- Spanish Communist Party in exile, 4, 141,
197, 271n11
- Sperber, Manès, 56, 61
- Spiru, Basil, 49, 74, 278n24
- sputnik, 167
- SRI. *See* Romanian Service of Information
- Stahl, H. H., 161, 183
- Stalin, Joseph: antisemitism and, 127; Bol-
shevization and, 6, 54, 106, 278n31;
Ceaușescu and, 163–64; Chișinevschi

- influenced by, 158; death of, 36, 131–32, 136, 291n7; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 104, 123, 129, 288n18; Khrushchev's critique of, 142–44; paranoid delusions of, 132; purges and, 122, 133; RCP and, 120; RWP and, 94; Tito and, 4
- Stalinism: anti-Soviet, 24–27; Ceaușescu and, 204, 208, 218, 221–22, 224, 229, 320n77; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 123; primitive magic and, 280n45; Rakovsky and, 61–62; RCP and, 64–71, 112–13; Rozvan and, 57
- Stalinist blueprint, 107–10
- Stalinist dogmatism, 170–71
- Stalinist repression, phases of, 113, 292n15
- Stalinist terror, 110–11, 201–2, 248, 290n29
- “Stalintern,” 124
- Stănculescu. *See* Chișinevschi, Iosif
- Stănculescu, Atanasie, 28–29
- Stănescu, Ion, 26, 204
- Staszewski, Stefan, 134
- state socialism, 244–45
- Stavrakis, Peter, 98
- Ștefănescu, Alexandru, 117
- Ștefănescu, Ion Traian, 210
- “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School, 29, 204, 246, 291n10
- Ștefanov, Boris: Comintern Fifth Congress and, 54; Comintern Seventh Congress and, 72–73, 97; Dealul Spirii trial and, 49; as interwar RCP activist, 61; RCP home directorate and, 57, 63, 67; RCP leadership and, 50, 283nn67,68; RCP Second Congress (1922) and, 51, 278n27; “right-wing opportunism” and, 55
- Stefanski-Gorn, Alexander, 72, 102, 283n64
- Stere, Constantin, 38
- Sternberg, Haim, 50, 52
- Stoica, Gheorghe: Ceaușescu and, 104, 199, 203; Comintern's Leninist school and, 123; as émigré communist, 104, 125; as Grivița strike leader, 103–4; home secretariat and, 72; International Brigades and, 285n82; Pătrășcanu's rehabilitation and, 199; plenum speech (November–December 1961), 280n42; Spanish Civil War and, 103, 203, 280n42, 283n65; UTC and, 65
- Streinu, Vladimir, 183
- strikes, 78, 81–82, 286n95
- Student Democratic Front, 77, 284n79
- students, Hungarian, 139, 164
- students, Romanian: Ceaușescu and, 164, 166, 206; Constantinescu and, 161; in postcommunism period, 239–40, 247; socialism and, 40; uprising of (1956), 25, 35, 147, 154–55, 276n41. *See also* UTC
- Students' League, 239
- Supreme Defense Council, 254
- Supreme Tribunal, 200
- Susaikov, Ivan Zaharovich, 90
- Suslik, Iosif (Badeyev), 68
- Suslov, Mikhail, 89, 94, 143
- Talpeș, Ioan, 29
- Tămădău episode, 92–93
- Tănase, Stelian, 238, 280n44
- Țării, Sfatul, 124
- “Tasks of Youth Unions” (Lenin), 52
- Tătărăscu, Gheorghe, 58
- Technical Publishing House (Bucharest), 242
- television, 239, 241, 253, 254, 317n61
- Teodorescu, Alin, 238
- Țepeș, Vlad (the Impaler), 235
- Țeposu, Radu, 10
- terrorist police state, 135, 142, 164, 249
- Tertulian, N., 150
- Thalheimer, August, 65, 122
- Thälmann, Ernst, 65
- “Third Way,” 250–51, 253
- Thorez, Maurice, 101, 123, 125, 143, 144
- Thracian-Dacian mythology, 27, 249, 321n89
- Tillon, Charles, 122
- Timișoara Society, 239
- Timișoara uprising, 25, 29, 164, 230, 240, 323n114
- Tineretul Progresist (Progressive Youth), 92
- Tinkelman, Asea, 48
- Țirgu-Jiu camp, 83, 86, 100, 113–14, 124, 126, 159, 161, 165
- Țirgu Mureș Pro-Europa initiative, 247
- Tismăneanu, Hermina, 17, 74, 78, 283n67, 285n82, 297n54, 297n57, 297n61
- Tismăneanu, Leonte, 17, 78, 285n82, 298n72, 300n3, 306n9
- Tisminețki, Nehama, 297n58, 300n8
- Tisminetsky, Leonid. *See* Tismăneanu, Leonte

- Tito, Josip Broz: Ceaușescu compared to, 188, 207; Comintern's Leninist school and, 122; de-Sovietization and, 184; de-Stalinization and, 137–38, 139; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 4, 99, 132, 152–53, 171, 299n78; Gheorghiu-Dej compared to, 123; national communism and, 32; Pătrășcanu compared to, 118, 119; RCP leadership and, 92; Stalin and, 4; Stalinist terror and, 111
- Titoism, 3, 106, 118, 144, 151, 201, 221
- Tkacenko, Pavel, 63, 67
- Togliatti, Palmiro: Constantinescu and, 144, 162; Gheorghiu-Dej compared to, 123; as intellectual, 76; “memorial note” of, 178, 200; national communism and, 32; Pauker, Ana, and, 101, 125
- Tökés, László, 230
- Toma, Ana (Grossman), 76, 97, 175, 205, 289n22, 294n31, 310n40
- Toma, Sorin: Agitprop Department and, 76–77, 79, 175; anti-intellectual bias of, 112; Argezi and, 291n8; Chișinevschi and, 159; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 99, 289n20, 310n40; Jar and, 302n26; as Organizational Bureau member (May 1952), 131; Roller, Mihail, and, 309n36; *Sctuteia* and, 110; Soviet citizenship and, 80; on succession struggle, 185; succession struggle and, 310n40; Toma, Ana, and, 97
- Torańska, Teresa, 134
- Tordai, Victor, 67
- Torossian, Herant, 117, 294n32
- Totu, Ion, 30
- trade union movement, 50–51
- traditional parties, 89, 91–93, 109
- “Tragicomedy of Romanian Communism, The” (Tismaneanu), 8
- “Transcendental Meditation Sect,” 27
- Transnistria camps, 83, 159
- Transylvania, 40, 44–45, 69, 160, 164
- “Treason of the Generous,” 38
- “trial of communism” (*procesul comunismului*), 246
- trials: of Beria, 137, 299n2; of Ceaușescu, 231, 242; in Czechoslovakia, 291n11; of Daniel, Yuli, 200; at Danube-Black Sea Canal project, 300n4; Dealul Spirii, 48–49; of Grivița railroad strikers, 78, 122; of intellectuals, 152, 303nn31,32; of Koffler, 117–19, 294n31; of Luca, Vasile, 130; in Moscow, 73, 75, 90, 101, 142; of Nagy, Imre, 156; of Pătrășcanu, 104–5, 113, 117–19, 140–41, 292n14, 292–93nn20,21, 293n23, 293n26, 294nn29,30, 294nn35,36; of Pauker, Ana, 133; in people's democracies, 229; of Roman, Valter, 285n82; of Sinyavsky, Andrei, 200; of Slánský, Rudolf, 116; Stalinist, 81, 111, 137; of students, 166
- Trianon Treaty, 24, 40, 69
- Trofin, Virgil, 166, 196, 204, 210–11, 316n52
- Trojan Horse complex, 95
- Trotsky, Leon, 37, 42, 44, 54, 106, 142
- Trotskyists, 148
- Trujillo, Rafael, 30
- Tucker, Robert C., 13, 273n10, 275n31
- Tudor, Corneliu Vadim, 4, 213, 235–36, 246, 249–50, 251, 253, 327n29
- Tudoran, Dorin, 211, 216, 318n72, 321n96, 322n100
- Tudor Vladimirescu Division, 102, 103, 280n42
- Țugui, Pavel, 301n10, 303nn30,31, 305n52
- Twentieth Congress (CPSU), 25, 142–48, 157, 163, 171, 177
- “Two Thousand Word Manifesto,” 202
- Tyminski, Stanislaw, 235
- UDMR (Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania), 251, 252
- Ukrainian Communist Party, 70, 141
- Ukrainian Supreme Soviet, 126
- Ulbricht, Walter, 95, 122, 123, 144, 179, 197, 278n24
- underground period, 37–84, 279n35; Ceaușescu and, 78, 194, 199; Chișinevschi and, 158; factionalism and, 111; party legitimacy and, 189–90
- Union of Communist Students' Associations of Romania, 209
- Union of Romanian Students' Associations, 166
- Unitary Socialist Party. *See* Social Democratic Party
- United Nations, 141, 165, 228; Human Rights Commission, 243; Youth Year Commission, 210
- United Workers' Front, 121
- UTC (Communist Youth Union): Bolshevikization and, 65; Ceaușescu, Nicu,

- and, 209–10; Ceaușescu and, 86, 166; Constantinescu and, 161; Florescu, Gheorghe, and, 131; Iliescu, Ion, and, 242, 246; Kharkov meeting and, 68; membership of, 87; reestablishment of, 92
 utopianism, 34, 36, 61, 151
- Vaida, Vasile, 130
 Vaida-Voevod, Alexandru, 82
 Valev, E. B., 179, 307n21
 Vapniarka camp, 131
 Varga, Eugene (Jenő), 57
 Vasilichi, Gheorghe: Doncea group purge and, 165; French *maquis* and, 203; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 175; as Grivița strike leader, 78, 81, 122–23; International Brigades and, 285n82; prison nucleus and, 81, 286n92; RCP politburo and, 295n41
 Vass, Ghizela, 205
 Verdeț, Ilie, 268–69; Ceaușescu and, 26, 196, 204, 316n48; as prime minister, 21; Socialist Party of Labor and, 247
 “verification,” 116–17, 127, 130
 Versailles Treaty, 24, 40, 54, 69
 Vianu, Ion, 211
 Vianu, Tudor, 161, 183
Viața Românească, 38, 151
 Vida, Geza, 203
 Vijoli, Aurel, 130, 297n62
 Vilcu, Vasile, 165
 Vințe, Ion, 130, 155, 299n74
 Vitner, Ion, 149–50
 Vlad, Iulian, 29, 30, 226
 Voicu, Ștefan (Aurel Rotenberg), 76–77, 79, 112, 165, 175
 Voinea, Șerban, 60
 Voitec, Ștefan, 59, 60, 93–94
 Voroshilov, Kliment, 122, 139
 Vulcănescu, Mircea, 161, 304n42
 Vyshinsky, Andrei Ianuarievich, 90
- Walesa, Lech, 235
 Warsaw Pact: Ceaușescu and, 31, 229; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 185, 190, 193; Hungarian revolution and, 154; Prague Spring and, 200, 201, 202, 230; RCP boycotted by countries of, 27
 Warski (Warszawski), Adolf, 61
 Wat, Aleksander, 54, 279n32
 Werfel, Roman, 134
 West, the: Romanian democracy and, 91; Romanian relationships with, 5, 31, 182; Tito and, 139; views of Ceaușescu in, 27, 187–89, 191, 203, 207, 311n3, 317n55; views of Stalinism in, 138, 142
 Western communist parties, 197
 Western intelligence, 118, 154
 witch-hunts: Beniuc, Mihai, and, 308n34; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 25; Pauker, Ana, and, 101; Rajk and, 106
 Workers’ and Peasants’ Bloc (BMT), 57, 58, 67, 69, 72, 113
 workers’ revolts, 78, 81–82, 212, 317n58
 world communism: Ceaușescu and, 215–16, 226; Gheorghiu-Dej and, 178–79; Prague Spring and, 200–201, 313n28; RCP and, 4, 190, 195, 197; RWP and, 134, 169–82. *See also* Sino-Soviet schism
World Marxist Review, 181, 300n3
 World Youth Festival, 140
 Writers’ Union, 110, 150–52, 183, 192, 193, 201, 302n29
- xenophobia, 41, 127, 251
- Yezhov, Nikolay, 64
 Yezhovshchina, 64
 Young Writers Congress, 152
 Yugoslav Communist League, 169
 Yugoslavia Communist Party, 132
- Zaciu, Mircea, 310n40, 319n76
 Zaharescu, Barbu, 79, 165, 181
 Zaharia, Ilie, 161
 Zahariadis, Nikos, 4
 Zamfirescu, Dan, 225
 Zeiger, Simion, 123
 Zhdanov, Andrei, 95
 Zhdanovism, 133, 140, 143, 176, 192, 206, 218, 309n36
 Zhdanov School for the Social Sciences, 110, 291n10
 Zhivkov, Todor, 21, 31, 141, 197, 199, 221, 227
 Zhou, Enlai, 172, 183, 195
 Zilber, Belu, 21, 75, 105, 117, 290n29, 293n23, 294nn29,30, 294n32, 294n35, 295n38
 Zinoviev, Grigory, 45, 50, 53, 61
 Zionism, 131, 281n49
 Zuckerman, Bercu. *See* Zaharescu, Barbu

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