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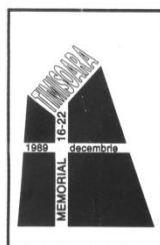
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Foreword

Starting with 2007, the “Memorial of Revolution” Association, through the National Centre of Documentation, Research and Public Information began publishing the “Memorial 1989”, a scientific and information bulletin. The magazine comes with interesting studies and documentaries that approach different subjects related to the Romanian Revolution of 1989, the socio-political changes from the former Eastern European communist countries and the particular period pertaining to the communist dictatorship.

We have released this special English version of the magazine upon the request of our readers who are not familiar with the Romanian language. This issue gathers the most interesting studies and documentaries that have been printed in our first ten editions of the magazine published in Romanian language.

Gino **RADO**

The Civic Spirit of Timișoara during the National – Communist Years

The idea according to which the Central European cultural model is in fact a herald of political message has its own significance which was properly understood by some people and severely criticized by others¹. At the beginning of the 20th century, Transylvania and Banat were two Romanian provinces that fostered the development of larger cities, such as Cluj (Kolozsvár), Brașov (Brassó), Sibiu (Nagyszeben), Târgu-Mureș (Marosvásárhely), and smaller urban centres able to build up and develop their own social and economic structures, such as Turda (Torda), Deva (Déva), Miercurea Ciuc (Csikszereda), Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy), Odorheiu-Secuiesc (Székelyudvar), Hunedoara (Vajdahunyad), Zalău (Zilah), Șimleu Silvaniei (Erdelysomlyó). Besides the largest city of the western part of the country, Timișoara (Temesvár), other cities, such as Reșița (Resica), Lugoj (Lugos), Jimbolia (Zsombolya), Sînnicolau Mare (Nagyszentmiklós) also emerged in Banat. In Bihor, the City of Oradea (Nagyvárad) experienced an outstanding development, becoming thus the most important symbol of the leading-edge cultural life while in the northern part of Partium, the cities of Satu Mare (Szatmárnémeti) and Carei (Nagykároly) began to satisfy various social and economic goals which required or facilitated numerous contacts with the western areas of the former dualist monarchy.

The most important and considerable process of modernization in Banat and Transylvania took place in Timișoara. The differences occurred in the aforementioned Romanian regions have been strongly influenced by the cultural physiognomy of both Timișoara and Cluj. While the first city has always been inclined to multi- and interculturalism, developing thus a

¹ This is not about the nostalgia of the past, but about the illustration of the idea according to which the past is frequently highlighting outstanding examples for the future. *Vergangene Zukunft (the past of the future)* is a fundamental concept advanced by the modern universal historiography able to demonstrate the manner in which the history creeps into the present or the causes which turned it into a model for the future. Reinhart Koselleck, an illustrious historian whose work is considered to be one of the most exhaustive and original studies of the post-war Germany, has developed a full-scale theory in terms of making the most of the experiences of the past. Within this context, he noticed that each and every authentic project relied on the background of the past. Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeit*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1995. See the Romanian version, Idem, *Conceptul de istorie [Concept of History]*, translation by Victor Neumann and Patrick Lavrits. *Studiu introductiv [Introductory Study]* authored by Victor Neumann, Univ. Al. I. Cuza Publishing House, Iași, 2005..

powerful civic patriotism, the second city has been attracted to the ethno-linguistic identity which eventually led to the development of a typical nationalism based on history and affinity. The frustrations brought about by the second position held by Cluj in relation to Budapest and Bucharest, have also been real and have temporarily hindered the embracement of the basic principles of open society.

Pluralism and Pursuit of Freedom

The historical background briefly illustrated above determined the inhabitants of Timișoara to adopt a critical attitude towards the authoritarian and totalitarian politics of that time. In spite of the changes occurred in the demographic structure that characterized the years which followed the First World War and particularly the period that succeeded the Second World War, and despite the excessive monitoring of the individuals originating from different linguistic communities, others than the Romanian community, the inhabitants of the city managed to perpetuate a significant part of the body of civic values fostered and cultivated by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Within this context which is impossible to compare with other contexts afferent to different urban centres of the communist Romania, the city of Timișoara continued to distinguish itself by its outstanding civic life. The merit to have understood the tremendous chance of cooperation and consequently, to have comprehended the structure of the communitarian life belonged to those who have felt, thought and acted beyond the so-called ethnic or confessional² affiliations. Particularly captivated by the status of being a “citizen of the Bourg”, as time passed by, the people have developed open-mindedness to the otherness of any type, which, for the rest of the country where the linguistic and religious communities were excessively focussed on their own identity, was quite impossible. Far from referring to the climate of tolerance shown by a certain majority towards the minority groups, this is all about the real cohabitation where the civic development of the individual was considered to be a matter of precedence.

What I think it is worth bearing in mind is that a wide segment of the city inhabitants was longing for freedom; the people wanted to live a free life, to be part of free trading activities, to travel unhindered across the

² Victor Neumann, *Multicultural Identities in an Europe of Regions. The Case of Banat County*, in *European Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 8 (1) , 1997, Carfax Publishing House, pp. 19-35, Franz Liebhardt, *Banater Mosaik. Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte*, Kriterion, Bukarest, 1976.

border and to have access to information. The interest in having a steady financial condition was always part of the living concept of the inhabitants of Timișoara. Consequently, the preoccupation for money, household management and purchase of goods has never been neglected and it continued to exist notwithstanding the difficulties that characterized the last years of Ceaușescu's regime. Even during the food crisis which occurred at the end of the 70's and became deeper and deeper during the 80's, there were several social categories who managed to keep reasonable living standards. The so-called flea market which traded goods originating from the neighbouring states, *i.e.* Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria and Germany – a market which the authorities have repeatedly tried to suppress – had an exceptional role in preserving and propagating the peoples' interest in the western material civilization. As for the need for knowledge and information shown by the average citizen, it was a genuine need, proven by the fact that the inhabitants of Timișoara were frequently watching the TV programs broadcasted by the televisions of Belgrade, Novi-Sad and Budapest. The manufacture of special TV aerials able to give access to the televisions broadcasting in the neighbouring states had become a habit. One of the regime representatives, who had been sent to Timișoara, intended to eliminate all TV aerials installed on the roofs of the buildings because he was aware of the fact that the information received from different audio-visual broadcasters conflicted with the official ideology and propaganda.

The intellectuals have let themselves shaped under and by virtue of the older traditions of the city; in other words, they became the product of their living in this area. They have been neither idolized by the masses nor have they tried or attempted to impose certain models. Their air of normality was astonishing in relation to the appearance of other intellectuals from other cities of Romania. They have kept something from the features of the former intelligentsia which claimed its origins in the culture of the Central Europe³. This is the reason why the inhabitants of Bucharest felt reluctant to the values emerged and promoted by Timișoara and, unfortunately, that attitude continued even after the twilight of political events of 1989. It is however certain that the cultural elite of Timișoara had benefited from no publicity or advertisement. The fear to think differently from the way imposed by the regime was obvious and it emerged especially because the Banat region was in fact the westernmost point of the country, giving thus countless and uncontrollable opportunities to contact the outer world. The discontent was also explained by the existence of certain minority groups

³ Franz Liebhardt, *op.cit.*

towards whom the officials showed constant reluctance and scepticism⁴. Consequently, the continuous supervision of the Hungarian, German, Hebrew and even the Serbian communities was well-known. In fact, what I want to emphasize is that as a consequence of fostering the Timișoara's civic spirit, the inhabitants there were able to live a rather decent life compared to other cities of the country.

As we all know, the communism pursued to indoctrinate the population with completely different standards, others than those pertaining to the liberal – bourgeois world. However, there are numerous examples which acknowledge that not everything happened as planned by the higher officials of the communist regime. The preservation of a certain state of Central European civilization which actually derived from the Austrian cosmopolitanism of the 18th century allowed and fostered the existence of many traditional communities in Timișoara, such as the German, Hungarian, Romanian, Serbian and Hebrew communities. On the other hand, both the interculturalism and the interconfessional values explain the predilection of the inhabitants of this city to leave the ghettos and to diminish or even to reject the preoccupation for the purism of origins. This is in fact the source of the high reluctance towards the nationalist – traditionalist* politics which supported Herder's *Volksgeist* idea according to which the progress of the linguistic communities might depend on the embracement of a certain organic social model. This nationalism lays particular emphasis on the autochthonous values created and developed in the rural environment. Nevertheless, this ideology – always conservative and frequently xenophobe and anti-Semitic – had numerous supporters in the Eastern and Central European states. It is worth mentioning that those ideational orientations have been based on the authoritarian regimes that characterized the 30's as well as on the dictatorial regimes imposed by Antonescu and Ceaușescu.

The perpetuation of the urban habits and the cosmopolitan ideology specific to the Austrian empire enabled the survival of the decent standards of living as mentioned before. As a matter of fact, those aspects constantly fed the temptation to continue the professional associative formulas required not only in the context of technical improvements but also to preserving the existence of the local community. As Lemberg or Cernăuți, Timișoara was and partially remained, until the events of December 1989, a multicultural city par excellence and a city where the so-called ethnical frontiers had

⁴ Victor Neumann, Ebrei dopo diluvio. Gli orfani della Mitteleuropa, *Lettera Internazionale*, Roma, no. 54, 1997, pp. 62-64.

never reached the relevance of those characterizing the neighbouring regions. Such attitude has never assumed or led to the disappearance of any of the linguistic and religious communities. It is then natural to wonder about and identify the effective means used to preserve the civic culture and how such culture managed to contribute to the political metamorphosis of 1989. Timișoara was the city which fostered several phenomena which were completely unusual for a country overwhelmed by the Ceaușescu's dictatorship and which represented a genuine avant-garde in terms of the rich contents of ideas. The cultural manifestations were implicitly or explicitly marked by both the symbols of non-conformism and the veiled challenge of the regime. The trend of thinking outside the box was structured and developed not only among several intellectual and artistic circles but also within the social-community circles. Among others, the following societies have excelled: *The Sigma Artistic Group*, *Banat Aktionsgruppe* which gathered the German native writers, *The Bionic Group* led by Prof. Eduard Pamfil, the multilingual literary circles governed by the Writers' Union of Romania, the inter-confessional gatherings, the film libraries, *The Phoenix Band*. All were speaking out against the system and all were engaged in permanent intellectual searches, categorically declining the wooden language and the totalitarian ideology.

Sigma: A Genuine European Synchronisation

In an account given in December 1990, the artist Roman Cotoșman remembers exactly how the *Group III*, which later on became the *Sigma Group* came into being. The idea of setting up an experimental group of the visual artists of Timișoara whose main goal was focussed on using the constructive principles and implementing the prospective methods, emerged after numerous and sometimes endless discussions with Ștefan Bertalan, Roman Cotoșman and Constantin Flondor. The projects were to represent special "communication systems" "tailored for particular environmental spaces designed to integrate arts". The partnership involving engineers, architects and scientists provided the group with an outstanding multidisciplinary construction which was quite peculiar not only for the general context of the 60's but also within the context of a country governed by a totalitarian regime. An ordinary kidney disease and some fortunate circumstances gave Roman Cotoșman the opportunity to travel to Paris, the capital of France. "The kinetic art was in full swing and I was deeply impressed by Schöffer's light towers. I was striving to understand, at a glance, the language of both the structuralism and the nouveau roman;

during my frequent tours to the theatre, I saw several plays signed by Ionesco or Beckett. I had with me a list of books drawn up by Ciocârlie, books which I managed to buy and brought into the country, avoiding somehow the customs search at my arrival in Romania. I was coming back home determined to radically change both my method and my means of work. But, once I came to Romania, I found again the obsolete formal atmosphere of conformism mixed with the fear of contamination with the decadence originated from the West. 2 or 3 years had to pass until the cultural freedom was actually felt. I was frequently meeting Livius Ciocârlie as our friendship had been deeply rooted since the classical high school years. In all our discussions or work projects we were driven by the same goal: to search for and identify, each of us, in our own field of work, new methods of expression. We were both living the adventure of creation and at the same time we found the fading-out of the traditional arts completely irreversible”⁵.

The artist returned from Paris having his knowledge enriched by new experiences, new readings and valuable impressions gathered while visiting the most famous museums and art galleries where he had discovered the marvellous achievements of the pioneers of constructivism, kinetic art and lyric abstractionism. “He was strolling from morning till night, visiting one gallery after another, barely eating enough to survive (sometimes one meal every three days) and buying books, cloths, disks and transistor radios. He went to see *The Bald Soprano*, because, for us, Ionesco as a mysterious writer; we did not even dare to imagine him” (Ciocârlie,1968). He had to cope with the inertias of a political system which opposed to everything that involved changes and which controlled both the process of creation and the creators’ lives. He would find out that due to the small liberalisation emerged at the end of the sixth decade, Timișoara was in fact the beehive of sufficient open-minded persons who were aiming for a completely different ideological orientation; he would also learn that the city offered sufficient civic-based references to accept the roles of the cultural experiments. Cotoșman’s portrait drafted by one of his closest friends from back in the day is quite suggestive for the atmosphere of certain cultural media: “He was an ardent fan of Bach and jazz. He was staring at you in a state of growing consternation when you mistook Armstrong’s trumpet for light music. He paid a special attention to his clothing style and therefore he had

⁵ Roman Cotoșman, *Depiction in Creation and European Synchronism. Artistic Movement of Timișoara during the 60’s and the 70s*, Timișoara, 1990.

his own personal tailor whom he recommended to all his friends; every suit, raincoat or overcoat became a matter of creation. Embracing the latest trends in fashion, he was seen as a trendsetter, particularly due to his nature to fight beyond the first line” (Ciocârlie,1968). Although the political background was far from encouraging the advancement of experiments in the 60s and 70’s, Timișoara was still impregnated with the cosmopolitan dimension and some of its first-class artists (we can give here the example of the illustrious visual artist Julius Podlipny) were playing essential roles in shaping the new generations of artists. Dietrich Sayler, Paul Neagu, Roman Cotoșman, Ștefan Câlția took somehow advantage of the drawing lessons taught by Prof. Julius Podlipny. However, since for others (the example of Cotoșman was probably followed by other similar examples) the maestro had become too exigent, the partnership did not lead to the expected outcomes. As an “intriguing expressionist”, Podlipny “was solely interested in drawing; in his opinion, the artists who used colours were just some sapless whimpers, incapable of drawing a simple line”⁶. Nevertheless, Podlipny was one of the artists who stimulated the creation of the visual artists of Timișoara, imposing the systemic method and the mixed technique. As both the holder of outstanding cultural heritage and the product of the Central European education system, his political orientation belonging to the left-wing ideology although sometimes, he easily slid to the extreme left-wing ideology, he practiced art and pedagogy with great fervency and his passion had a major impact on the movement of the cultural ideas in Timișoara. “He was speaking Romanian quite badly and, as he had a very powerful personality, all phrases he delivered became memorable. He had a goatee; he was crippled, nervous, intransigent and sarcastic”⁷. At the same time, he was that person gifted with divine skill and knowledge to train and instruct others and some of the most cherished Romanian artists were in fact the product of his school. The case of Ștefan Câlția is just one example among many, many others.

Set up in 1966, the *Group 111* ought to be seen as an integral part of the special environment developed by the personalities who were living here. It brought high hopes not only among the visual artists but also among the intellectuals of the city; shortly after its setting up, it managed to prove that the multidisciplinary dialogue was fundamental for the proper adjustment to the changes occurring around the world. Immediately after Roman Cotoșman left to USA, the *Group 111* became the *Sigma Group*. For

⁶ Livius Ciocârlie, Depiction in *Creation and European Synchronism. Artistic Movement of Timișoara during the 60's and the 70s*, Timișoara, 1990.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

the contemporary art of Romania, the *Sigma Group* offered a new understanding and a fresh definition of the world by appealing to grammar of shapes, industrial aesthetics, marketing, industrial geometry, complementary colours, design, descriptive geometry, bionic study. All five members of the *Sigma Group*, together with a mathematician who joined the group later on, planned to implement not only “a programme of art pedagogy” but also “the principles of correlation between shape-function-environment and the principles of shape generation”⁸. Both groups focused on permanent references to the Nature, the Nature-Number relationship, the shape development process, the anthropology. Iosif Király – one of the former students of the Visual Art High School of Timișoara, where the members of the *Sigma Group* were teaching – tells us how the intellectual environment governing that school at the end of the 60’s allowed you to feel and perceive yourself as a person of the 20th century, with no interest in what had happened before 1900. “Actually, he says, we had not time for the past: the present was so rich, we all lived the moment so intensely that there was little room for something else. The art, the culture took shape before my eyes”⁹.

The students from that time were reading Sartre, Kafka, Joyce, Ionesco, Hesse, paying also a special attention to the avant-garde literature pertaining to the social sciences, signed by Marshal Mc Luhan, Alvin Töfler, Nicolas Schöffer. The music they were listening to was composed by Sostakovici, Schönberg, Bartok, Stravinski. The environment was stimulating and challenging, the students were treated as professors’ travelling companions and that fact made them feel like they were stepping in line with their masters to uncover the unknown. Stimulated by art films, foreign specialty books and magazines, numerous lectures on arts history and study of visual languages, the students discovered the activity of the *Sigma Group* in their immediate proximity. The Group’s influence was so powerful so, as Király confessed, the students set up their own artistic groups by means of which they fancied to cover the entire world and its complicated issues. The exhibition organized by the students of the Visual Art High School of Timișoara and which took place in 1976 in the Kalinderu Hall in Bucharest, acknowledged the existence of an outstanding workshop like no other in the Romania of that time. An art critic compared the exhibition of the students from Timișoara with “a vivid and open

⁸ Constantin Flondor, in *Depiction in Creation and European Synchronism. Artistic Movement of Timișoara during the 60’s and the 70s*, Timișoara, 1990.

⁹Iosif Kiraly, *Evocare in Depiction in Creation and European Synchronism. Artistic Movement of Timișoara during the 60’s and the 70s*, Timișoara, 1990.

assembly, captured in the making, in its full splendour. The dense atmosphere of a perfectly balanced respect for tradition complemented by the air of a sober and bold experiment, free from any prejudices and snobbish mannerism are floating above this vivid assembly¹⁰. Outraged, the critic also noticed that the exhibition had benefited from no publicity although it had been almost certain that the contents of the works could prove a genuine emulation. It became obvious that that high school of Timișoara was unique on the scene of the Romanian artistic education. A question emerged almost instantly: which faculty operating in that field was duly qualified to admit those students?

The Sigma Group, built-up around Ștefan Bertalan and Constantin Flondor, joined later on by other remarkable names, such as Doru Tulcan, Molnár Zoltán, Dietrich Sayler, soon became a reference point not only at the level of fine arts, where its contribution to the revival of the language of visual art had been decisive, but also at the level of debates. Since the craving for change was obvious among all those artists, they became, in the 60's and 70's, the promoters of a different way of communication which somehow managed to programmatically evade the ideological control of the regime¹¹. The skilfully advanced multidisciplinary approach, the artistic pedagogy aiming at open systems, the ability to surpass the known forms and to introduce the experimental studies enabled the outset of a special aura in the cultural media of Timișoara. The Group's goals envisaged a dynamic universe as well as the intention to engage the recipients into a constant dialogue. The radicalization of the individual experience became obvious to each and every artist who either joined the *Sigma Group* or gravitated towards this group. For example, I learnt that the assumption of the scientific experimental model, by Ștefan Bertalan, had been a start for the visual arts in Romania¹². The temptation to imply the special interferences electrified the circles of qualified intellectuals of Timișoara.

The existence of a constructivism *avant-la-lettre* which was to impress both the experts and the audience at the biannual event held in Nürnberg din 1969, acknowledged not only the active participation in an international artistic forum but also a genuine European synchronisation of the studies conducted by the Group of Timișoara. The actions taken to

¹⁰ Andrei Pleșu, *A Visual Art High School and Several Questions in the Artistic Movement of Timișoara during the 60's and the 70s*, 1990.

¹¹ Ileana Pintilie, *Benchmarks of Artistic Movement of Timișoara from 1960 to 1996 in the Experiment in the Romanian Art after 1960*, Bucharest, 1997.

¹² Idem, in the *Depiction in Creation and European Synchronism. Artistic Movement of Timișoara during the 60's and the 70s*, 1990.

facilitate an authentic dialogue between the art and the science brought about plentiful positive comments of highly qualified critics from both Romania and abroad. *Sigma* had managed to prove not only genuineness but also an extraordinary team coherence as never seen before in other intellectual circles. Since that kind of medium needed a challenge, it came sooner than expected. This “sequence of artistic movement in Timișoara remains, even during its moments of utmost constructivism or programming the pedagogy of the aesthetics of useful forms, under the auspices of nature and universal harmony”¹³, „a buoyant galaxy” emphasizing “its stars, Flondor-Cotoșman, Tulcan-Bertalan as the primary and bright starts of x-y degree”¹⁴. *The informational tower*, „a multifunctional signal construction”, deemed as the most important achievement of the *Sigma Group*, is itself a conclusive and irrefutable proof of the attempt of bringing together both the aesthetic and the social components. The maturity of the artists was also reflected by their attempt to coagulate the cultural discourse and to investigate and mend the social-urban grid.

Eduard Pamfil: Tendency to Progressively Reconstructing the Civic Society

Prof. Eduard Pamfil has been the coordinator of both the seminars of psychiatry and the innovative *Circle of Bionics* which has been joined by numerous visual artists, musicians, philologists, historians, mathematicians and philosophers. The setting up of a genuine ritual of ideas and prolific dialogues and nonconformist postulations was due to this circle. The chance meeting between the painter Ștefan Bertalan, founder and leader of the *Sigma Group* – and Eduard Pamfil was seen as an important benchmark for the creative atmosphere of the city. A colleague described that moment as an ideal means of communication where the affective overlapped the intellectual. As Pamfil said, describing himself at the same time “Bertalan is a cavalier of anti-conformism. All things, gestures, speeches which might eventually end up in a placid and comfortable manner are definitely avoided, and sometimes, unbearable for him; everything he does is marked by this ardent goal: to be structured as a construction of something and to be maintained by the perpetual pressure of self-discontent”¹⁵.

¹³ Constantin Flondor, Depiction in *Creation and European Synchronism. Artistic Movement of Timișoara during the 60's and the 70s*, 1990.

¹⁴ Ștefan Bertalan, Depiction in *Creation and European Synchronism. Artistic Movement of Timișoara during the 60's and the 70s*, 1990.

¹⁵ Ion Nicolae Anghel, *Cartea cu Pamfil [Revealing Pamfil]*, Timișoara, 1996.

The civic sense, as a result of the education given by both his family and the Parisian school he had attended immediately after the war, enabled Prof. Eduard Pamfil to become one of the most remarkable intellectual benchmarks for numerous youth generations absorbed by the mysteries of the universal culture. Pamfil's political thinking was also stimulated by the scientist's outstanding systematic and philosophical achievements. His thinking has not benefited from any voluntary or involuntary multipliers which emerged in the neighbouring states, such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary or Poland. His criticism which had often targeted the totalitarian political phenomena has not been always fully understood but it has managed to stimulate the enrichment of knowledge and experiences needed to evade the influence of Neo-Stalinist dogmatism. He had the same tendency to progressively reconstruct the civil community as the Czech, Polish and Hungarian dissidents had. Although he made frequent references to them whenever he had the chance, he failed to initiate a genuine protest movement.

The cultivated speech and the exhaustive analyses of the society, easily noted due to his countless conferences, had proven a responsible understanding of the problems faced by the city inhabitants. He was a model precisely because he had succeeded to communicate using a language completely freed from the control of the totalitarian ideology. Prof. Pamfil has been an ardent supporter of the pro-European orientation in culture and consequently he had never hesitated to express his opinions against the traditionalist direction imposed by mass-media and school. Music and poetry which he had practiced beyond any material utility, created the proper support for a wide range of meditations which were far from a simple game playing. Pamfil has never been influenced by the essentialism of the previous century or by the essentialism which has often characterized the 20th century. He cohabitated with plurality, his opening to multiplicity of meanings pertaining to social relations was obvious every time he went out in public. He shattered the theories which supported the singularity of truth and which tried to overlap the private and the public life. The liberal culture, which seemed emancipated in relation to traditions and which occasioned numerous critical analyses in respect to the ethnicity-based nationalism proliferated by the official ideology has been deeply rooted in Pamfil's beliefs. He constantly fed his knowledge and soul with the French literature and, if I may say so, he has been one of the most educated scholars in

Timișoara in terms of philosophy of culture and politics. His vocabulary, strongly influenced by his rich and well-documented expertise in the field of psychiatry, infused hope, being, at the same time, a powerful instrument through which he predicted phenomena and events which were to happen. As an assiduous explorer of the humanist-renaissance ideology and an illuminist thinker, Pamfil felt responsible towards humans' aspirations for freedom. He was reasonable in everything he said (however, due to several occasions when he became too vocal, a significant part of his reflections have not yet been published; nevertheless, his notes are all gathered in several volumes referred to as *Idear*) and this is the reason why most of his political scenarios became plausible. His preoccupation to shatter myths was accompanied by the construction of his own speech. Sophisticated combinations between speculation and pragmatism were frequently found in all his meditations. On numerous occasions, Pamfil proved the purpose of the convergent communication, "the purpose of communication free from any type of domination" and the meaning of the open confrontations. The professor's questions, supported by reliable arguments and inductions from social sciences, broke down the contemporary problems. His volumes of poetry, *i.e.* *Arioso dolente* and *Idear* made me think that Pamfil had understood, better than any of his congeners, including here the comparison with his younger compeers, why "the moral prophets of humanity had always been poets, even if they had been using blank verses or parables". I think this last reflection which belonged to one of the most challenging modern philosophers, Richard Rorty, is a true and exact definition of this classical scholar of Timișoara. As a man fond of reading, he considered that the relation between several humanistic disciplines had no meaning at all unless the spiritual universe and the modern-time political universe were revealed.

Actively involved in the life of the fortress city, his presence in different literary circles, at the exhibitions of visual artists and in the conference halls has brought about the coagulation of several authentic cultural circles and the arousal of the reformation process of the citizen's culture. The professor has been the promoter of many of the cultural societies in the city. His name was constantly present on the agendas of the University Halls, the Students' Cultural Centre, the literary circles of the Writers' Union. He sometimes used to recite poems or give concerts of classical guitar or deliver speeches or moderate debates focussed around exciting topics related to the philosophy of culture, philosophy of history and anthropology. In a more specific sense, I cannot help reminding that the help he offered to all those persecuted by the regime was substantial. It is

now common knowledge that the Clinic of Psychiatry of Timișoara and the Hospital of Psychiatry of Gătaia had been safer refuges for all discontented citizens, for all persons considered by the regime as socially impaired individuals as well as for all those who had the courage to challenge the non-human measures taken by the Ceaușescu's regime. The names of several illustrious writers, scientists, visual artists, educators were listed among the patients of those healthcare facilities. His discretion was well-received by his fellow citizens. Pamfil symbolized the utmost moral judgment which was impossible to question even by his opponents, therefore, the circles he had set up continued to decently reflect his ideology upon the world. An entire generation educated in the West survived due to and with Pamfil. It was not just the hazard that for most of those who used to attend the cultural societies of the 60's, 70's and 80's in Timișoara, he had become a symbol of the European civilization. His reflections had a great impact on a relatively closed but highly important circle in terms of preservation of the civil sense and the spread of the antitotalitarian attitude.

Aktionsgruppe Banat: A Coherent Way to Challenge the Totalitarian System

Apart from the circles mentioned above, the *Universitas* literary club of the Students' Art Centre, also known as the *Aktionsgruppe Banat* (Banat's Action Group) has been founded and operated in Timișoara. Closely connected to the modern social and political problems, the group has soon become the leading figure in the crusade against the official ideology. Gathering young German writers, such as Gerhardt Ortinau, William Totok, Richard Wagner, Ernest Wichner, Anton Sterbling, Rolf Bossert, Anton Bohn, Werner Kremm, Johann Lippet, the literary club had a prolific activity during the first half of the 8th decade. The texts written by its members have been published in various German and Romanian publications from Timișoara, Brașov, Cluj, and Bucharest. Criticized and cherished by the cultural press, the texts grabbed the attention of the political police. Being under the surveillance from 1973, as evidenced by well-documented testimonies, the *Aktionsgruppe Banat* has been charged with conspiracy against the communist regime. The German writers had published or publicly presented numerous poems and essays whose explicit contents had often criticized the very essence and form of the dictatorial regime from Romania of that time. The writers had knowledge about what was happening in the world literature and also about the latest developments from Germany and Austria in terms of political ideas. However, the

pacifism of the previous generation left its mark on their way of thinking. Highly qualified in terms of theory, the German writers had exhaustively analyzed the newspapers and magazines of that time as well as the legislation and the speeches delivered by Ceaușescu to clearly understand the direction and ideology of the political matters. For example, among the poems read by William Totok to the *Universitas* literary club (*Aktionsgruppe Banat*), we may find sufficient eloquent titles such as *Entscheidungsfragen bei einem Macht-Prozess* (Conclusive questions to be asked in a trial against the power), *Mit Chile im Herzen* (Bearing Chile in My Heart) *Allerhand aus einem Modejournal, das ziemlich teuer und kulturausgerichtet ist* (Different aspects highlighted by a high-priced and culture-oriented fashion magazine). As a matter of fact, the author of these titles was among those members of the *Aktionsgruppe Banat* who had been constantly harassed by the communist regime. Ultimately, he ended up in prison¹⁶.

The ideas discussed by the members of the literary club suggested a remonstrating state of mind. The populism and the propaganda which distorted the Romanian realities, the hesitance of population facing a political system which was totally indifferent to the citizens' problems, were severely criticized by the club¹⁷. It is however relevant, from the perspective of the civil culture and its role in shaping the opposition against the totalitarian system, the moral straightness required to and from the congeners¹⁸.

¹⁶ William Totok, *Aprecieri neretușate. Eseuri, articole și alte interviuri 1987-1994* [*Bare Considerations. Essays, Articles and Other Interviews 1987-1994*], Iași, 1997. The clergy of the totalitarian regime changed the actual state of facts, giving a different interpretation to what has been stated above. For example, in the case of the dissident William Totok, the documents kept by the County Inspectorate within the Ministry of Internal Affairs showed that he had been prosecuted for having proliferated, through his poems, a bourgeois-related ideology, cultivating thus the scepticism towards and lack of obedience in respect to the laws and the totalitarian government of Romania. According to the criminal prosecution case file no. 2899/1995, prepared by the aforementioned county inspectorate, he had been arrested and charged with „propaganda against the socialist regime”.

¹⁷ The explanation of the particular situation of the German writers should take into consideration not only the struggle of conscience felt by the entire German community during the post-war period, but also the deportations of German families, in the 50's, the status of minority strongly felt by the German community as a consequence of the constant pressures practiced by the communist-nationalist regime for assimilation purposes. The behaviour which particularized the young members of the *Aktionsgruppe Banat*, in relation to other groups of Romanian writers, was mainly owed to the access to the German culture, to other sources of information and implicitly to other social and political benchmarks. This also explains the tendency of radicalization in terms of political ideas and the refusal to be part to the regimentation process.

¹⁸ William Totok, *Aprecieri neretușate. Eseuri, articole și alte interviuri 1987-1994*, [*Bare Considerations. Essays, Articles and Other Interviews 1987-1994*], Iași, 1997. The clergy of the totalitarian regime changed the actual state of facts, giving a different interpretation to what has been

It is all about that kind of intellectual honesty and, implicitly, that sort of political sophistication which has been seldom expressed within the Romanian intellectual circles. The conformism and opportunism have been strongly rejected. On the other hand, as the literary historian Peter Motzan noticed, the polemical and prescriptive commitment was more than obvious in the activist and participative lyricism of those poets. The emphatic presence of Richard Wagner and Rolf Bossert, the reflections and inquiries of William Totok, the family biography illustrated by thorough and detailed chronicles and the questioning of the past from a modern perspective, as it was the case of Johann Lippet, highlighted the manner in which the group had focussed on a constantly moving reality, a reality which had to be perfectible¹⁹. All actions carried out by *Aktionsgruppe Banat* emphasized a clear dissociation from everything that had a declarative or hyperbolic character. The ideas debated by the members of the literary group pointed out to an antagonist state of mind.

Despite the plea that the minority's theme had not become the central subject of the group, the representatives of the communist party insisted on the fact that the Romanian Germans had risen against the state. The communist officials justified thus their discontent in relation to the antagonist attitude of the German writers of Timișoara. In fact, that was just a secondary opportunity to encourage and accelerate the emigration of that community to Germany. It is worth mentioning that the positions taken by some of the members of the *Aktionsgruppe Banat* could be found in the Marxist ideology, proving once more that the Romanian national-communism had nothing in common with Marx. Moreover, those were the years when Ceaușescu's regime was getting closer to the extreme-right wing orientation, carrying into effect numerous principles characterized by obvious chauvinistic, racist and anti-Semitic contents. The articles published in the journals from the Federal Germany gave detailed account of the attitude of the German dissidents in Timișoara, finding out, to their utter astonishment, that even the Marxist scholars had been forbidden in Romania. Under suggestive headlines, such as *Kulturpolitik mit Polizeieinsatz. Marxistische Rumäniendeutsche stören die revolutionäre*

stated above. For example, in the case of the dissident William Totok, the documents kept by the County Inspectorate within the Ministry of Internal Affairs showed that he had been prosecuted for having proliferated, through his poems, a bourgeois-related ideology, cultivating thus the scepticism towards and lack of obedience in respect to the laws and the totalitarian government of Romania. According to the criminal prosecution case file no. 2899/1995, prepared by the aforementioned county inspectorate, he had been arrested and charged with „propaganda against the socialist regime”.

¹⁹ See Peter Motzan, *Vânt potrivit până la tare. Zece tineri poeți germani din Romania [Mild to Harsh Winds. Ten German Young Poets from Romania]*, Bucharest, 1982.

Ruhe ihres "sozialistischen" Staates (Cultural Politics and Police Repression. German Marxists from Romania Disturb the Revolutionary Lethargy of Their "Socialist" State), a German journalist described the paradoxical situation faced by both the aforementioned writers and the Romanian state where almost everything had been prohibited, even the doctrinarian debates, particularly when such debates derived from the Marxist philosophical thinking²⁰. The journalist also criticised the populism and the propaganda which distorted the Romanian realities, the population's ambivalence when dealing with a political system which showed no compassion towards people. The generation of young German writers from Timișoara was also known for its ingenuity and originality in terms of the literary practise pertaining to different states from the Eastern and Central Europe.

Although it ceased to exist after few years from its inception, the merit of the group was that it knew to defend its own dignity as well as the dignity and values of the inhabitants of a city subject to direct and particular persecutions due to its rather cosmopolitan orientation. Although *Aktionsgruppe Banat* had had an active involvement in the city's life from 1972 to 1975, the echo of its initiatives failed to mobilize the citizens up to turning them against the regime. On the other hand, the German writers had proven that the expression of a distinct and coherent manner to challenge the system was still possible and consequently, they soon became the benchmark for all fellow citizens. Several years later, the poet Petru Ilieșu, one of the most remarkable Romanian poets of the generation of the 80's in Timișoara, was highly influenced by the preoccupations of his German peers from Timișoara. Debating together on the "Beat Generation", reading and commenting together on the western literature as well as on different internal and international political issues, Petru Ilieșu had been a beneficiary of his close relationship with the German writers. It is also true that his state of mind, similar to the state of mind of his generation, had been fuelled by his contact with the worldwide music movement. During his college years, Petru Ilieșu has been the promoter of the music and dance group of the Students' Arts Centre and therefore, he has strongly influenced by the occidental heavy rock. Consequently, in 1982, Ilieșu gave rise to a new form of challenging Ceaușescu's regime. The leaflets he drew up and which incorporated powerful slogans such as "Down with the Criminal! Down with Ceaușescu" and "Down with the Communist Party" were distributed by Alexandru Gavrilu, another poet of Timișoara. Arrested shortly after

²⁰ Dieter Schlesak, in *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 10.07. 1976.

making public his antagonist attitude, Ilieșu was investigated and then released as a consequence of the interventions made by the editor-in-chief of the German newspaper, Nikolaus Berwanger²¹. Once more, the population found out that a new way of expressing opinions, completely different from the servile propaganda imposed by the regime, was still possible.

The same Students' Arts Centre, where the *Aktionsgruppe Banat* was activating and where Petru Ilieșu was advertising a music-based culture which kept up with the European latest trends, was to host many other groups of young writers willing to cultivate their literary and artistic talents. "*Pavel Dan*" *Literary Group* and "*Forum Studentesc*" magazine, published in Romanian, Hungarian and German languages, distinguished themselves among those groups. The end of the seventh decade found numerous students of Timișoara fully aware of the importance of writing a poem, an essay or a reportage, and cognizant of the significance of expressing and adhering to a strong professional creed. The curiosity – based games, much more discreet in terms of the problems imputed to the regime than those pertaining to the German literary group, were apparently benign. Nevertheless, their role was to be properly perceived since they struggled to preserve the very essence of the professional and citizen-oriented activities. It happened that those young writers who were attending the "*Pavel Dan*" *Literary Group* be the representatives of a generation for which the French and English literature had become the first and only benchmark in terms of cultural orientation. Some of those writers also read books with rich ideological contents, authored by novelists subject to censorship, such as George Orwell, Milan Kundera, Alexandr Soljenițin, etc. The members of the literary club took advantage of the journeys abroad made by their relatives, friends and acquaintances who had accepted the risks of bringing into the country some books characterized by incendiary messages against

²¹ Nikolaus Berwanger, German newspaper and poet, has been the representative of all Romanian minorities, assigned to the central committee of the communist party. In spite of his collaboration with the regime, some of his actions were quite beneficial for the people he represented, since he managed to effectively protect numerous persons investigated or under investigation of the political police. Petru Ilieșu considers that, among other merits, it is worth mentioning that the newspaper run by Berwanger, *Neue Banater Zeitung*, was, for many years, one of the most liberal newspapers edited in Timișoara during the years full of tensions and constraints, specific to Ceausescu's regime. Petru Ilieșu acknowledges that he also benefited from the intervention of Berwanger during the period when he had been investigated. "I remember that, in spite of the reticence and even refusal stated by all newspapers of Timișoara and the "Orizont" magazine to publish articles whose themes were forbidden by the regime, *i.e.* the history of Hebrews from Banat, Berwanger assumed the responsibility to publish such texts (1984), reason for which he was severely criticised by an official in charge of the communist propaganda, Eugen Florescu, assigned by the central committee of the communist party in Timișoara.

the totalitarian regime. Alexandra Indrieș, Șerban Foarță, Livius Ciocârlie, Andreas Lillin, Franyó Zoltán became real models for a generating undergoing continuous development. These are the writers who took the chance to speak openly about the literary and universal philosophy works which had been completely ignored by the editorial and academic curricula. Under the guidance of one of the aforementioned writers, numerous debates on the extraordinary books authored by Raymond Aron, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida were frequently organized. Again, the intellectuals could turn their back on the illiteracy propagated by the ideologists of the communist party.

A Reliable Representative of the Young Generation's Resistance: Phoenix

The *Phoenix* band was one of the cultural creations with huge impact on the young generation. It is almost sure that this rock music band enabled a tremendous social cohesion in Timișoara whose positive echoes were soon spread all over the country. *Phoenix* has been a genuine symbol for the inhabitants of Timișoara as well as for the future generations that were brought up under the influence of the cultural and artistic auras of the city. As a multicultural band, bringing together Romanian, German, Hungarian, Serbian and Hebrew musicians, *Phoenix* succeeded to distinguish itself through its piercing perception of the social and political realities. The texts enhanced by captivating music sounds were in fact a manifesto of the young generation, a protest against indoctrination and mediocrity. The band has created a new style, constantly cultivating its own insight in relation to the fusions between the local culture and the European civilization. The music and photography of the hippy movement were the main sources of inspiration for the *Phoenix band* in the 60's. "The bohemian mentality, the colourful appearance and the ideas disseminated by the representatives of the new peaceful rebellion, also known as the flower-power movement, simply fascinated us. We were confident that that was the path which should be followed by every young individual impregnated with the craving of getting rid of the fake moral and the seclusion of the world's leaders... The interdiction to listening to certain radio stations, the dissemination of certain music or art magazines or specialty journals originating from the Western Europe and which were considered decadent and outrageous as well as the more and more obvious, substantial and uncontrolled censorship of the entire cultural and artistic life, aimed to deviate the dynamic flow of changes foreshadowed for the near future. However, those who had been

touched by the bug of freedom were able to find the way to evade oppressive barriers and to have access to real and accurate information. Each and every edition of well-known magazines such as *Bravo*, *Musical Express* or *Rolling Stones* was read over and over again; in fact every edition was engulfed, if we can say so, by the young people who were ecstatically trying to identify themselves with their idols²². The same years, the 60's, coexisted with endless searches of identity and manners to attract the wide public. The songs conveyed the thoughts and feelings of a generation who constantly strived to express freely, ridiculing stereotypes. *Phoenix* showed that a new movement had been brought forth in Timișoara: it was the movement of the young people who were able to express freely their thoughts and to ignore the formalism. The concerts of the band have often delivered political messages and despite the fact that some of the messages were quite rudimentary expressed, they had a huge impact on the public. The Lyra Hall where the Phoenix Club was based and where most of the concerts were organized, was adorned with most peculiar items, such as chains, bike wheels, motorcycle engines, painting frames. That was the very place where, due to the affability of several administrators, Phoenix was able to express freely, rehearsing the songs which brought about their outstanding success or giving concerts three times a week, in spite of the interdiction imposed by the communist officials. The European rock music finally reached Romania as a result of the prolific activity of this rock band from Timișoara. The songs performed by *Phoenix* met all expectations of the generations of the 60's and 70's because that music represented a viable alternative to all ideological lies, a refuge against the cult of proletariat. The emotional power of the music played by *Phoenix* was tremendous especially because it allowed a new world to be heard: the Occident which captivated and allured those who had been deprived of the right to contemplate it. The visionary nature of the band's members "made them see, when most of the population and even the political analysts allowed to be cheated by the superficialities of the spiritual and material freedom, that everything was no more than an elaborate masquerade. The sharp perception of reality has individualized and outstripped them. The aggressive text against mediocrity, indoctrination and basically, against the power became the manifestos of the young generation. Songs like *Vremuri*, *Canarul*, *Totuși sunt ca voi* [Old

²² Nicolae Covaci, *Phoenix însă eu...* [*Phoenix and me...*], Bucharest, 1994.

Times, The Canary, And Yet I am Just Like You]” were saying more than thousands of pages of sociological analyses about the lost generation”²³

The challenges of the generation whose representative had become the band of Nicolae Covaci, Florin Bordeianu, Josef Kappl, Günter Reininger, Bela Kamocsa, Mircea Baniciu soon turned into a real problem for the authorities. The constant surveillance of the *Phoenix Band* had fallen within the powers of all officials in charge of propaganda in the city and the county. The nonconformist behaviour of the band members, their clothes, the new type of social relations promoted by the band and the lack of any inhibitions when confronted with the authorities had generated a completely new atmosphere in numerous social media. The lyrics were also the product of several skilful writers trained in the academic environment of Timișoara and the examples provided by Victor Cârceu, Șerban Foarță and Andrei Ujică were outstanding. The powerful bond between the lyricists, the musicians and the public reflected a smouldering resentment against the communist authorities, the marginal conditions of the youth and basically, against all who tried to forbid the right to contemplate the occidental world. The *Phoenix* has been an exceptional cultural and social benchmark, responsible for having cultivated a distinct attitude in the post-war community of Timișoara. What the *Phoenix Band* succeeded to do for Timișoara can be translated as a constant persiflage of the communist authority, a multiplication of the number of young people who were to contradict and challenge the official ideology.

The 60's and 70's brought to life a generation which had nothing in common with the communist party. The leader of the *Phoenix Band* is right when he remembers that, during that period, there were very few people who still believed in the communist slogans. “Only the scornful dodgers wasted their words trying to convince the people of what they themselves gave up believing” (Covaci,1994). However, the idea of communism continued to be used in different social groups and the personal interests were much more obvious than the freehearted affiliation to the communist ideology. The verticality remained an attitude which surpassed the difficulties faced by the community of Timișoara and the *Phoenix Band* has encouraged it through its numerous concerts. The visionary style and attitude of the songs proved that the band has done a public service by keeping awake the people's awareness in face of a system which forged

²³ C. Postolache, Foreword to the book authored by, *Phoenix însă eu...* [*Phoenix and me...*], Bucharest, 1994.

values. The band had become an outstanding milestone for those generations as well as for the generations to come due to its continuous betterment, the periodic renewal of its repertoire with west European songs, the use of the state-of-the-art instruments and the efforts made to approach the concerts in a professional manner. The role played by Günter Reininger was more than exemplary in relation to the aspirations invoked above. Bringing together people of different nationalities, the *Phoenix Band* kept the Banat's tradition of linguistic plurality. Unfortunately, the originality of Banat's multiculturalism was scarcely exploited. On the other hand, the shift to the Romanian folklore, a moment whom Nicolae Covaci and some music critics considered highly important for the band's destiny, seems now to have been a moment of unfortunate inspiration, at least when speaking about the contribution it brought to the civic culture of the inhabitants of Timișoara. Nevertheless, this option has been an ideological movement which, whether agreed or not by some group leaders, has been in harmony with the objectives pursued by the communist regimes to accustom again to the nationalist goals. Although this was not the first mischievous trick successfully played by Ceaușescu's regime, it was one of the most cunning artifices with long-term consequences. It is quite unpleasant nowadays to find out that the totalitarian policy has fully benefited from the propagandistic effect of the pro-Romanian music, inasmuch as any other system which claims itself as the product of a so-called monoculture takes advantages from the philosophies inspired from and by the traditionalist ideas. Despite this shortcoming and from the perspective of genuineness, we will always admit that *Phoenix* has created music: *Cantafabule* remains one of the reference songs for the history of music and culture that characterized Timișoara of the second half of the 20th century. From a civic perspective, it is worth mentioning that the band members were able, for a limited period of time though, to generate a genuine state of mind where their critical language gave hopes for freedom to several generations living on the Bega banks. Some of the *Phoenix* fans have been literally shocked and outraged when the band left the country for good. You may now wonder why. Well, there had been abandoned one of the few forms of protest, which, at that moment seemed still possible: the active participation in the avant-garde music movement. The young people came to the concerts also because they felt much stronger together. Being assimilated to the loss of the favourite music, the emigration of the *Phoenix Band* brought about and increased the exodus of several groups of inhabitants of Timișoara.

Echo of the Hungarian Revolution

All cultural circles have influenced larger or smaller social groups. As we have seen, those were defence mechanisms against the abuses committed by the totalitarian system. Nevertheless, there have been cases when the community of Timișoara embraced an explicit political orientation, taking a stand against the domestic communist regime or against the Soviet domination exerted upon the countries from the Central and Eastern Europe. The phenomenon involving the rejection of the extreme left-wing ideology had been more obvious as the hunger, the pitiful salaries, the ideological lies, the dirigiste economy and the lack of planning had literally threatened the biological existence of the population of Banat, accustomed to a higher standard of living than the average standard of the population from other regions of Romania. In 1956, numerous workers, clerks and students as well as all inhabitants of Timișoara, Lugoj, Arad and Resita protested against the Soviet invasion in Hungary. The solidarity with the Hungarian revolutionists was so strong that, at a certain point, *i.e.* the last week of October and first week of November, it seemed that those manifestations had got out of hand and might set off the revolution in Romania too, starting from the western part of the country, as it did happen three decades later. Everywhere you could find powerful slogans and leaflets such as: “We are against USSR”, “We don’t want Russian courses”, “Down with Gheorghiu Dej and his pack of parvenu bureaucrats!”, “Fight for freedom and a better life!”, “Students, fight against the intervention of the Kremlin murderers from Hungary!”, “Well done, Hungarians!”, “Freedom in Hungary, soon to come in Romania, too!”²⁴. The example of the actions initiated in 1948 by the students attending the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy and particularly the civic conscience of the students of the Polytechnic Institute, who, from October to November 1956, had fearlessly organized protests and raised anti-totalitarian claims, similar to those pertaining to the Revolution from Budapest, proved that the citizens of Timișoara were not indifferent to the political system, the Soviet pressure, the communist officials, the living standards and the submission towards Moscow.

The fact that the news regarding the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 has simply electrified the academic environment of Timișoara and that

²⁴ M. Sitariu, *Rezistența anticomunistă: Timișoara 1956 [The Communist Resistance: Timișoara 1956]*, București, 1998.

numerous persons from other social segments spread detailed information on what had happened in Budapest, alarmed the executive officials at the regional and national level. The promoters of the movement (Teodor Stanca, Aurel Baghiu, Friedrich Barth, Ladislau Nagy, Aurelian Păuna, Nicolae Balaci, Gheorghe Pop and Caius Muțiu) had shown a deeper understanding of the problems faced by the Central and East European countries and particularly, by the Romanian state and consequently, they acted as the heralds of a tremendous social dissatisfaction (Baghiu,1990; Stanca,1990). Instigating to actions similar to those occurring in Hungary, filing explicit statements that emphasized social-democratic ideas and being interested in the connection between the Hungarian and the Polish movements, the students had proven an outstanding political thinking. The rejection of both the Soviet domination and the intervention of the USSR army in Hungary had been themes frequently debated by the students of the Polytechnic Institute. The anti-communist actions had been sparked by the discontentment to the relations of subordination of the Central and Eastern European countries to the system imposed by the Soviets. It was for the first time when that was to be perceived to its full extent by full masses of citizens, particularly due to the armed intervention from Hungary. The weak points of the communist regime from Bucharest and the fake news which was spread by the central press and which contradicted everything that was happening in the neighbouring country were subject to exhaustive debates.

The information received from Radio Kossuth was to become the main reliable source of news in relation to the revolutionist actions from the Hungarian capital. Due to its geographic location in the proximity of the national border, Timișoara had its own Hungarian native speakers who were willing to spread the news on the Hungarian events. And so they did. The students' civic and political culture allowed their memorandums and statements to include numerous and reliable references to the main issues of the communist totalitarian system: the dissolution of the cult of personality, the rational development of the economic sectors and the conclusion of commercial agreements with all countries concerned, including the capitalist states, the retreat of the Soviet troops from Romania, the governance of the country regulated by the country's best interests, proper living conditions for students and pupils. The trial which followed the students' movement emphasized the degree of concern shown by the regime led by Gheorghiu-Dej in respect to what had happened in Timișoara. The authorities acknowledged the danger of the events which had taken place in Timișoara in October and November 1956. The county court found that the students had attempted to set off a movement of vast proportions, similar to the

Hungarian movement, and it seemed that the judges were right. The leaders of the movement of Timișoara were sentenced to eight, six and four years to “correctional prisons”, according to the judgment ruled by the Military Court of Timișoara²⁵. The documents point out that a second group of students was also convicted based on similar arbitrary judgments. One of the punitive measures which were particularly taken by the government against the students of Timișoara was the interdiction of any forms of association. In spite of this measure, numerous associative cultural and civic forms appeared during the following period. The harsher became the surveillance, the more elaborate were the protection measures taken by the promoters. Nevertheless, the protest movement of 1956 from Timișoara was the most important action which had taken place in Romania, during the dictatorship of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. It proved, once more, that the inhabitants of Timișoara had an outstanding civic courage and were capable of solidarity in relation to planning and expressing a strong opposition against the system.

Despite the effort made by the population to resist and cope with a system which was systematically destroying the individual, the intellectuals had failed to draw up an alternative political project and to plan in advance the administrative changes from December 1989. Were the intellectuals short of pragmatism or courage to bring their protesting thoughts to an end? Perhaps they did. Most likely, the absence of preoccupation for political thinking, a preoccupation which unfortunately had been forbidden in all training facilities for decades, was a decisive factor. Irrespective of the multitude of proofs of civic culture which emerged in Timișoara during the communist period, it is more than obvious that a properly organized democratic opposition, similar to the “Charta 77” of Czechoslovakia, the “Solidarnosc” Union of Poland, the dissident intellectuals of Hungary, was missing. Moreover, the status of “the second city” within the country and the absence of a minimal local autonomy have also impeded the materialization and the coordination of a movement similar to the movements from the neighbouring countries. In spite of the shortcomings described above, Timișoara was to become the first Romanian city which has fully understood, through the majority of its citizens, the need to change both the Romanian president and the communist regime. Timișoara of the post-war time managed somehow to preserve a fragment of its long-

²⁵ M. Sitariu, *Rezistența anticomunistă: Timișoara 1956 [The Communist Resistance: Timișoara 1956]*, București, 1998.

established civic culture and this culture enabled the extraordinary anti-Ceaușescu and anticommunist demonstrations from December 1989.

Ph. D. Victor **NEUMANN**

www.memorialulrevolutiei.ro

From Timișoara to Berlin:
***Herta Müller and her German Peers of Romanian Origin from Banat, in
the East-German STASI files, from 1987 to 1989.****

When Herta Müller, German writer, originating from Romania, was awarded, at the beginning of October 2009, the Nobel Prize for literature, the German public opinion focused inevitably on her native region, the Banat region, located in the western part of Romania, with its capital at Timișoara, as well as Hertei Müller's natal place, Nițhidorf. The period in which the country was literally ruined from the material, spiritual and moral perspectives, by Nicolae Ceaușescu and the Securitate has not been omitted. In her books, Herta Müller writes about the oppression she and her travelling companions experienced.

In the fall of 2009, these facts have aroused Germans attention as never before and continued to keep this peculiar effect till the present time. Unfortunately, no special attention was paid to the fact that the history of persecution of Herta Müller and her friends, German writers of Romanian origin, found a sequel in Germany even from the '80s, particularly in divided city of Berlin. There, within a definite period of time, the Ministry for the State Security of the GDR (German Democratic Republic) began to implement its inventive repression methods against those writers.

As if a secret service had not been enough, the Ministry for the State Security and the German Secret Police dealt with Herta Müller and her peers. Starting with the late 70s' and the early 80s', the unofficial collaborators (CN) of the Ministry for the State Security who used to travel to Romania, submitted numerous reports describing a young and unconventional generation of German writers which, starting with the end of the 70's, spread its wings also over the *Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn* Literary Society from Timișoara. Some of its important members, such as Richard Wagner and William Totok, had first joined the „Aktionsgruppe Banat” / „Action Group of Banat” in 1972. Three years later, the Group was annihilated by the Securitate. Herta Müller and Helmuth Frauendorfer first joined the Literary Society in 1977. Their fearless goal was to lay the foundation of a modern and criticizing literature as well as to approach new forms of writing. Inevitably, their attempt clashed on two obstacles: the traditions of their peers and the Romanian socialist governance.

As far as the Eastern Berlin was concerned, the emergence of the nonconformist generation was a genuine problem for Romania. Consequently,

* This article was issued first in German in *Die Welt / Lumea/ The World* newspaper

the Ministry for the State Security chose to cautiously monitor the entire situation. Although no connections had been set back then between the German Ministry for the State Security and the Romanian Securitate and the Romanian state had already proven to be an unreliable ally, particularly starting with the mid of the 60's, the Ministry assumed that the Securitate was able to identify such groups in time and act accordingly.

However, in December 1985, the Ministry for the State Security decided to draw up the first index card for Herta Müller: obviously, this was the first sign that the poet had somehow become a priority for the Secret Police of the German Democratic Republic. Unfortunately, this first outrageous action taken by a Secret Police faced an inexplicable general ignorance. Among the few data the Ministry for the State Security registered back then was the year of her birth, her activity as publicist, as well as her address, pointed out as *Temesvar / UVR*. The Ministry for the State Security used the Hungarian name for „Timișoara”, i.e. Temeswar. Moreover, the Ministry considered that this large city in the western Romania was somehow subordinated to the Hungarian state territory, because *UVR* was in fact the usual abbreviation for the *Republica Populară Ungaria (People's Republic of Hungary)*. Were the collaborators of the Ministry for the State Security not aware of the fact that Timișoara as well as the entire western region had been recovered by Romania from Hungary, after the Second World War? Were they still using maps dated back to the end of the century? Although the answers to these questions are still waited for, one thing is though clear: the classical example of the combination between the arrogance of power and stupidity which almost always characterizes the representatives of dictatorships. Nonetheless, Herta Müller was seen as a publicist with close contacts in the People's Republic of Hungary and the *RSR (the Socialist Republic of Romania)*. As a matter of fact, Bromme, a “more than qualified” captain with the Ministry for the State Security, should have known this better since Romania was one of the territories he was in charge of. For example, in the summer of 1985, he recruited four GDR students, prior to their arrival in Bucharest, as unofficial collaborators (CN), asking them to closely monitor their colleagues and to give reports on the events taking place in Romania. Undoubtedly, some information on Herta Müller was also coming from these circles.

In the spring of 1987, demoralized by the pressure the Securitate exerted on them, William Totok, Herta Müller and her husband, Richard Wagner decided to emigrate to the Western Berlin. They were soon followed by their friend and colleague, Helmuth Frauendorfer, who came to the Western Berlin in December the same year. From there, they continued their critical debate on Ceaușescu's regime and made use of all means they had available

there to act freely, particularly from a political perspective. They revealed their own experiences as well as the catastrophic situation of Romania through interviews, articles and public discussions and they joined all political actions that vehemently criticized Ceaușescu's strategy and policies related to human depreciation.

Initially, their actions were disregarded by the Ministry for the State Security because nothing they did was directly affecting the GDR. However, the situation changed when they soon met the GDR dissidents, who had their citizenship withdrawn: Jürgen Fuchs, Freya Klier or Wolfgang Templin. This latter group was also living in the Western Berlin, they belonged to the same generation and they debated in a way similar to the political system in GDR. At the same time, they mediated contacts with their friends from the Eastern Berlin and with the local groups that were militating for civil rights.

Consequently, the German writers of Romanian origin shared their goals and experiences with their peers from the brought their lives and knowledge to Eastern Berlin, attended private or ecclesiastic lectures and set up contacts with other people who vehemently criticized and opposed against communism. At that point, the Ministry for the State Security became active.

When Richard Wagner and William Totok attended, in June 1987, the *Kirchentag von Unten* [a gathering of the criticising Christians – author's note] held at the Evangelic Church *Zum Vaterhaus* [The Lord's House] on Baumschulenweg in the Eastern Berlin, the priest read a message of giving up, from a fabricated telegram, and that reading was heard by few listeners.



Zum Vaterhaus Church from Berlin

However, the event was also attended by at least two CNs: Rainer Schedlinski, a GDR writer **used?** by the Ministry for the State Security as an unofficial collaborator, also known by the name of *Gerhard*, and a journalist from Dresden, *Hans Reimann*. The snitch *Gerhard* said that it was hard for him to understand what they were saying because of their „not so well spoken language” and the acoustics of the church. *Hans Reimann*, a covert operative, warned on the danger that “those Romanians” had been given the opportunity „to express publically in the GDR”. As *Hans Reimann* also reported, the Romanians tried to emphasize „how inhuman can the socialism be and that socialism can sometimes be more dangerous for the humankind than the fascism”. Although he failed to properly understand the presence of Wagner and Totok, a serious warning signal sounded for the Ministry for the State Security.

A speech delivered by Herta Müller at the Treptow Culture Regional House in the Eastern Berlin, in the late September 1988, aroused the people’s interest. *Gerhard* reported that, according to Herta Müller’s opinion, the leaders of the new generation emerged in the GDR should organize better to gain a “more political efficiency against the state politics”.

At that time, Herta Müller, together with her German companions of Romanian origin and other East-European dissidents have been actively involved in the organization of an *Action Day of Romania* in the entire Europe. That event, which finally took place on November 15th 1988, commemorated the major rebellion of the workers from the Transylvanian Braşov, a rebellion which had been brutally stifled by the Securitate in the previous year. The purpose of that event was to draw the people’s attention on the terrifying conditions in Romania and to condemn Ceauşescu’s regime at the international level. The action was attended by the ecclesiastic communities and the militant groups for human rights in the entire GDR and they considered the event a fortunate opportunity to take a stand against their own government. Furthermore, not only that they organized counter-publicity actions at the level of the entire country, but they also held numerous exhibitions and delivered countless lectures on Romania and prepared protest letters to the GDR government blaming it for having conferred the Karl Marx Order to Ceauşescu instead of opposing to his barbarian domestic politics. Their protests were more vehement when Ceauşescu visited the GDR on November 17th and 18th 1988 and his visit was more than welcomed by the official mass media. All efforts of the Ministry for the State Security were then focused on keeping Ceauşescu away from the critics and protests and consequently, numerous dissidents had been subject to house arrests during Ceauşescu’s visit.

On November 2nd 1988, the chief of the Ministry for the State Security, Erich Mielke submitted to Erich Honecker a 8-pages informative report on the topic related to the *Action Day for Romania*. The report pointed out, among others, that “poetry and prose authored by the former Germans of Romanian origin, who are now living in the Western Berlin, is being read” in Ghetsimani Church from the Eastern Berlin, in Prenzlauer Berg. The report pointed out particularly to Herta Müller and Richard Wagner, but also to William Totok and Helmuth Frauendorfer. Another report submitted to the Ministry for the State Security said that similar texts were also read during „an information and intervention sermon for the situation in Romania” held at the Evangelic Centre *Am Fennpfuhl* of Lichtenberg District from the Eastern Berlin.

The Ministry for the State Security compiled elaborate files on the rogue Germans of Romanian origin and sent them to the Data Centralizer of Socialist Secret Services from Moscow, *SOD* (*System for Joint Acquisition of Data on Enemies*). The files were carefully kept under lock. Moreover, Helmuth Frauendorfer became a target of the GDR’s External Intelligence Service the moment he joined the *Initiative for Freedom for Those Who Think Differently/ Initiative Freiheit für Andersdenkende*, in the Western Berlin. By means of that group of action, the GDR dissidents who had their citizenship withdrawn and the workers in the West Berlin continued their protest against the SED regime and supported their friends in the GDR. After having produced a broadcast for the German radio station about the last two “narrow-minded heads: Honecker and Ceaușescu”, in August 1988, Helmuth Frauendorfer became a persona non-grata in the GDR, until the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The same restriction was imposed on Herta Müller and Richard Wagner, after a radio broadcast, aired by RIAS, a West-Berlin radio station, on October 14th 1988 when several texts authored by them were publicly read. The day that followed the radio broadcast, while Herta Müller and Richard Wagner were preparing to attend a Romanian event organized at the *Church of Reconciliation / Versöhnungskirche* from Dresden, the GDR authorities rejected their entrance visa, although their participation had already been announced in the *Die Union / The Union* newspaper from Dresden.



Versöhnungskirche / Church of Reconciliation from Dresda

Hardly had they known that the entrance interdiction was in fact set solely for a six weeks period. Nevertheless, they found out that aspect at the beginning of the 90s', after consulting the files kept by the former Ministry for the State Security. Starting from the late fall of 1988, the couple had already given up, for a period and out of precaution, to other voyages in the GDR, because of the death threats received not only by both of them but also by other companions in sufferance. Although William Totok was the only dissident whose entrance visa had not been rejected, he was under the strict surveillance all the time.

The Ministry for the State Security had initiated the „light form of terror” against the Banat inhabitants, as the late writer Jürgen Fuchs called the preventive, administrative and destructive measures enforced by the German secret police. On the other hand, the Securitate, acted differently, without having previously entered into an agreement with the German Ministry for the State Security. Therefore, the Romanian secret police decided to send covert operatives in the Western Berlin to intimidate the Romanian dissidents. Consequently, both secret services served the security interests of the SED and the Romanian Communist Party, respectively. Fortunately, their malicious attempts to silence all critical voices failed. The permanent harassment applied by both secret services seemed to give Herta Müller and her comrades (although we were many, only three of us could be presented here today), a new reason to continue their struggle to achieve their final goals: to keep sharing their experiences in more realistic and vocal accounts and particularly to lay the bases of a new literature designed to gently touch the readers' hearts. The Noble Prize for literature awarded to Herta Müller in December 2009 can surely be understood as an acknowledgement of her continuous intransigent attitude.

Ph. D. Georg HERBSTTRITT

Understanding and Celebrating, Warning and Hoping

The *History Forum 2009*, consisting of numerous manifestations which paid a tribute to the events of 1989, has been organized in Berlin, from May 28th to May 31st 2009. The first issue of the *Bulletin (4) / 2009, Memorial 1989* has already given an account of the event, pointing out particularly the contribution brought by the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of Timișoara which presented its itinerant exhibition.

In the following part of this paper we will give a report on an international scientific conference organized under this *History Forum 2009*. The speakers and the themes, the discussions and the theses are still of present interest and very captivating.

The Conference took place from May 29th to May 30th 2009, being organized by the *Department of Education and Research / Abteilung Bildung und Forschung* withi *The Bureau for Administration of Stasi Archives from Berlin / Berliner Stasi-Unterlagen Behörde*, under the following title: *The Year of the Revolution of 1989 – The East – European Democratic Revolution as A Caesura of the European History*. On the one hand, the lectures delivered by competent speakers from 8 countries emphasized the various national experiences and research methods related to that year (1989) and, on the other hand, the lectures built a timeline highlighting the onset moments of the events that reached their peak in 1989. Speaking about the "long" revolution of 1989, which started almost immediately after the Second World War, the Polish historian and former activist of Solidarność, Mr. Kazimierz Wojcicki (Warsaw), has implicitly characterized the year 1989 as the final of a long and *evolutional* process.

The Hungarian teacher of Philosophy, Ágnes Heller (New York, Budapest), survivor of Holocaust and student of Georg Lukács, has analyzed, in her opening speech, the European development starting with 1917, drawing thus the attention on the historical dimension of year 1989: once with the downfall of the Soviet totalitarianism, the Europe became, for the first time in its history, a free continent. In her opinion, this can be regarded both as the most outstanding aftermath since 1945 until today and a blessing for which Europe must respond through work. The Europeans should work hard for their own ethnical position; nonetheless, they would need a meaning of life and an identity, which however should not rely on placing thereof on other communities. More like a warning, she described Europe as a paradox: although it is a continent which loves freedom, it

revealed, along the time, an enormous aggression. Presently, Europe is a continent which loves freedom, but which, at the same time, is highly predisposed to cowardliness.

The same as Wojcicki, Heller referred to several modified forms of resistance starting from the Second World War until the present day. Since the political resistance failed in the Soviet Union, the moral resistance was the single form of resistance which survived starting with the late 60's. On the other hand, the underground movements, which lead to *Solidarność* in Poland, left behind the Polish resistance tradition, which, by its nature, was a military resistance.

Heller explained the strained relation between the historical needs and historical coincidences. She described the fall of the Soviet system as a necessity, because it deprived the people of their elementary rights and freedoms. Nonetheless, the moment and circumstances of such fall were not predictable and could not be predicted because the development of the historical events is always opened and dependent on casual constellations. With reference to the 20 years' celebration from the Revolutions in South-Eastern Europe, Heller argued that it is more important to understand the current situation than to celebrate it with vanity. But, at the same time, you can „understand and celebrate, warn, and hope”.

The speeches delivered by Prof. Alexander von Plato (Hagen / Germany) and Prof. Viktor Zaslavsky (Rome) opened a new perspective on the role played by the both superpowers. Von Plato underlined the manner in which former President of the USA, George Bush, immediately after taking his office in January 1989, has vehemently brought up, on the current political agenda, the overcome of the European division and how he significantly detached himself from the purely rhetoric drives of his predecessor, Ronald Reagan. Viktor Zaslavsky analyzed the reforming Soviet Politics, using the example of the nuclear catastrophe from Chernobyl and making reference to the massacre from Katyń. Ultimately, in 1986, Gorbaciov used the example of the reactor's catastrophe and the authorities' false reaction to blame the “Brejnev” era for those unacceptable mistakes; he used the example of Chernobyl as motivation and catalyzer for his glasnost politics. Nevertheless, the events that occurred two years later found Gorbaciov totally unprepared to admit the Soviet's responsibility for the massacre of the Polish officers from Katyń, in 1940. More than ever he denied any knowledge he might have had on those documents, contrary to the historical truth, though. In April 1990, during a meeting with Wojciech Jaruzelski, he attributed the full responsibility for what had happened in Katyń to the management of the NKWD (*Narodnii Komissariat Vnutrennih*

Del / The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) from Berija. The same as Hrusciov did, in 1956, Gorbaciov was not prepared to fully question the Soviet system and this fact proves the limits of the reforming politics. The purpose of Glasnost and Perestroika was to stabilize and not to dissolve the system.

Bernd Florath (Berlin) continued this analysis and ascertained that Glasnost would have never had so much influence on both sides of Germany unless the people had already understood the real purpose and limits of Glasnost. Nevertheless, under the Glasnost mark and due to a relative lack of knowledge, the people from the GDR (German Democratic Republic) would have claimed freedoms which had not been foreseen by the Soviet reformers. Such claims finally dynamited the system.

The events that preceded 1989 are strongly connected to some other misunderstandings and paradoxes. „The cracks in the official party”, mentioned by Florath, have practically led to the grotesque situation of the downfall of the SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands / Socialist Unity Party of Germany), at the end of the summer of 1989, allowing thus the party members to find consistent answers to the current problems solely from the groups in the opposition. In Poland, according to Wojcicki, the proclamation of the international war laws, in 1981, did nothing but strengthening the underground movement and favouring its spread on an extended area. Wojcicki supported the thesis according to which the Soviet leaders had wrongfully interpreted the Solidarnost-ul as a current immanent to the system, possibly socially- and democratically-centred, and whose anti-communist and national orientation they had understood later on. As a matter of fact, the Solidarnost movement was a triggering factor for the Glasnost politics.

On the other hand, Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk (Berlin) settled the paradox of both the „apparent stability” of the GDR (German Democratic Republic) and the fulminating changes starting with the fall of 1989, describing the "apparent stability” as a social and economic dormancy and underlining the manner in which the people perceived that phase as a crisis period. “The action was a tremendous failure” concluded Kowalczyk, who characterized the negative dynamics which was actually inherent, to this phase of “apparent stability”.

Ágnes Heller made reference to the danger that the present religions would prepare the field for potential totalitarian systems; on the other hand, she pointed out that, at the beginning of the last century, the totalitarian ideologies of communism and national-socialism derived from the battle against religions.

Heller and Kowalczyk provided an explanatory model for some disappointments which are now connected to 1989. The Paternalism, a state of passive expectancy from the state, is still applicable and the new freedoms were not conquered through a revolution, according to Heller. Kowalczyk spoke about a revolution without utopia, because, in essence, the final goal was the end of the SED domination and the implementation of the rights of freedom which were deeply rooted in the Western states. Nobody should see the "Revolution deprived of utopia" as a malicious fact; it should be regarded as a "fortunate circumstance".

The findings of Prof. Valters Nollendorfs (Riga), according to whom the evolution of different countries from the Eastern Bloc would have been similar from a macro-historical point of view, in spite of the remarkable differences at the micro-historical level, were acknowledged in numerous lectures pertaining to those countries. Consequently, there has been noted a connection between Nollendorfs' lecture and the essays authored by Tomáš Vilimek (Prague), on the ČSSR (the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic), János Rainer (Budapest) on Hungary, Raluca Grosescu (Bucharest) and William Totok (Berlin) on Romania and Prof. Stefan Troebst (Leipzig / Germany) on Yugoslavia. Prof. Wolfgang Eichwede (Bremen / Germany) pointed out that the samizdat of the Soviet Union was somehow fed by nationalism, and this fact was barely noticed in the '70s and the '80s. Nevertheless, it became efficient starting with 1989, when „Russia opposed the Soviet Union”. Svitlana Hurkina (Lvov / Ukraine) described the contribution brought by the underground Greek-Catholic Church to the incipient Ukrainian national consciousness, involving thus a tremendous and, at the same time, an elementary historical work, considering the missing written testimonies. On the contrary, Christian Halbrock (Berlin) based his comparative essay on the ambivalent role of the churches from the GDR (German Democratic Republic) and Poland, on better sources.

Besides Halbrock only few speakers dared to indicate direct similarities between the countries and to show their interdependence. Reinhard Weisshuhn (Berlin) somehow knew, using his own experience, to give a description of the Hungarian dissidence from the 70's, considering it as an intellectual challenge for the GDR (German Democratic Republic) opponents, and which served them as model for the culture of debating and the emancipated themes and thinking. Oppositely, the underground GDR movement did not play an inspirational role for the dissidents from other countries of the Central Europe. Prof. Jerzy Holzer (Warsaw) compared the „Round Table” function from different countries and was able to prove how this instrument operated differently in Poland and Bulgaria and what

consequences it brought up. The political concessions that characterized the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe were approached by Walter Süß (Berlin); he emphasized how some countries, particularly the GDR (German Democratic Republic) and Romania have tried, starting from the mid 80's, to neutralize the retroactive effects of the agreements under the Conference for Security and Cooperation, using unconventional means: politics and secret services. Wolfgang Templin (Berlin) approached the present, presenting a comparative study of the rebellions of the end of the millennium, paying a special attention to the revolution from Yugoslavia (2000) and particularly to the mass revolutions and protests emerged the "implosion centre", the former Soviet Union.

The symbolism of the visual and artistic means of expression was detailed by Andrea Genest (Potsdam / Germany) and Prof. Bronisław Misztal (Warsaw): the Solidarnost used its own recognizable symbols while "the orange alternative" from Poland of the 70s', employing public artistic actions, revealed the daily absurdity in a surrealist manner. The purpose of these actions was to approach ordinary people. Therefore, Matthias Braun (Berlin), in his lecture on the literary scene of the GDR (German Democratic Republic), revealed that, during the fall of 1989, numerous writers showed no concern for the interests of the majority, choosing to rather despise the people's urge for the West. The literature promoted by the GDR (German Democratic Republic) has fully exerted, starting with the 70s', a „compensatory political function" and has offered spaces of freedom to its countless readers.

As a whole, the conference provided, besides to the well-known points of view, numerous facts and thesis, which could be found during the following year in a conference volume.

Beside many others points of interest, there has been outstanding the precision of processing the events that preceded the revolutions of 1989. Retrospectively, a question emerges: why was the erosion of the socialist system perceived so clearly by so few people back then? Nevertheless a message is obvious: we all should include the unimaginable intrinsic in our own thinking, while analyzing the current crises.

Ph. D. Georg **HERBSTTRIT**

December 1989 in Timișoara. From Popular Riot to Revolution

I. Why Timișoara?

The systemic crisis of the communist regime, dramatically deepened at the end of the ninth decade, brought about the onset of an anti-Ceaușescu riot in Timișoara, on December 16th 1989, which soon spread to Lugoj, on December 20th, and to Bucharest and other cities from Banat and Transylvania, on December 21st.

“Why Timișoara?” was one of the questions frequently asked by those who studied the events which had proven to be decisive for casting out Ceaușescu and the collapse of the Romanian communist regime. As many other questions related to both the casting out of Nicolae Ceaușescu and the logical consequence of the collapse of the communist regime, since Ceaușescu and his clan had been the most emblematic figures of this regime, this inquest will find several answers, too.

Liviu Birăescu was the first to ask this question in an elaborate study dedicated to the revolution of Timișoara and published in March 1990. He was also the first to give a reasonable answer validated by the geographical position, the ethnic structure and the historical evolution of the city from the banks of the Bega River¹.

After 1980, the crisis of the communist regime has been acutely felt in Timis County and the city of Timișoara, gradually spreading over all sectors of activity with profound implications at the social level². The shortage of raw materials faced by most of the plants and factories in Timișoara, *i.e.* Electromotor”, „Solventul”, „1 iunie” Textile Factory of Timișoara etc., the poor quality of the products for export and the production of unsalable goods determined the executive board of the party to progressively guide the exports towards the agricultural products. This strategy led to a considerable diminishment of the production of agricultural and processed food products for domestic consumption and implicitly, to a severe food crisis and even to a state of malnutrition ascertained in numerous families.

This is the reason why, according to an Informative Note of the secret police agency which was also known as the “Securitate”, dated July 16th 1981, the people lined up in endless queues were often railing “invectives and insults

¹ Traian Liviu Birăescu, *De ce Timișoara? în Timișoara 16-22 decembrie 1989 [Why Timișoara? in Timișoara – December 16th – 22nd 1989]*, Timișoara, Facla Publishing House, 1990, p. 11-15

² Ioan Munteanu, *Starea de spirit a populației din Timișoara premergătoare Revoluției din Decembrie 1989 [The spirits of Timișoara community prior to the Revolution of December 1989]* in „Clio”, an. IV, no. 1/2008, Bucharest, p. 69-70

against the local and central party officials, the government and basically, against all bodies responsible for this situation”³. The same notes accounted the supportive position of the workers within the largest plants and factories of Timișoara towards the events which had taken place in Poland, where the “Solidarity” Union had set off a significant social-political movement. Therefore, the workers from “Modern” Factory considered that although “the actions from Poland are justified and right”, in Romania “they will not limit to strikes to regain their rights”⁴.

As the former first-secretary of Timis County Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, Radu Bălan, testified during the Trial of Timișoara, the situation of the county he had to govern starting with November 3rd 1989, was quite difficult and the spirits were highly agitated. In many plants and factories, the salaries of the employees were 80% below the legal entitlements and the employees from the agricultural sectors had not been paid since July⁵.

Nevertheless, despite that reality, the living conditions experienced by the inhabitants of Timișoara were not worse than those of most of the Romanians. On the contrary! This is the reason why the onset of the Revolution from December 1989 in Timișoara was also due to some other factors closely related to the European and democratic tradition, the ethnic and heterogeneous structure, the geographic location of the city at the Romanian western border, the experiences of both the “Bărăgan operation” and the students’ movements from 1956 and last but not least, to a plus of information⁶.

Due to a particular historical evolution⁷, the Banat region, in general, and particularly Timișoara, represented an active model of interculturality,

³ Timis County Directorate of National Archives, Merits - Timis County Committee of Romanian Communist Party, case no. 256/1981, f. 29 (hereinafter: D.J.T.A.T.N....)

⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 12

⁵ *Procesul de la Timișoara [Trial of Timișoara]*, vol. III, Edition supervised by Miodrag Milin and Traian Orban, Timișoara, Mirton Publishing House, 2005, p. 1414

⁶ Dumitru Tomoni, *Aspecte ale crizei economice și deteriorarea condițiilor de viață în Banat [Aspects of the Economic Crisis and the Deterioration of the Living Conditions in Banat]* in „Caietele Revoluției” [Journals of Revolution], no. 5/2008, p. 16-18

⁷ Gheorghe Jurma, *Descoperirea Banatului [Discovery of Banat]*, Reșița, Timpul Publishing House, 1994; see also Dumitru Tomoni, *Regionala „Astra Bănățeană”. Monografie istorică [“Astra Banateana” Regional Journal. Historical Monograph]*, Timișoara, Eurostampa Publishing House, p. 14-56

mainly characterized by civic complementarity⁸. In parallel with the dogmatism promoted by the communist activists in charge of culture, the wooden language and the mass manifestations organized under the aegis of “Daciada” or “Cântarea României” [*“Paean of Romania”*] (two national cultural events during the communist period), Timișoara distinguished itself by a different way of thinking expressed through the activity carried out by several intellectual and artistic circles such as the Sigma Group, the Aktionsgruppe Banat which gathered young German writers, the multilingual literary groups of the Writers’ Union, the interconfessional gatherings, the film libraries, the Phoenix Band, etc.⁹. The active interculturality of Banat achieved by its interconfessional, interethnic, interlinguistic and intercultural hybridization may explain, to a broader extent, both the onset of the Revolution of December 1989 in Timișoara and the “pole position” of Timișoara in terms of post-revolution transformation of Romania. The synthetic expression of these realities, emphasized by the well-known slogan: „Azi în Timișoara, mâine-n toată țara!” [*“Timișoara, at this moment, Romanian is the sequent!”*], has been uttered with the same pathos both during the week of the great ordeals to which the city on the Bega banks had been subject from December 16th to December 22nd 1989, and after the instauration of the new government which was the “emanation of the revolution”.

Rich in natural resources and populated by hardworking and prosperous inhabitants, the Banat region was not exactly a favourable place to implant the communism. Being aware of that fact, the communist regime attempted to impose itself by force and terror, faster than in any other region of the country, ignoring the aspects related to image or perception. On the pretext of the proximity to Yugoslavia, whose communist leader, Iosif Broz Tito had unequivocally declared himself against the Stalinist system, the officials of the Romanian communist regime planned the so-called “Bărăgan operation”. On June 18th 1951, over 40.000 Romanians, Serbians, Germans, Bulgarians and the list may go on, from Banat region and Mehedinti county were taken from their homes, by force and gathered in cattle wagons. After two horrifying weeks of travelling to nowhere, they have been left under the open sky in different areas of the Bărăgan Plain. The communist regime

⁸ Ștefă Buzărnescu, Sorin Pribac, Micea Neagu, Ana Buzărnescu, *Un model de interculturalitate activă. Banatul românesc [A Model of Active Interculturality. The Romanian Banat]*, Timișoara, Western Press, 2004, p. 64

⁹ Victor Neumann, *Civismul Timișoarei în anii național-comunismului [Civic Spirit of Timișoara during the National-Communist Years]* in „Memorial 1989. Buletin științific și de informare” [*Memorial 1989. Scientific and Information Journal*], no. 2/2007, Timișoara, p. 16

forced them to build their life from scratch, to struggle with hunger and lack of money and to survive the freezing winters and burning summers¹⁰. Even if a large number of deportees returned home after 4 or 5 years, they and their children (most of them being born in the Bărăgan Plain) would never forget the ordeal inflicted by the communists and whenever they had the chance to express their true feelings about the communist regime, they did it in various forms.

It is not a coincidence that the most obvious and vocal forms of protest and solidarity with the Hungarian revolution from 1956 came from Timișoara. It was then when the students of Timișoara, assuming all possible risks, have chanted powerful slogans such as: “Down with the communism!” and “No more Russians in the country!”¹¹. The intervention of the repressive forces came instantly: over 800 students have been arrested and 29 have been judged and sentenced to prison. The students’ movement from October 30th to 31st 1956, which gathered over 2000 students from all academic centres of Timișoara, was the first undisputable anti-communist manifestation¹². Undoubtedly, the additional information has played a significant role in setting off the revolution of Timișoara. The programs and news broadcasted by the TV stations from Belgrade, Novi-Sad and Budapest were constantly watched by numerous inhabitants of Timișoara who had the chance to witness a new reality and to have access to accurate information on the anti-communist movements from all other countries subject to totalitarian regimes. The information was also received directly, since many citizens from Timișoara had relatives, friends or neighbours who had settled in different European countries.

Summing up, we may conclude that December 1989 found a pro-occidental, democratic and anti-totalitarian feeling deeply rooted in the community of Timișoara. This is the reason why, beyond the obvious economic crisis with severe consequences on the society, this feeling has set

¹⁰ Viorel Marineasa, Daniel Vighi, *Rusalii 51. Fragmente din deportarea în Bărăgan [The Pentecost of 51. Fragments from the Deportation to the Bărăgan Plain]*, Timișoara, Marineasa Publishing House, 1994; see also: Viorel Marineasa, Daniel Vighi, Valentin Sămânță, *Deportarea în Bărăgan [Deportation to Bărăgan]*, Timișoara, Mirton Publishing House, 1996; Elena Spijavca, *Munci și zile în Bărăgan [Working and Waiting in Bărăgan]*, Bucharest, Press of the Civic Academy Foundation, 2004

¹¹ Mihaela Sitaru, *Oaza de libertate. Timișoara, 30 octombrie 1956, [Oasis of Freedom, Timișoara, October 30th 1956]* Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 2004, p. 48

¹² Ioan Munteanu, *Manifestarea anticomunistă a studenților de la Timișoara din octombrie 1956. Semnificația politică națională [Anti-communist Manifestation of the Students of Timișoara from October 1956. Political Significance at the National Level]*, in „The Annals of Sighet”, vol. VIII, Bucharest, 2000, p. 635-656

off, whether helped or not by external instigators, within a favourable international context, the revolution of December 1989.

II. Preludes to December 16th 1989

The first signals were given immediately after the riot of the workers of Braşov, in November 1987. Attempts have been made to organize a demonstration against Ceauşescu, in Timişoara, both in the Unirii Square and in the Opera Square, on January 3rd 1988. The insufficiently planned strategy and the fear of direct repressions from the vigilant officials caused the significant diminishment of the manifestation which was soon reduced to a discrete and shy call: “If you’re a patriot, come on January 3rd in Unirii Square”¹. Due to the poor planning and the discrete mobilization of police and Securitate officers, the actions turned to a simple stroll between both squares; however, it also triggered a serious alarm for the docile authorities whose only goal was to maintain an anachronistic regime.

Another signal was given by the citizens of Timişoara on November 15th 1989, after the football game played by the Romanian and Danish national teams. The victory of the Romanian team and the qualification to the Football World Cup tournament organized in Italy in 1990, brought thousands of people, especially students, on Timişoara’s streets. The crowd sang “Deşteaptă-te, române!” [“Awaken thee, Romanian!”] and chanted several slogans, such as “Romania!” and... “Down with Ceauşescu!”². The news travelled fast, generating perplexity and curiosity, so, the following day, hundreds of inhabitants of Timişoara were marching on the streets downtown not only to see for themselves what had happened during the previous night but also to continue the actions. Unfortunately, the absence of a catalyst designed to join and concentrate the desire for action of the random groups of citizens was conclusive.

During the days prior to November 19th 1989, the park from the University Campus was full of leaflets which called the students to join the manifestation against the communist regime organized in the Opera Square of Timişoara, on November 19th, at 4:00 p.m. The leaflets drafted by hand in four colours had the following message: “All students are invited to come on Sunday, November 19th 1989, 4:00 pm., to Opera Square, to manifest under the

¹ *Timişoara 16-22 decembrie 1989 [Timişoara, December 16th – 22nd 1989]*, Timişoara, Facla Publishing House, 1990, p. 86-87; see also Titus Suci, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură [“A Story in One Breath”]*, Timişoara, Seicon Publishing House, 1990, p. 6-7 (continued: *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură... [“A Story in One Breath...”]*)

² *Ibidem*, p. 7

following slogan: Freedom, DIGNITY!!! Down with the LIES, TYRANNY, POVERTY AND THEFT!!!”³.

On the scheduled day and time, scattered groups of people were strolling down the Opera Square and since nobody started the protest, the groups spread after a while.

Soon after this attempt, a new signal of revolt against Ceaușescu’s dictatorship would be given by the workers of the largest factory of Timișoara, the U.M.T. On November 23rd, the very same day when the proceedings of the 14th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party were in full swing in Bucharest, a group of workers from U.M.T. tried to mobilize the employees within the factory to join them to a manifestation against the re-election of Ceaușescu as the general secretary of the Romanian Communist Party. Consequently, a large number of citizens from other factories have been contacted and a group of 300-400 people gathered in the factory yard chanting: “Romanians, come with us!” and then moved to the factory gate. Unfortunately, due to the demobilizing intervention of unit manager, most of the workers failed to find the necessary courage to go on with their protest and returned to their units. Numerous arrests and threats followed⁴. Again, nothing serious happened for Ceaușescu’s regime but... December 1989 was to come in no time.

III. A Spontaneous Revolt or an External Plot?

Despite these realities that motivate and fully justify the onset of the revolution of the citizens of Timișoara, shortly after the casting out of Ceaușescu, numerous journalists and analysts fond of sensational or connected, by hidden interests or dirty pasts, to the former communist regime, including without limitation to the Army and the Securitate, have launched the version of an external plot elaborately planned by the Soviet and American secret services aiming to chase away the dictatorial regime. A former obsession of Ceaușescu, which speculated the presence of foreign secret agents whose missions were to instigate the population, and which was also circulated on the occasion of the revolt of Brașov from November 25th 1987, was soon to be embraced, at first by very few people but, as the time went by and the discontent towards the new post-revolution government increased, more and more people adhered to that theory which became a genuine trend. Given that context, among other exegetes of the events of December 1989⁵, Alex Mihai Stoenescu⁶, a Romanian

³ <http://www.vestul.ro/stiri/485/indemn-la-revolutie-in-noiembrie-1989.htm> , 09.01.2009

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 8-9

⁵ Filip Teodorescu, *Un risc asumat [A Risk Fully Assumed]*, Bucharest, Viitorul Românesc Publishing House, 1992; Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Revoluția. Începutul adevărului. Un raport*

politician and writer, has distinguished himself by his tenacity proven along the time. Following the same logics of the crucial role played by the foreign secret agents in setting off and planning the revolt of Timișoara, the events which had taken place in Timișoara were detailed in the collective book titled “The Romanian Army in the Revolution of December 1989” coordinated by Costache Codrescu and published in two editions.

The supporters of the theory involving the external plot orchestrated against Ceaușescu by the Russians and Americans are also speaking about the recruitment and special training of several Romanian runaways from different camps in Hungary, who were to be sent, particularly in the Banat and Transylvania areas to instigate the population. Their mission was that “immediately after having knowledge of a conflict occurred in a particular place of these areas ... to urgently travel there to amplify and direct such conflict”⁷.

A new diversionist group sent by the Soviet secret services consisted of tourists who transited our country, by personal vehicles, heading to Yugoslavia. On an average, 80 to 100 cars entered our country on a daily basis. At the same time, the activity of several individuals “known as Soviet agents who had been carrying out propagandistic activities involving also a series of philo-Soviet intellectuals from Timișoara”⁸ has been intensified. We haven’t been told and we could not find the identity of those highly influential intellectuals for the educated environment of Timișoara.

The supporters of the foreign plot have also assigned an important role to the general consul of Yugoslavia in Timișoara, Marko Atanaschovici, who was considered an agent of the Hungarian secret services. He is claimed to have been maintained a close contact with the local personalities and “to have frequently crossed the border between Romania and Yugoslavia, sometimes

personal [Revolution. The Beginning of Truth. A Personal Account], Bucharest, Topaz Grup Press, 1995; Idem, Lupta pentru putere. Decembrie 89 [The Fight for Power, December 1989], Bucharest, Bic All Press, 2005 (continued: The Fight for Power ...); De la regimul comunist la regimul Ilescu. Virgil Măgureanu în dialog cu Alex Mihai Stoenescu, București [From the Communist Regime to Ilescu's Regime. Virgil Măgureanu in Dialogue with Alex Mihai Stoenescu, Bucharest], RAO Press, 2008 (continued: From the Communist Regime to Ilescu's Regime ...)

⁶ *Revoluția română din decembrie 1989. Istorie și memorie [Romanian Revolution from December 1989. History and Memoirs],* coordinator Bogdan Murgescu, Iași, 2008, p. 205-212

⁷ Filip Teodorescu, *op.cit.*, p. 49; see also Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Lupta pentru putere... [The Fight for Power ...]*, p. 52

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 52

even 2 or 3 times a day”⁹. Nevertheless, it is common knowledge that both the revolutionists from the Civic Committee established within the premises of the former Timis County Committee of the Romanian Communist Party and the revolutionists from the Opera balcony have made repeated efforts to send the list of claims to the Yugoslavian Consulate which, in its turn, was to send the list both to the embassy and to the Taniug agency¹⁰.

The first manifestation against the regime, which took place in December 1989, was also attributed to the foreign agents. During the night of December 10th – 11th, thousands of leaflets containing anti-Ceaușescu messages, such as “Down with the dictator!”, “Down with Ceaușescu’s despotism!” and “Death to the dictator!” were spread on the streets of Timișoara. During the first hours of the morning, the militia officers were mobilized to gather the leaflets. Since the authors of those actions have not been identified and nobody assumed that form of protest, both Alex Mihai Stoenescu¹¹ and Sergiu Nicolaescu¹² considered that the foreign agents spread those leaflets to provoke the repressive forces and to prepare and stimulate the citizens of Timișoara.

The very same agents would have acted on December 15th and December 16th 1989 around the residence of pastor László Tőkés aiming to turn the actions of the citizens who had come to support the pastor who was to be evicted based on a court order, into a form of protest against the regime. “All those agents, as the former head of the Romanian Intelligence Service, Virgil Măgureanu said, together with other groups, the so-called Soviet tourist groups.... who came by Lada cars, some athletic young persons who always travelled in groups” would have instigated the people of Timișoara to riots¹³. According to Sergiu Nicolaescu, the surveillance agents would have identified, among the people surrounding Tőkés’ residence, “agents of foreign intelligence services who were trying to blend in the crowd”¹⁴. Besides the fact that none of the thousands of people who marched around the pastor’s residence saw any suspicious individuals, none of the agents of the local Securitate acknowledged that hypothesis, as we will see in the following pages. Furthermore, it is also claimed that the conviction of Tőkés had not been accidental: he had been

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 53

¹⁰ Titus Suci, *Reportaj... [Reportage]*, p. 229-231

¹¹ Alex Mihai Stoenescu, *Istoria loviturilor de stat în România [The History of the coups d'état in Romania]* vol. 4 (I), Bucharest, RAO Publishing House, 2004, p. 325-326

¹² Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Lupta pentru putere... [The Fight for Power]*, p. 54

¹³ *De la regimul comunist la regimul Iliescu [From the Communist Regime to Iliescu's Regime...]*p. 15

¹⁴ Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Lupta pentru putere... [The Fight for Power...]*, p. 55

considered to be “the most fearful enemy of the national unity”¹⁵ and, at the same time „just a pretext, aimed at and exhaustively exploited by the external forces.”¹⁶ If the reasons of this conviction have been clarified by Marius Mioc¹⁷, the aspects related to the role played by the pastor Tőkés in the revolution of Timișoara are much clearer. Paraphrasing Nicoale Bălcescu in our attempt to identify the connection between the European Revolution of 1848 and the Revolution from the former Romanian States, we can undoubtedly state that the attempt to evict the Reformed Pastor was just the occasion and not the cause of the revolt of the inhabitants of Timișoara. The fact that the things are as described above is proven not only by the repeated calls of the pastor addressed, on December 16th, to the people gathered in front of his parochial residence to leave and avoid any potential incidents, but also by the fact that in the afternoon of that day, the actions to support Tőkés turned into a tumultuous revolt against Ceaușescu’s dictatorship.

Another controversial moment related to the onset of the revolution of Timișoara and the potential presence of a “shock” group is the moment depicting the vandalizing of storefronts, on December 16th and 17th. The dexterity shown by some peoples involved in vandalizing the storefronts as well as their serenity and calmness draw the attention of several eyewitnesses. Therefore, Vasile Andraș remembers: “The windows of both the tobacco store and the bookstore from the corner were being vandalized. The authors were four bald-headed young individuals dressed in civil clothes, armed with some maces, I’d say special truncheons of 1,70-1,80m long having both ends provided with metallic rings. All they did is to smash the windows! I haven’t seen one of them entering the store and taking something!! It was like they were holding a grudge against the poor windows and it seemed that they love smashing them down”¹⁸.

As Sandu Haniuș also remembers: “Most windows have been smashed by a group of seven or eight persons armed with maces which looked like some booze bottles. Where did they come from and how did they know to bring those tools with them?”¹⁹. This is why some exegetes of the events of Timișoara perceive those groups as “foreign mercenaries involved in diversionist

¹⁵ *De la regimul comunist la regimul Iliescu... [From the Communist Regime to Iliescu’s Regime...]*, p. 169

¹⁶ Radu Tinu, *Timișoara... no comment*, Bucharest, Edit. Paco, 2001, p. 19

¹⁷ Marius Mioc, *Revoluția, fără mistere. Începutul revoluției române: cazul László Tőkés [Revolution Devoid of Its Secrets. The Onset of the Romanian Revolution: the case of László Tőkés]*, Timișoara, Almanahul Banatului”Press, 2002

¹⁸ Titus Suciu, *Reportaj...[Reportage]* p. 118

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 71

operations” or just deliberate diversionist actions performed by the Securitate and the Army to justify the repression of the demonstrators²⁰. However, a large number of the people who had been marching and protesting during those days do not agree to these hypotheses, considering that the smashing of store windows was just a form of protesting against the regime and against the rough intervention of the repression forces. They do not exclude the presence of either the perpetrators or the people driven by the tendency to steal goods.

In some cases, the arguments used to justify a foreign intervention in Timișoara are far-fetched and even hilarious. Therefore, the commander of the Military Unit 01185 declared that in the morning of December 17th, the military column deployed in the Opera Square for parade “had become a genuine magnet, being surrounded by numerous individuals whose appearances and clothes clearly indicated that they were not locals (narrator’s underlining)”²¹. If we had been talking about a remote village from the Apuseni Mountains, a difference between the locals’ clothes and those of the strangers would have been seen and justified, but we are speaking about an academic and multi-ethnic city and consequently, such differentiations are difficult, if not impossible to be made. The allegation according to which “during the same day, several flags bearing the official symbols of Hungary emerged from the crowd”²², seems also far-fetched. None of the demonstrators acknowledged the presence of the Hungarian flags, and, considering that state of mind, it is hard to assume that somebody would have made such imprudence.

It is however undisputable the fact that, during those days, Timișoara has been visited by numerous tourists, particularly the tourists who came from the Republic of Moldova. The problem is not related to their presence but to their number and effective involvement in the onset and catalysis of the citizens’ revolt.

According to the researches conducted by the “14 decembrie” Timișoara Association, in December 1989, the hotels of the city accommodated a number of 1638 foreign tourists, less than in November of the same year, when their number had reached to 2190²³. The possibility to accommodate the tourists in the city camping was clearly excluded because it was closed during the winter. If those people had stayed on the streets, mingled with the crowd or hidden in vehicles parked in different locations, they would have undoubtedly

²⁰ Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Lupta pentru putere...[The Fight for Power]*, p. 58

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 62

²² *Ibidem*

²³ Marius Mioc, *Revoluția din 1989 și minciunile din Jurnalul Național [Revolution of 1989 and the Lies from the National Journal]*, Timișoara, Marineasa Press, 2005, p. 13 (continued: *Revolution of 1989...*)

been identified both by the inhabitants of the city, who, during those incendiary days, were on the run to avoid being arrested, and by the repressive forces. The fact that no strangers or suspicious persons have been seen is acknowledged by hundreds of persons who actively attended those events. We quote the testimony given by the former political prisoner and senator, Tănase Tăvală: “In my opinion, as a person who marched, during the days of the Revolution, through the entire Timișoara, day and night, reaching different points of the city, no terrorists were here... I did not witness any armed foreign or Romanian citizens among the demonstrators”²⁴. The same thing will be also acknowledged by Dan Voinea, after more than ten years of study of the Revolution of 1989: “except for several journalists, no foreign citizens have been found among the victims recorded in the entire country... The merit of setting off the Romania revolution belongs solely to the citizens of Timișoara and they would have definitely seen, among them, foreigners, whether Hungarians, Germans, Americans or Russians, who were instigating the crowd. Nobody led the citizens; they were led by their own discontent against the regime”²⁵. “Until now, we have not identified any foreign citizens among the victims or the shooters”, the former chief of the Military Prosecution Offices of Timișoara declared. From December 16th to December 19th 1989, over 900 persons have been arrested, irrespective whether they had attended or not the demonstrations, being taken from the streets, the railways station, the parking areas or from other places. However, no foreign citizen was found among those persons. The same thing applies to the 73 dead people recorded until December 22nd 1989 and the 296 injured.

The most powerful arguments that invalidate the role of the foreign agents in the onset of the revolt of the citizens of Timișoara come from the official reports prepared by the Securitate and from the affidavits given by the Securitate officers and the Ministry of Interior. Therefore, Radu Tinu, the deputy commander of the County Securitate, who had been on the streets together with his subordinates even from the very first moments of the revolt, declared during the Trial of Timișoara that, according to the information gathered during those days “there have been found no foreign elements culpable of having provoked those protests”²⁶. Asked by the case prosecutor if,

²⁴ *Întrebări cu și fără răspuns. Decembrie 1989 [Questions with and without Answers. December 1989]*, Timișoara, Mirton Publishing House, 2001, p. 154 (continued: *Questions with and without Answers...*)

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 139

²⁶ *Procesul de la Timișoara [Trial of Timișoara]*, vol. I, Edition supervised by Miodrag Milin, Timișoara, Civic Academy Foundation, 2004, p. 444

as a result of the informative operations he had performed, he found any instigators, Tinu answered unequivocally, as before: “No”²⁷.

A similar stand was also taken by Col. Filip Teodorescu, deputy commander of the Romanian Counter-Intelligence Service, who had been sent to Timișoara in the night of December 16th 1989, together with a group of 14 officers from different divisions of the State Security Department to identify the foreign agents arrived there to destabilize the political situation of Romania, “equipped with ammunition and anti-communist and anti-Romanian propagandistic materials”²⁸. In his first informative note – during those days, he sent three informative notes to Bucharest – sent on December 19th 1989 to Gen. Iulian Vlad, the head of the State Security Department, Filip Teodorescu reported that no leaders had been identified and that “the action was absolutely spontaneous, being generated by the general dissatisfaction (what?!) felt by the citizens of Timișoara, and also by the people from other counties of the country”²⁹. During the trial, he reconsidered the spontaneous character of the events emerged on December 16th 1989, specifying that “the data communicated by us to the officials in Bucharest mentioned that the manifestations had been and are still spontaneous and they are not the result of previous planning or intervention of any foreign agents”³⁰. During the same trial, Filip Teodorescu declared frankly that “during the entire period of the events of Timișoara, despite all our efforts, we did not manage to obtain any data that might confirm that agents of foreign intelligence services would have been infiltrated in Timis County to destabilize the political situation”³¹. Unfortunately, the moral probity of those two representatives of the Securitate has been damaged because, over the years, they have changed their opinions regarding the events of Timișoara. In collusion with the mass-media eager for sensational, they are currently some of the most vocal supporters of the plot organized by foreign intelligence services in December 1989 in Timișoara against Ceaușescu.

Neither Major Gen. Emil Macri, head of the Economic Counter-Intelligence Division within the Department of State Security, nor Lt. Col. Gabriel Anastasiu, deputy commander of the Division I -Internal Intelligence Directorate, who had been sent to Timișoara, accompanied by the same group of officers, to identify “the instigators and particularly, the foreign individuals mingled with the crowd”, could not confirm the existence of the foreign secret agents. Therefore, on December 18th 1989, Emil Macri informed Ion Coman,

²⁷ *Ibidem*, vol. II, p. 459

²⁸ *Ibidem*, vol. I, p. 280

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 301

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 315

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 292

that he “identified no foreign agents” and Iulian Vlad, that he had “no knowledge according to which certain instigators and foreign individuals had come to destabilize the political situation in the area”³². During the trial, Gabriel Anastasiu testified that “it was clear to me that it was not a question of instigation or about such kind of runaway, fugitive individuals, but a question of distinct activities attended by proletarians...”. Another Securitate officer, Lt. Col. Gheorghe Carașcă, reached the same conclusions: “The mission assigned by Gen. Emil Macri consisted in finding the leaders of the events from Timișoara, after thoroughgoing investigations, and their potential connections with any external hostile elements. The Securitate officers have conducted numerous investigations regarding the aspects stated above ... I can now declare, according to the investigations performed at the Penitentiary of Timișoara, that no aspects of particular interest for the Securitate officers have been identified.”³³

Both the reports and testimonies illustrated above deserve a special attention. All these high-ranked officers with leading positions in Securitate, have been sent to Timișoara on a special mission: to identify both the leaders of the revolt and the foreign agents who had allegedly instigated the citizens of Timișoara. The high-ranked officers and the county Securitate officers benefited from the entire logistics available at that time and were more than motivated to satisfy the orders given by their superiors, *i.e.* to clarify the real causes of the revolt and to attribute everything that had happened to the destabilizing and instigating foreign agents. Since no such elements have been identified, we can conclude that either such agents were just the fruit of imagination or, if they did exist, they played no role in the development of the events of Timișoara. The fact that, in the meanwhile, the very persons who had been desperately looking for the foreign secret agents, during those days, are now the most vocal supporters of the external plot thoroughly planned in relation to the events from Timișoara, is just a matter of nostalgia for those long-gone days, a nostalgia that is explained by their eagerness for publicity. The historical investigation cannot be performed based on impressions but based on documents and facts, and all documents known by this time lead to one single idea: given the favourable and somehow stimulating external context, the revolt of the citizens of Timișoara has been triggered by the unprecedented crisis of an anachronistic regime hated by the large majority of Romanians.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 37

³³ Apud Alex Mihai Stoenescu, *op. cit.*, p. 485

With or without the presence of the foreign secret agents, the protest of Timișoara has been decisive, dramatic and even heroic and this fact is also acknowledged by the supporters of the external plot against Ceaușescu. Therefore, in an interview given to John Simpson, the editor-in-chief of external news department of BBC, about the role of the foreign secret agents, Virgil Măgureanu stated that “this outside influence did exist in Timișoara; among other aspects, it also included the intervention of certain groups which have been previously trained, outside the country, to intervene in a potential rebellion”, but “the revolt of the population of Timișoara cannot be attributed to such destabilizing groups; they have only facilitated a certain planning of the events and perhaps, they may have directed them ... but under no circumstances were they the persons to determine the course of events of Timișoara and the amplitude thereof”³⁴. The same logic is also followed by Sergiu Nicolaescu who declared “both the course of events from Timișoara, which were definitely anti-communist, and the outcome thereof, have been fundamentally triggered and decided by the population of Timișoara”³⁵.

IV. Timișoara Takes a Stand: December 16th – 20th 1989

Indeed, the period from December 16th to December 22nd 1989 has been the most tragic week of the history of the City of Timișoara. The onset of the revolt of the citizens of Timișoara occurred in the afternoon of December 16th 1989 in Maria Square, in close proximity to the residence of the Pastor László Tőkés. At about 7:00 p.m., the trams were stopped and the demonstrators shouted for the first time “Down with Ceaușescu!”, an incendiary slogan which marked the shift from an action of solidarity with Pastor Tőkés, an action which was a vivid expression of the well-known civism of the inhabitants, to a revolt against Ceaușescu, which, in its turn, was the expression of the discontentment against an aggressive and dictatorial regime. It was then when the spark of the revolution has been triggered and that was also the moment when the role played by Pastor Tőkés in the development of the events of Timișoara has reached an end. Nevertheless, those who triggered the spark stopping the trams and shouting the slogan which was so loved by the Romanians during those days, had nothing to do with the foreign secret agents!! They were two simple, ordinary citizens: Ion Monoran și Daniel Zăgănescu³⁶. The seed of the riot had been thrown over a fertile soil; otherwise, even if all secret services of the

³⁴ *Întrebări cu și fără răspuns...* [Questions with or without Answers ...], p. 45-46

³⁵ Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Lupta pentru putere* [The Fight for Power]..., p. 51

³⁶ Archives of the Memorial of Revolution of Timișoara, *Fond Ion Monoran* [Merits: Ion Monoran]; see also Daniel Vighi, *Mono a oprit tramvaiele* [Mono Stopped the Trams]... in „Orizont”, Timișoara, no. 1 as of January 23rd 2006, p. 22

world had joined forces, together with a traitorous segment of the Securitate, to cast out Ceaușescu, the citizens of Timișoara would have not risked their lives and freedom solely to please several foreign or local conspirators. The fact that the Romanians and particularly the citizens of Timișoara were not so credulous, simple-minded and so easy to manipulate, as some would like us to think, is over and above proven after the 90's, by several actions, such as the launch of the Proclamation of Timișoara, the planning of numerous demonstrations against the politics implemented by the new governors, and, why not, the votes casted over the years.

Indeed, after 7:00 p.m., the situation in Maria Square got out of hand: the traffic was stopped, the number of demonstrators kept growing by the hour (over 2000) and their attitude was undoubtedly contrary to Ceaușescu's regime. Confronted with an unprecedented situation, the authorities intervened using all necessary means and force. At first, an intervention squad and numerous fire brigade vehicles were deployed there. The demonstrators resisted heroically and the attempt of the repressive forces to spread the crowd and reinstate order fizzled out, in spite of the order given by Ceaușescu to the first secretary of Timis County Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, Radu Bălan, to settle the crisis within an hour³⁷.

Getting enough courage, a massive group of demonstrators marched to the Party County Committee, crossing the Michelangelo Bridge, passing by the State Bank, the Post Office and strolling down the 23 August Boulevard. Overwhelmed by the events, Radu Bălan dared not to initiate a dialogue with the demonstrators whose number exceeded by far 2000 persons, although he knew he stood up well with the inhabitants of Timișoara. Under those conditions, the demonstrators attacked the premises, smashed down the windows and attempted to tear up the symbols of communism. Realizing the troops available at that moment were not able to control the crowd, the first secretary demanded the County Inspectorate of the Ministry of Interior to deploy new troops. A squad under the control to the Counterterrorism Division (U.S.L.A.), equipped with special suits, shields, batons, masks and helmets was sent to defend the premises and spread the demonstrators. Using special equipments, including vials of tear gas, the squad managed to reinstate order³⁸. At 8:45 p.m., the first secretary demanded Lt. Col. Constantin Zeca, who acted as the substitute of the commander of the Large Mechanized Corps Division, to organize and send out troops and combat logistics to participate, together with the officers of the Ministry of Interior, in restoring order in the city. As a result

³⁷ *Procesul de la Timișoara*, vol. III, p. 1429

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 1433

of the order passed by Gen. Vasile Milea, the Minister of National Defence, 24 patrols of 10 armed soldiers each, without yet carrying ammunition, were sent out in the city³⁹.

In the meantime, the demonstrators regrouped in Maria Square and, after 11:00 p.m., at the call of Sorin Oprea, a mechanic at Electrometal Timișoara, they headed out to the Metropolitan Cathedral, crossing the nearby bridge⁴⁰. As the number of the people gathered there was too small, the demonstrators decided to set out to the campus to ask the students to join them. At the same time, another group of demonstrators was heading out to the same campus, coming from Calea Buziașului and Girocului Boulevards. Once the two groups got together, Sorin Oprea lifted on a unit generator-transformer and asked the demonstrators to march back to the Metropolitan Cathedral to ask for the support of the metropolitan bishop in facilitating a dialogue with the authorities⁴¹. On the way back to the Metropolitan Cathedral, the demonstrators literally shattered all panels and boards displaying communist slogans. After midnight, the demonstrators arrived to the Cathedral. Over 10000 people began to sing two songs of utmost importance for all Romanians: “The Hora of Unity” and “Awaken thee, Romanian!” and chanted, for the first time, under the guidance of Sorin Oprea, the slogan: “Down with the communism!”⁴². From there, the demonstrators decided to head out to several highly populated areas of the city, *i.e.* the Circumvalațiunii, Calea Aradului and Calea Lipovei Zones, to encourage other citizens to join and to return to the Cathedral with new and fresh forces.

Unfortunately, the communist authorities did not wait long to respond to those stimuli and acted as such. After several discussions with Ceaușescu, Radu Bălan was to personally and unconditionally engage in repressing the demonstrators, keeping in touch with Ion Popescu, chief inspector with Timis County Inspectorate under the Ministry of Interior (Ion Popescu has miraculously succeeded to advance, from an ordinary mineworker, to the Officer Cadet School, the Military Academy and finally to the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Academy) and Traian Sima, head of the Securitate Division of

³⁹ Neculai Damian, *Scânteia vine din văzduh [The Spark Comes from Above]*, Timișoara, Eurostampa Press, 1999, p. 41-42

⁴⁰ Armata română în Revoluția din decembrie [Romanian Army during the Revolution of December], 1989, 2nd Edition II-a, Bucharest, Military Press, 1998, p. 56 (continued: *Armata română [Romanian Army]...*)

⁴¹ Miodrag Milin, *Timișoara 15-21 decembrie 89 [Timișoara between December 15th and December 21st 1989]*, Timișoara, 1990, p. 36 (continued: *between December 15th and December 21st 1989*); see also *Timișoara 16-22 decembrie 1989 [between December 15th and December 22nd 1989]*, p. 60

⁴² Marius Mioc, *Revoluția din 1989 [Revolution of 1989]*, p. 109

Timis County, obtaining thus valuable and up-to-date knowledge about the events in the streets and giving orders to restore order in the city⁴³.

Since the lines of demonstrators were marching down the streets, passing by the most important zones of Timișoara, at about 3 o'clock in the night, Bălan ordered the army "to intervene using all necessary force and means to disperse the demonstrators and to arrest everybody they found strolling down the streets". Indeed, after the intervention of the repressive forces, the demonstrators were spread and until the first hours of the morning, over 200 arrests have been made⁴⁴.

Early in that Sunday morning, Timișoara looked like a city under siege. The broken windows were being replaced and the people were walking down the streets, in groups, by-passing the roadblocks placed in different areas of the city, making comments about events that had taken place during the previous day. The peace restored on the morning of December 17th 1989 was to be disturbed by a military parade, with bands, national flags and weapons without ammunition. The purpose of that parade, ordered by Ceaușescu, was to intimidate the citizens and discourage any other demonstrations⁴⁵. To support the planning and the march of the parade, in the early morning of December 17th, a group of officers from the Romanian General Staff, the Supreme Political Council of Army and the Inspectorate of Military Bands, arrived at Timișoara. In fact, the parade gave the citizens the ideal pretext to gather again and express their protests against the regime.

Around noon, Ceaușescu called Bălan several times to be briefed on both the course of the army parade and the general behaviour of the citizens gathered in Opera Square. Although Bălan stated that no incidents had been reported and the situation was under control, shortly after he did see thousands of people heading out to the premises of the county branch of the communist party. Besides the fact that the local officials refused any dialogue with the demonstrators who were protesting peacefully, they ordered the spreading of the crowd by tear gas grenades and water jets from tow road tankers. Under those conditions, a part of demonstrators attacked the premises with rocks and

⁴³ „Caietele Revoluției” [*Journals of Revolution*], Bucharest, nr. 2/2007, p. 16

⁴⁴ „Timișoara”, an. I, no. 144 as of December 13th 1990 and no. 147 as of December 18th 1990

⁴⁵ Nicolae Durac, *Neliniștea generalilor [Unrest of Generals]*, Timișoara, M. P. S. Press, 1991, p. 5; see also *Armata română în revoluția din decembrie 1989 [Romanian Army during the Revolution of December 1989]*, Second Edition, Bucharest, Military Press, 1998, p. 56 (continued: *Armata română în revoluția din decembrie 1989 [Romanian Army during the Revolution of December 1989]*); Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Lupta pentru putere. Decembrie 89 [The Fight for Power]*, Bucharest, BIC ALL Press, 2005, p. 61

petrol bombs, entered the buildings and vandalized the offices located at the ground floor. Once the demonstrators had been chased away from both the building and the street, Bălan returned to the headquarters. There he found out that Ceaușescu had called him several times. To call back the dictator, he went to the Inspectorate of the Ministry of Interior. Learning that the premises of the county branch of the communist party had been vandalized, Ceaușescu ordered him to retake possession of the building, to mobilize the entire party and to wait for Ion Coman who was to arrive accompanied by a group of seven generals and three colonels from the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, to restore law and order⁴⁶.

Before leaving to Timișoara, Coman was briefed by Ceaușescu about the current situation in the city: “A group of vandals and hooligans, serving certain foreign interests, are making serious attempts to destabilise the country. They’ve vandalized stores, torched the military units and the County Committee of the Party and they’ve even tried to take down the military unit combat flag. Hence, I’ve decided to declare state of emergency in the city of Timișoara and I’ve instructed Milea and the Ministry of Interior to send a group of generals to enforce these orders”⁴⁷. The dictator’s wrong perception of the actual situation of Timișoara is proven by the sequence of events which took place during the first part of the 17th day of December: over 20.000 citizens were chanting slogans in front of the premises of the County Committee of the Communist Party while many other groups of demonstrators were marching down the streets of the city.

In the meantime, Vasile Milea released an official announcement for the entire army: “Since the situation of Timișoara is getting worse by the hour, I hereby call on the army intervention: From now on, the army shall be prepared to intervene at any time, until further orders”⁴⁸. Shortly after the announcement, Milea instructed the commanders of the two military units of Timișoara, by phone, to deploy new troops to the most important objectives of the city: the County Branch of the Communist Party, the “Continental” Hotel, the Mail Station, the National Bank and the armoury of the patriotic squads. Since the number of demonstrations was exponentially increasing by the hour, Milea released new orders, demanding that 7 armoured personnel carriers (also known as TABs) and 10 training tanks be sent to the County Committee of the

⁴⁶ *Procesul de la Timișoara [Trial of Timișoara]*, vol. III..., p. 1448

⁴⁷ *Procesele revoluției din Timișoara (1989) [Trials of the Revolution of Timișoara (1989)]*, documents gathered and commented by Marius Mioc, Timișoara, Artpress, 2004, p. 26

⁴⁸ Apud Alesandru Duțu, *Revoluția din 1989. Cronologie [The Revolution of 1989. Chronology]*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Institute of the Romanian Revolution from December 1989, 2006, p. 108

Communist Party and to the headquarters of the main military unit of Timișoara. Contrary to the officials' expectations, the presence of the tanks in the streets encouraged more people to join the manifestations and to intervene to stop the repressions. Several tanks were blocked and chained to the tram rails and their optical periscopes and the drivers' optics were covered in paint while the fuel bins of other tanks were broken⁴⁹. To rapidly identify and survey the lines of march, two helicopters were sent from the Military Unit 01875 Caransebes and around 3:00 p.m., the commander of the Large Mechanized Corps Division was notified that troops from the Military Unit 01233 Buziaș, 01140 Lugoj și 01380 Arad had also been deployed to Timișoara⁵⁰. Seeing that concentration of forces, it was not hard to imagine what the demonstrators were about to face up.

At about 5:00 p.m., after the arrival of Ion Coman and the operative group led by Gen. Ștefan Gușă in Timișoara, the officials found, via a teleconference organized by Nicolae Ceaușescu, that the army was instructed to open fire on the unarmed demonstrators. During the teleconference, Ceaușescu asked Ion Coman about the latest developments in Timișoara and the latter answered: "I ordered the troops to open fire!"⁵¹. Unfortunately, the first gunshots were heard in Timișoara at 4:00 p.m., and one hour later, the first victims were to be found. After 6:00 p.m., Gen. Ștefan Gușă assumed the control of all military forces pertaining to the Ministry of National Defence and which had already been deployed in the city, ordering the distribution of ammunition and the execution of warning shots, firstly in the air and if disobeyed, at the level of the feet⁵².

The confrontation between the demonstrators and the repressive forces led to a tragic outcome: 21 deaths and almost 100 injured were found downtown, around the Metropolitan Cathedral and in the Opera Square⁵³. At

⁴⁹ *Armata română [Romanian Army]...*, p. 58

⁵⁰ Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Lupta pentru putere [The Fight for Power]...*, p. 65

⁵¹ Ioan Scurtu, *Revoluția română din decembrie 1989 în context internațional [Romanian Revolution of December 1989 within the International Context]*, Bucharest, Encyclopaedic Press, 2006, p. 187-188; see also Constantin Sava, Constantin Monac, *Revoluția Română din decembrie 1989 re-trăită prin documente și măturii [The Romanian Revolution of December 1989 Re-enacted based on Documents and Testimonies]*, Bucharest, Axioma Publishing House, 2001, pp 146-151; Camelia Moraru, Constantin Moraru, *Stenograma teleconferinței lui Nicolae Ceausescu din 17 decembrie 1989 [Transcript of the Teleconference of Nicolae Ceausescu dated December 17th 1989]* in „Clio 1989”, Bucharest, an. I, no. 1-2/2005, p. 189-193

⁵² Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Lupta pentru putere [The Fight for Power]...*, p. 69

⁵³ Peter Siani-Davies, *Revoluția română din decembrie 1989 [Romanian Revolution of December 1989]*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2006, p. 102

the Cathedral, the army opened fire on the demonstrators after 7:00 p.m., long after the stores in the area had been vandalized, the fires had been put down and the demonstrators had begun to retreat. Although no important institution of the regime was under attack and no soldier of the Romanian army was threatened, the troops opened fire. The first shots were warning shots, with no effect on the crowd which was chanting slogans such as: “Don’t run away!”, “Don’t be cowards!”, “Down with Ceaușescu!”, “Freedom!”, “Soldiers, don’t shot your own brothers!”, “You are our children, too!”. Few minutes later, the troops opened fire directly on the crowd, using war ammunition⁵⁴.

Similar confrontations had taken place in other areas of the city: Calea Lipovei, Calea Aradului, Traian Square, Băile Neptun, Calea Girocului and Buziașului Zone, until 3 a.m. in the following morning⁵⁵. This is the reason why December 17th 1989 has been fairly considered to be “the worst day of the history of the city of Timișoara”⁵⁶, or “the day of the eight fights of the citizens of Timișoara with the dictatorial regime”⁵⁷. The tribute paid by the inhabitants of Timișoara for their courage to face up Ceaușescu’s regime was dreadful and unprecedented in the modern history of Romania: over 60 deaths and more than 200 injured⁵⁸.

In the morning of December 18th, Timișoara “looked like a city under siege, everything had been vandalized. The air smelled like a hot volcano. The square was occupied by cordons of soldiers and Securitate officers, all dressed up in civil clothes and fully armed. The passers-by looked at them and felt nothing but contempt, hate and disgust. The streets, particularly the areas in front of the stores that had been vandalized and torched, were being cleaned”⁵⁹. Although the city seemed silent and peaceful, the spirits reached the climax as a result of both the massacre of the previous day and the number of arrests (over 800 arrests). Despite the state of emergency which prohibited the presence of groups of citizens in the streets, everywhere you looked you could see desperate people looking for their missing children or relatives.

⁵⁴ Dumitru Tomoni, *Catedrala mitropolitană ortodoxă din Timișoara [The Orthodox Metropolitan Cathedral of Timișoara]* in „Clio 1989”, an. IV, no. 1/2008, p. 158-160

⁵⁵ Florin Medeleț, Mihai Ziman, *O cronică a Revoluției din Timișoara 16-22 decembrie 1989 [A Chronicle of the Revolution of Timișoara of December 16th – 22nd 1989]*, Timișoara, 1990, p. 12-14; see also Costel Balint, *1989 – Legiunea Revoluției [Legion of the Revolution]*, Timișoara, Brumar Publishing House, 2005, p. 174-175

⁵⁶ Miodrag Milin, *Timișoara 15-21 decembrie [Timișoara during December 15th – 21st ...]*, p. 67

⁵⁷ Florin Medeleț, Mihai Ziman, *op.cit.*, p. 10

⁵⁸ Marius Mioc, *Revoluția din 1989 [Revolution of 1989...]*, p. 112-115; see also Costel Balint, *op.cit.*, p. 179-218

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 44

At about 9 a.m., a briefing meeting was held at the premises of the party. It gathered all chiefs and party secretaries from all factories and institutions of the city, who were being asked to bring reports emphasizing the attendance of their employees⁶⁰. The persons who took the floor, the first secretary, Radu Bălan, and the former secretaries, Ilie Matei and Cornel Pacoste, stigmatized the events of the previous day, crediting thereof to some “hooligans” and “scamps” who had lured children and women whom they had previously intoxicated with alcohol and drugged. The state of emergency declared in Timișoara came with numerous restrictions, *i.e.* the people were not allowed to walk in groups, the performances were ceased, the employees were prevented to leave their places of work and every party wing had to nominally convoke everyone who failed to appear to his/her place of work, to organize meetings at every factory in the city and to deliver the same message. Despite those efforts, the message was disregarded and the workers barely waited the end of their program to return in the street and continue the protests.

In the meantime, Col. Traian Sima and Col. Filip Teodorescu, in their attempt to identify the leaders of the revolt, notified the head of the County Hospital (Sima's cousin) that all the patients who had sustained gunshot injuries were to be questioned. Therefore, Gen. Vlad Iulian dispatched to the hospital a group of militia and Securitate officers, who had been deployed from other counties. In spite of the ordeal to which the injured had been subjected, some of them being brought on stretchers from the operating theatres, and despite the threats, the officers found nothing about the identity of the protest leaders. Why? Simply because there were no leaders since the protests had been spontaneous.

After 5 p.m., groups of young people coming from the Hospital of Paediatrics reached the platform in front of the Cathedral. In no time, the steps of the Cathedral were crowded with young people holding candles and chanting anti-Ceaușescu slogans. Briefed by Ion Coman about that new protest, Elena Ceaușescu, in an obvious state of insanity, gave a terrifying order: “Fire the cannons and tear down the Cathedral, once for all!”⁶¹. No cannons were used, but the troops opened fire on the young people, instantly killing Sorin Leia, the student who was waving a flag with the blazon removed, and two other people and injuring 4 other persons. Although the crowd was spread for the moment, the demonstrators, who were running for their lives, regrouped downtown,

⁶⁰ *Procesul de la Timișoara [Trial of Timișoara]*, vol. IV, Edition supervised by Miodrag Milin and Traian Orban, Timișoara, 2006, p. 1970

⁶¹ *Procesul de la Timișoara [Trial of Timișoara]*, vol. III, p. 1352

howling the army and chanting slogans. Making use of gunshots and tear gas grenades, the army dispersed the crowd again.

At 11 p.m., an insulated tank truck from the COMTIM motor depot arrived to the premises of the Militia Inspectorate. It was then directed to the County Hospital, where 6 militia officers loaded 40 bodies from the hospital morgue. At 5 a.m., the insulated tank truck, following the schedule, left to Bucharest, where the bodies were cremated at “Cenusa” Crematorium. The officials, as instructed by Elena Ceaușescu, were thus striving to cover up any remnants of the massacre from December 17th. The plan was even more horrifying because, as per the communist officials’ instructions, the victims’ families were to be informed that their loved ones had illegally crossed the country border⁶².

In the morning of December 19th 1989, the workers from the tool engineering sections within the “Electromotor” Factory refused to enter the sections as long as the armoured vehicles and the soldiers were still marching down the streets. Only after endless negotiations with the factory officials and on condition that county officials would be informed and asked to satisfy their demands, the workers resumed their activity⁶³.

However, things were different at ELBA Factory where, despite the absence of an official notification announcing the general strike, the workers went on strike from the early hours of the morning up to the moment Ceaușescu fled from Bucharest. Upon workers’ request, Bălan came to the factory to initiate a dialogue with the employees. Once arrived to the factory, accompanied by the city mayor, Petru Moț, Bălan was notified that the workers, who were waiting in the factory yard, ceased the work and demanded the improvement of their living conditions and the removal of the army from both the factories and the entire city. A group of 10 to 15 workers, overcoming their fear, started to shout: “Down with Ceaușescu!” from one of the factory platforms. It was then the moment when the first secretary knew that he was witnessing a manifestation “with a profound political and anti-communist character”⁶⁴. For the first time, the workers’ protest raised serious doubts both to Bălan and Gen. Ștefan Gușă, who saw that “there were no hooligans there, but serious and responsible persons”⁶⁵. Indeed, on December 19th 1989, the revolt of Timișoara reached a new level: the workers played an essential role and the actions were better planned. The absence of any violent acts gave no reasons to the repressive forces to react or intervene.

⁶² Titus Suciu, *Reportaj [Reportage]*, p. 151-154

⁶³ Costel Balint, *op.cit.*, p 57

⁶⁴ *Procesul de la Timișoara [The Trial of Timișoara]*, vol. III..., p. 1472

⁶⁵ Apud Peter Siani-Davies, *op.cit.*, p. 109

The following day, upon the request of over 2500 workers from UMT, who were on strike and gathered in front of the largest factory of the city, Bălan, followed by Cornel Pacoste and the minister of mechanical engineering, Eugen Rădulescu, former manager of that factory, arrived at the factory headquarters at about 10 a.m. Better living conditions and ousting of Ceaușescu from the country's government were just two of the political and social claims raised by the workers⁶⁶.

If in the report sent party central board during the previous day Bălan had been more than confident that “through the political and organizational measures taken by the officials, the party wings and the authorities of the proletarian-revolutionary democracy during all that period, the activity of all economic and social organizations within the city as well as the activities of the elementary, secondary and higher education institutions”⁶⁷ were carried out normally, after the meetings he had with the workers from ELBA and particularly, with the workers from UMT, he completely changed his position, realizing the real state of facts. Bălan did no longer label the opponents of the regime as groups of “vandals” or “irredentists” because he identified the real protesters: hundreds, maybe thousands of workers who made up the very base of the communist regime just several days before. Bălan saw how the proletarians, overcoming their fear, shouted the well-known slogans in the broad day: “Down with Ceaușescu!” and “Freedom!”. Radu Bălan was smart enough to realize that Timișoara could no longer be turned into the Brașov of 1987. This is the cause which led to the change of his attitude, of course, within the limits allowed by his political culture and responsibilities. From that moment, Bălan was no longer avoiding the contact with the demonstrators or their representatives. Furthermore, up to his arrest, he tried to emphasize his position and even to make the demonstrators think that he would like to be on their side.

V. From Popular Revolt to Revolution

On December 20th, the spirits of the boiling city changed radically, and, as Claudiu Iordache remembers, “Everybody knew that the workers from the largest factories of the city were to join the demonstrations”⁶⁸. The signal given

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 1479

⁶⁷ Archives of the Memorial of Revolution of Timișoara, *Documentary sources*, Raport privind evenimentele care au avut în municipiul Timișoara în perioada 15-18 decembrie 1989 [Report regarding the events which have taken place in Timișoara from December 15th to December 18th 1989], f. 4

⁶⁸ Titus Suci, *Lumea bună a balconului [The Balcony's Elite]*, Timișoara, Helicon Publishing House, 1996, p. 26 (continued: *The Balcony's Elite*)

by the workers of the industrial platforms from Calea Buziaşului, A.E.M. and Electrotimiş reached ELBA factory, motivating the employees who were on the second day of strike. When reaching the railway station, the workers found out that their colleagues from ELBA had just left to Opera Square, joining the protest of the workers from Solventul and Electromotor factories⁶⁹. Eager to join their fellows, the labourers from the largest factory of Timișoara, UMT, set out to the premises of the County Branch of the Community Party. The communist authorities were no longer dealing with the “hooligans” and “scamps” employed by foreign interests but with the proletariat itself who, at that moment, had indeed become the revolutionary labouring class. The determination of the tens of thousands of workers, peacefully marching in block formations, paralyzed the reaction of the communist officials and gave rise to the first signs of solidarity between the army and the demonstrators. In the light of those developments and to prevent any potential incidents with uncontrollable consequences, Ștefan Gușă ordered the retreat of the troops and military logistics from the streets and their positioning for circular defence in the barracks. The order was also approved by Milea. It is worth mentioning that we are not speaking yet about a general alliance of the army with the demonstrators. The solidarity emerged solely at the level of soldiers and their immediate superiors because the large majority of commanders, highly indoctrinated and fearful of the consequences that were about to come, were still to remain obedient to Ceaușescu’s clan.

At noon, the entire city was in the street, either in the Opera Square or in front of the Community Party’s County Branch, where, on December 20th, the two leading nuclei of the revolt of Timișoara were to be set up.

At about 1:00 p.m., on Lorin Fortuna’s own initiative, a group of demonstrators stepped onto the Opera Balcony where they made the decision to set up a leading and coordination committee. Consequently, Fortuna invited 2 or 3 representatives of the factories whose employees were present there, to step up beside the initiative group⁷⁰. The committee set up in the opera foyer prepared a list of minimal demands to be used when discussing with the communist officials and elected a permanent bureau whose members were: Lorin Fortuna (president), Claudiu Iordache (vice-president), Maria Trăistaru (secretary), as well as Ioan Chiș and Nicolae Bădilescu, as simple members. Therefore, at 2:00 p.m., Lorin Fortuna announced, before almost 50.000 demonstrators, the setting up of the first free political organization, the

⁶⁹ Costel Balint, *op.cit.*, p. 62-64

⁷⁰ Lorin Fortuna, *Seminificația zilei de 20 decembrie 1989 [Significance of December 20th 1989]* in „Journals of the Revolution”, no. 5/2006, p. 29-32

Romanian Democrat Front (*Frontul Democrat Român*) which was to change its name, shortly after, into the Romanian Democratic Front (*Frontul Democrat Român*)⁷¹. In the afternoon of December 20th 1989, Timișoara became the first free city of Romania and the leaders of the Romanian Democratic Front urged the inhabitants of all other Romanian cities to follow the example of Timișoara. Lugoj was the first city to respond to Timișoara's appeal, being then followed by Arad, Cluj and Bucharest, on the next day.

At about 2:30 p.m., the prime minister, Constantin Dăscălescu, accompanied by Emil Bobu and three other ministers arrived in Timișoara by a special plane. They went straight to the premises of the Community Party County Branch to meet the local officials and Ion Coman. Tens of thousands of people, chanting anti-Ceaușescu and anticommunist slogans were also waiting for them. Shortly after his arrival, Dăscălescu, feeling the tremendous pressure exerted by the crowd, started the "negotiations" with a group of 13 demonstrators⁷². That group would later on turn into the City Committee, representing thus the second leading nucleus of the revolt of Timișoara. After heated debates far to imagine a week ago between the prime minister and the revolutionaries Ioan Savu, Ioan Marcu, Sorin Oprea, Petre Petrișor, Mircea Mureșanu, etc., a set of claims and demands was finally falling into place: Ceaușescu's relinquishment, resignation of the government, release of all people who had been arrested, recovery of the bodies of those who had been shot to be buried according to the Christian traditions, free elections, etc⁷³. The demands, carefully written down by Ion Savu, were then presented to the crowd outside by Petre Petrișor. He was also in charge of notifying those demands together with the names of the leaders, to the Yugoslavian Consulate to have them broadcasted outside the country

At about 6:00 p.m., a delegation of the Romanian Democratic Front, led by Lorin Fortuna, Claudiu Iordache, Nicolae Bădilescu, Mihaela Munteanu etc., came to the Party premises to attend the negotiations with the government representatives. Their demands were almost similar to those written down by

⁷¹ Marinela Veronica Țariuc, *Frontul Democratic Român (FDR) [Romanian Democratic Front (RDF)]* în *Ibidem*, p. 10-28; see also Titus Suciuc, *Lumea bună [The Balcony's Elite]*, p. 26; Milin Miodrag, *Timișoara în revoluție și după [Timișoara during and after the Revolution]*, Timișoara, Marineasa Publishing House, 1997, p. 110-111 (continued: *Timișoara during and after the Revolution ...*); *Idem*, *Semnificația zilei de 20 decembrie 1989 pentru Revoluția Română [Significance of December 20th 1989]* in „Journals of the Revolution”, no.1/2006, p. 15-18

⁷² Ioan Savu, Ioan Marcu, Petre Boroșoiu, Sorin Oprea, Virgil Socaciu, Mircea Mureșan, Petre Petrișor, Dan Carp, Nicolae Vartan, Mihai Bădele, Adela Săbăilă, Corneliu Pop și Valentin Vitner („Caietele Revoluției” [*Journals of Revolution*], no. 2/2005, p. 10

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 9

Savu and the most important claim was by far the dismissal of Ceaușescu⁷⁴. It is more than obvious that Dăscălescu dared not to inform the dictator about the demand of utmost importance for Timișoara and consequently, the negotiations with the government officials failed. The only claims approved by the communist officials were those related to the release of the people who had been arrested – some of them would return in the Opera Square later in that evening – and the return of the bodies to their families. During the moments of the so-called negotiations, the crowd kept on chanting the well-known slogans: “Down with Ceaușescu!”, “Down with the brainless academician!”, “Romania can no longer house Ceaușescu and his spouse!”, “Christmas is to come, Ceaușescu will be gone!”, etc.⁷⁵

After the failure of negotiations, the delegation of the Romanian Democratic Front went back to the Opera, accompanied by over 2000 demonstrators. Shortly afterwards, the large part of the demonstrators set out to the Opera Square because the Party building was no longer of interest, being just the premises of a purely artificial power devoid of any influence over the city on the Bega River. The Opera Square and the building where the Romanian Democratic Front had its headquarters became the source of hope and energy for all citizens of the first Romanian free city.

In the evening, Ceaușescu decided to deliver a speech which was aired by the national radio and television stations. After stigmatizing Timișoara, he declared the state of emergency in the entire Timis County and appointed Gen. Victor Stănculescu as the military commander of Timișoara. Those were in fact desperate and pointless measures because, at that moment, Timișoara had become the first free city of Romania. The Committee of the Romanian Democratic Front (which also included some members of the City Committee and the representatives of all largest factories of Timișoara which planned to go on general strike starting from the following day) had already prepared a political agenda. Given that context, the popular riot entered a new phase: it turned into a genuine revolution. The citizens were explicitly demanding the resignation of Ceaușescu and implicitly, the removal of the communist regime, because, back then, no distinction was made between Ceaușescu and the communist regime. The people's hardships, shortcomings and dissatisfactions were automatically attributed to Ceaușescu. There was no time and patience to conduct an exhaustive analysis of the entire communist regime and to see that Ceaușescu had been the creation of that particular system and the system could not be simply reduced to Ceaușescu and his faction.

⁷⁴ Milin Miodrag, *Timișoara în revoluție [Timișoara during the Revolution]*..., p. 113-114

⁷⁵ Alesandru Dușu, *op. cit.*, p. 145

During the night of December 20th / 21st, the commission in charge of preparing the official political plan of the Romanian Democratic Front⁷⁶ was set up. The political platform, whose preparation lasted until 3 o'clock in the morning and which was known as the Proclamation of the Romanian Democratic Front represented the first programmatic document of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989 that recognized the shift from popular revolt to revolution. The Proclamation acknowledged the existence of a new political force and put forward the citizens' demands to be endorsed by the Government: free elections, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to travel abroad, release of all political prisoners and dissidents, reform of education, punishment of those who ordered the shooting of demonstrators, recovery of the bodies of those who had been shot, acknowledgment of the new political structure, etc. Last, but not least, the Proclamation called the inhabitants of all Romanian cities to follow the example given by Timișoara and go on general strike starting with December 21st until the final victory⁷⁷.

In the morning of December 21st 1989, at about 9 o'clock, Lorin Fortuna read the Proclamation for the first time in front of over 100.000 people of Timișoara who saluted and acclaimed it with cheers. Despite the fact that Timișoara had proclaimed itself a free city and most of its inhabitants were in the streets, Ceaușescu could not come to terms with that situation and, in a desperate attempt to regain the city, ordered the organisation of a pro-communist rally in Bucharest and the recovery of the city on the Bega River. Undoubtedly, the generals who had already been dispatched to Timișoara prepared a complex plan referred to as "Thunder and Lightning". The contemplated the launch of a military attack on demonstrators from the Opera Square by means of several armoured personnel carriers (also known as TABs), 2 helicopters, coming from the Cathedral, and 50 army tanks that were to come from the "Continental" Hotel. The troops from Oituz military unit were to surround the area to prevent the access of other insurgents. The demonstrators from the Opera Square were to be spread and arrested and their place was to be taken by two lines of people brought by the party activists from the industrial platform from Calea Buziasului, followed by military troops from the Ministry of National Defense and 22.000 patriotic squads from Oltenia. The second stage of the plan stipulated that operative teams of the Securitate, in partnership with the Army Intelligence Service (D.I.A.) and the parachutists of Caracal city, were to carry out an attack on the Opera Balcony to arrest the members of

⁷⁶ Members of the commission: Lorin Fortuna, Nicolae Bădilescu, Claudiu Iordache, Luminița Milutin, Petre Boroșoiu and Mihaela Munteanu. (Milin Miodrag, *Timișoara în revoluție [Timișoara during the Revolution...]*, p. 123)

⁷⁷ „Caietele Revoluției” [*Journals of the Revolution*], no. 2/2005, p. 12-13

the Romanian Democratic Front, to capture the weapons and ammunition held by the protesters and to seize the megaphone and the amplifier station used by the demonstrators to deliver anti-communist messages and to incite the population to general strike. Due to several factors, such as the rally organized in Bucharest, the protests emerged in other Romanian cities and some organizational flaws, the plan was not put into action. Because of the severity and magnitude of the action (more than 2000 people had been either killed or injured and arrested) those documents (including numerous pages from the ledger kept by the Mechanized Division No. 18 of Timișoara) have been destroyed⁷⁸.

Although the documents available for research support this plan to a certain degree, it's easy to assume that the repressive forces could not accustom themselves with the idea that, starting with December 20th, they had lost control over the city. During the night of December 20th / 21st, at the order given by Gen. Mihalcea, Ioan Corpodeanu together with a number of high-ranked militia officers went to the headquarters of the Military Division from Libertății Square to ask for the deployment of fully armed troops which were to support the army according to a plan to be completed soon⁷⁹. During the trial, other high-ranked officers declared that they had been called up at the premises of the Military Division where they had been asked to provide military troops and tanks⁸⁰.

In the morning of December 21st 1989, Radu Bălan called a number of party activities and briefed them that, at Coman's order, they were to organize a proletarian counter-demonstration in the Opera Square. Consequently, they had to organize and mobilize two columns of people: one was to leave from the industrial platform from Calea Buziasului Boulevard and the other, from ELBA, Electromotor and 6 Martie industrial areas. The plan provided that the columns were to be joined by 200 soldiers, 200 to 400 members of the patriotic squads and over 1000 workers. Despite the elaborate attempts and the massive deployment of troops in the industrial areas mentioned above, the objective of the plan could not be fulfilled because almost all workers from those areas were had already left to the Opera Square by the time the soldiers arrived.

Even more disappointing painful for the communist officials was the failure of the "Mineriad"-type operation [translator's note: A *Mineriad* (*Romanian: Mineriadă*) is the term used to name any of the successive violent interventions of miners in *Bucharest.*], where units of patriotic squads from

⁷⁸ Iosif Costinaș, *M-am întors [I Came Back]*, Timișoara, Marineasa Publishing House, 2003, p. 51-60; see also Marinela Veronica Tariuc, *op. cit.*, p. 17

⁷⁹ *Procesul de la Timișoara [The Trial of Timișoara]*, vol. II..., p 567-568

⁸⁰ Iosif Costinaș, *op. cit.*, p. 57-59

Mehedinți, Dolj and Olt counties, equipped with special suits and customized clubs and guided by the Securitate officers had been dispatched, by special trains, to Timișoara to intervene against the Hungarian and Yugoslavian invading troops who were trying to conquer the Banat Region and to whom the gangs of “hooligans” and “rummy scamps” from Timișoara had adhered⁸¹. Being informed in time about the arrival of the special trains by the employees of the telephone switchboard of the C.F.R. (Romanian National Railway Company), the executive board of the Romanian Democratic Front succeeded to intervene and prevent those actions. Some trains were stopped before reaching Timișoara and directed back from where they had left while those people, who had succeeded to enter the city, were able to see for themselves that the streets of Timișoara were occupied by honest citizens determined to remove Ceaușescu’s regime and not by foreign enemies, as they had been told. Naturally, they instantly joined the manifestations, putting thus an end to the dictator’s last attempt to take over the city.

In the morning of December 22nd, at Coman’s order, Moț, the city mayor, contacted the leaders of the Romanian Democratic Front asking them to give up using the amplifier station because numerous citizens claimed to be dissatisfied by the public and private nuisance. The leaders refused and handed over the Front’s Proclamation to be transmitted to Coman, too. Even from the early hours of the morning, over 150,000 people gathered in the Opera Square, chanting anticommunist slogans and saluting the people in the balcony, among whom we can mention Maj. Viorel Oancea, the first officer of the Romanian army who had switched sides⁸². The news that the dictator had fled generated a tremendous enthusiasm, somehow comforting the excruciating pain of those who had just buried their dead or who were still hoping to find the missing relatives and friends.

The solidarity expressed by other Romanian cities, particularly Bucharest, with the revolt of the inhabitants of Timișoara, which had begun on December 16th 1989 and which turned into a genuine revolution on December 20th, caused the removal of the political regime led by Ceaușescu and his clan and marked the beginning of a new historical phase in the history of Romania, a phase which envisaged the essential elements of a democratic regime.

⁸¹ Lorin Fortuna, *op. cit.*, p. 32

⁸² „Caietele Revoluției” [*Journals of the Revolution*], no. 3/2006, p. 36-37

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Ph. D. Dumitru **TOMONI**

Cathedral of Timișoara – The Shrine of Sacrifice in December 1989

The Cathedral of Timișoara, the largest Orthodox cathedral in the country, temple of Christian spirituality and the benchmark of some important events in the Banat history, was and remained the pride of the inhabitants of Banat. For the inhabitant of Timiș County and particularly for the community living in the city on the Bega banks, the Cathedral represents the kilometer 0 of Banat. If you happened to be in the centre of the city, hardly could you resist the natural impulse that characterizes every good Christian, to get through its doors or at least to stroll along the promenade, admiring this imposing architectural monument.

Definitely, Nicolae Ceaușescu had a different perception, because he vehemently avoided meeting the inhabitants of Timișoara there. Although he visited Timișoara 12 times, from 1968 to 1988 and even though it was common knowledge that the Cathedral area was in fact the centre of the city, he had never actually come there. The inhabitants of Timișoara were fully aware of Ceaușescu's position in relation to the Cathedral and this is the reason why the Cathedral area was both the front line of the most fervent protests against Ceaușescu's regime and the shrine of sacrifice and hopes for thousands of demonstrators. In December 1989, the Cathedral silently witnesses a terrifying massacre: 15 were literally raked and 39 were severely injured.

In the evening of December 16th, the first day of open confrontations with the repression forces, after the first attack on the premises of the County Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, groups of inhabitants of Timișoara regrouped in Maria Square and, at about 11:00 p.m., headed out over the bridge, to the Cathedral, at Sorin Oprea's call, a mechanic at Electrometal Timișoara.¹ At that moment, the protesters naively believed that nothing wrong would and could happen to them in front of the Cathedral since that place had a special significance. Sorin Oprea asked the crowd of more than 1000 demonstrators to meet every day and implicitly the following day, at about 10:00 p.m., in front of the Cathedral, because, as he said, their unity was the key to face and overcome the repressive machine mobilized by the Party's central and local officials.

Realizing that the number of the people gathered there was too small, the protesters decided to set out to the university campus to ask the students to

¹ Miodrag Milin, *Timișoara 15-21 decembrie '89 (Timișoara December 15-21 1989)*, Timișoara, 1990, p. 36; see also *Timișoara 16-22 decembrie 1989*, Timișoara, Facla Publishing House, 1990, p. 60.

join them. In the meantime, another column of demonstrators was heading to the students' hostels from Calea Buziasului and Girocului. Once the two columns merged, Sorin Oprea, from a transforming block, advised the protesters to march to the Cathedral and ask for the metropolitan bishop's help to arrange a meeting with the authorities². On their way to the Cathedral, the manifestants dashed all slogan boards praising Ceaușescu and the communist regime to the ground, and, from place to place, they poured fuel oil and set fires. Reaching the Cathedral after midnight, the crowd, gathering more than 10000 manifestants started to sing „The Hora of Unity” and „Awaken thee, Romanian!” and chanted slogans against the communist regime and Ceaușescu³. „There, in front of God's sanctuary, I understood there is no better place for the souls torn apart by the life's injustices to find comfort”, wrote, at a later time, one of the participants, Prof. Costel Balint⁴. From there, the demonstrators decided to go to the highly populated city zones: Circumvalațiunii, Calea Aradului, Calea Lipovei to call other fellows to join them and then, having increased their forces, to come back to the Cathedral. In many people's consciousness the Cathedral was the place which guaranteed safety and trust in the victory of the action set off against an atheist and oppressive regime.

This is the reason why, the following day, December 17th, „the most dreadful day in Timișoara's history”⁵, the Cathedral was one of the most fervent areas of the city besieged by the repressive forces. At about 03.00 p.m., hundreds of protesters gathered in front of the Cathedral shouting powerful slogans such as „Freedom!”, „Democracy!”, „Free elections!”, „Down with the dictator!” etc. Some of them went to the military cordon equipped with shields and hats, standing on the roadway, in front of Timișoara City Hall. Getting closer to the military cordons, the protesters tried to persuade the soldiers to break the cordon and join the crowd, but facing the soldiers' determination, they came back to the Cathedral⁶. Meanwhile, groups of hundreds of demonstrators were coming from „6 Martie” Boulevard and from the Girocului, Circumvalațiunii, Calea Șagului and Calea Lipovei zones, so,

² Marius Mioc, *Revoluția din 1989 și minciunile din Jurnalul Național (Revolution of 1989 and the Lies from the National Journal)*, Timișoara, Marineasa Publishing House, 2005, p. 109

³ Miodrag Milin, *op. quotes* p. 39.

⁴ Costel Balint, *1989 Timișoara în decembrie (Timișoara in December)*, Timișoara, Helicon Publishing House, 1992, p. 16.

⁵ Miodrag Milin, *op. quotes.*, p. 67.

⁶ *Procesul de la Timișoara (Trial of Timișoara)*, vol. IV, Edition supervised by Miodrag Milin and Traian Orban, Timișoara, Mirton Publishing House, 2006, p. 1879.

according to the official reports, until 05.00 p.m., the number of demonstrators reached over 5000⁷ people. „I am not a faithful person, please believe me, but during those moments, I believed in something and I tried to be as close to the Church as possible”, one of the demonstrators confessed⁸. Probably the fear made many of them believe that near and in the Cathedral they were safer, and the repressive forces would not possibly dare to open fire. Unfortunately, the people ignored both the four decades of atheist propaganda and the zeal and fanaticism of those who were serving Ceaușescu until the very last moment. Following the logic of those having no morals or beliefs, everything, and we mean everything, was allowed to keep the power and maintain the privileges acquired through obedience and servility.

At about 05.00 p.m., some demonstrators tried again to break the military cordon deployed in front of the City Hall, but their efforts failed once more. From a transceiver equipped on a vehicle behind the military cordon, the mayor, Petre Moț, appealed to calm and silence⁹. In the meantime, the number of protesters increased gradually, and many of them entered the Cathedral to buy and light candles. Their faces showed extraordinary fierceness and determination¹⁰, giving thus the impression „that these people can be killed, but they DEFINITELY cannot be stopped”.

After 07.00 p.m., when the vandalizing of the stores from the Opera Square – Cathedral area stopped, the fires were put out and the protesters began to leave, the soldiers deployed in the City Hall area opened fire on the people gathered in front of the Cathedral. At first, the soldiers fired warning shots which proved to have no significant impact on the crowd which was seeking to raise its spirit by chanting meaningful slogans such as: “Don’t run away!”, „Don’t be cowards!”, „Down with Ceaușescu!”, „Freedom!”, „Soldiers, don’t shoot your own brothers!”, „You are our children, too!” etc.¹¹ Few minutes later, the troops open fire directly on the crowd, using war ammunition.

Terrified, the crowd split and the protesters ran for their lives. And yet, as the painter Emeric Antal recalls, „around 20-30 people fell down on the platform in front of the Cathedral. A 20 years’ old girl died instantly, right next to me, being shot in the chest. First, I was shot in my shoulder, and then in my

⁷ Marius Mioc, *op. quotes.*, p. 102.

⁸ *Trial of Timișoara*, vol. IV, p. 2273.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 1880.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 2227.

¹¹ *Procesul de la Timișoara (Trial of Timișoara)*, vol. III, Edition supervised by Miodrag Milin and Traian Orban, Timișoara, Mirton Publishing House, 2005, p. 968.

left leg”¹². At the same time, at the Cathedral’s corner, a TAB (armoured personnel carrier) literally run over a woman, who was crossing the tram line, killing her instantly.

The massacre of an unprecedented violence in the Romanian contemporary history, which started at the Cathedral, continued until 10.00 p.m., with terrifying results: 12 dead¹³ and 34 injured by gunshots¹⁴.

Unfortunately, on December 18th, the Cathedral was to be, again, a place of hope and a shrine of sacrifice for the inhabitants of Timișoara. Following a telephonic conversation which took place in that afternoon, when Elena Ceaușescu gave an aberrant order to Ion Coman to „set the dogs and deploy the mounted militia officers on the population of Timișoara”, in the evening, annoyed by the presence of the young people holding lit candles on the Cathedral’s stairs, and in an obvious state of insanity, she gave a more horrifying order: „Fire the cannons and tear down the Cathedral, once for all!”¹⁵. No cannons were used, but the troops opened fire on the young people, instantly killing Sorin Leia (23 years’ old), Ioan Măriuțac (20 years’ old) and Vasile Nemțoc (19 years’ old) and 5 other protesters, Avram Gliguță, Crenguța Huțanu, Constantin Băițan, Gheorghe Popa and Ioan-Avram Cioază, being seriously injured.

After the overthrow of the communist dictatorship, the tragic events of December 18th generated some tendentious interpretations. Driven by the malign desire for sensationalism or by much lower reasons, such as staining the image of the Romanian Orthodox Church, there were some people who accredited the idea that the Cathedral doors had been deliberately closed during that day to stop the people seeking refuge in the holy building.

The imagination of those people exceeded even the furthest barriers of logics and common sense when they claimed that everything had been premeditated and that a special arrangement had been made between the communist officials and the management of the metropolitan church to that effect, so, “several children have been killed on the very stairs of the Cathedral

¹² *Procesul de la Timișoara (Trial of Timișoara)*, vol. V, Edition supervised by Miodrag Milin and Traian Orban, Timișoara, Mirton Publishing House, 2007, p. 2940.

¹³ Balmuș Vasile, Caceu Margareta, Caceu Mariana-Silvia, Fecioru Lorent, Gîrjoabă Dumitru-Constantin, Iosub Constantin, Istvan Andrei, Mardare Adrian, Păduraru Vasile, Sava Angela-Elena, Stanciu Ioan and Wittmann Petru. See also Romeo Bălan, *Victimele libertății (Victims of Freedom)*, Timișoara, „Artpress” Publishing House, 2009, p. 17.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, see also Marius Mioc, *Revoluția, fără mistere (Revolution without mysteries)*, Timișoara, „Almanahul Banatului” Publishing House, 2002, pp. 210-212; Costel Balint, *1989 – Legiunea Revoluției (Legions of Revolution)*, Timișoara, Brumar Publishing House, 2005, pp. 190-218.

¹⁵ *Procesul de la Timișoara (Trial of Timișoara)*, vol. III, p. 1352.

whose doors were locked up. An official of the metropolitan church ordered that the Cathedral doors be locked up, and so were they when the protesters were seeking shelter. Who would have given such delirious, horrifying order?”¹⁶

The reality was different: not only that the doors of the Cathedral were wide opened, but tens of people were getting in and out the Cathedral to pray and light candles. Moreover, during the massacre committed in front of the holy building, many demonstrators took refuge from the bullets inside the church. Crenguța Huțanu, worker at Agrosem, who had been shot during that evening, confessed at the trial: „ 2000 or 3000 people, chanting numerous slogans, such as «Down with Ceaușescu!», «Down with dictatorship!», «Freedom!» gathered in front of the Cathedral. I myself started to shout the same slogans... All of a sudden, I felt something, something like a burn in the head area; I got sick and I fainted. I woke up in the Cathedral, where a priest was giving a sermon”¹⁷. The same moment was also reported by Cornel Moldovan, worker at Timișoara Forest District, and quoted by the „Renașterea bănățeană” daily journal on June 22th 1990: „I checked my watch (it was 04.40 p.m.) and I entered the main room of the Cathedral. I saw, on the left side, people standing in line to buy candles, and other six persons bowing and praying in front of the altar. As I returned to the hallway and I saw there, lying down, on the right side (as I got out) a dark haired young man, whose age was about 25, (Sorin Leia – *author’s note*), dressed in a black modest suit, with his eyes shut and his eye balls popping out prominently. He has been shot in his left temple”.

The same moment of Sorin Leia’s murder was described too by Gliguța Avram, also injured on the Cathedral stairs: „The moment the TABs passed, the militiamen, who had been stationed as I mentioned before, started to fire a warning shot. We crowded to enter the Cathedral. As we strove to take shelter inside, one of the doors closed. We all squatted, struggling to get in. Next to me was a young man, Sorin Leia, as I found out later on that this was his name. As we slowly raised our heads to see what was going on, a volley of bullets was fired on us, upwards. Leia Sorin was hit in the middle of his forehead. The bullet got out of his head and touched me in the right side of my neck. I felt something like a burn, I kept my head down and I slowly crawled inside. A

¹⁶ Nicolae Danciu Petriceanu, *Tot ce am pe suflet (Everything that Weights Heavy on My Soul)*, Baia Mare, 1995, p. 203.

¹⁷ *Procesul de la Timișoara (Trial of Timișoara)*, vol. IV, p. 2376.

group of young people saw that Leia was shot and dragged him inside the Cathedral”¹⁸.

The Cathedral’s doors closed that evening, but when the demonstrators wanted to take refuge inside they could get inside. This fact is also described by Capt. Grigore Tașcău in the 10th issue of the „Timișoara” newspaper: „Terrified by the deadly shootings, the people ran to the Cathedral. Shot in the head, the young Sorin Leia fell down and shortly afterwards he died in the entrance hall of the church. Some manifestants took refuge in the nearby parks. The people who managed to enter the Cathedral, together with Priest Ioan Radu, closed the main doors and no person was left behind, neither on the Cathedral’s stairs nor around them... Later on that evening, the Cathedral doors were opened and a person got out shouting that someone should call an ambulance. Shortly afterwards, two ambulances arrived and the lifeless body of Sorin Leia was transported by one of them. The refugees from the Cathedral got out using the right lateral door which was opened by Priest Victor Mițiga and Deacon Eugen Bendariu”. This intense moment was also reported by the archpriest Cornel Pleșu: „At about 04.50 p.m. we started the evening service and after fifteen minutes or so, the fire was opened on the young people standing on the Cathedral stairs and holding lit candles in their hands. Given those circumstances, the people bounced into the Church and a minute later, everybody panicked. Consequently, Priest Victor Mițiga and Deacon Eugen Bendariu stopped the service to see what happened. A young man shot in the head was dragged in the church and a doctor who attended the service hurried up to give him the first aid, using bandages from the first-aid kit. Deeply affected by the state of despair of the young people, some of them started to cry, the priest Victor Mițiga, tried to take them out from the Church using the lateral door which led to the Capitol cinema theatre, but, the moment he opened the door, the soldiers opened fire from the cinema. The people entered the Cathedral again and the priest guided them towards the door on the right side (which led to the tram line), advising them to get out one by one. Thus, all those who were inside managed to get out alive. The Priest Victor Mițiga attended the wounded man from the church to the Ambulance. At about 06.00 p.m., the church was closed and the maids began to clean up the place, washing the blood of the young man’s body.”¹⁹

As for the allusive implication or lack of implication of the Metropolitan Church of Banat in the events of December 1989, things are even much clearer:

¹⁸ Marius Mioc, *Revoluția de la Timișoara așa cum a fost (Revolution of Timișoara, Exactly as It Was)*, Timișoara, Brumar Publishing House, 1997, p. 33.

¹⁹ „*Renașterea Bănățeană*”, year 1, no. 24 of February 1st 1990

although during those days, his Grace, Nicolae, attended meeting of all Orthodox churches organized by the Patriarchate from Constantinople, when he returned to Timișoara, on December 23rd, he unequivocally praised the spirit of sacrifice proven by the inhabitants of Timișoara²⁰.

On Tuesday morning, to please Elena Ceaușescu who was absolutely terrified by the mirage the Cathedral had on the inhabitants of Timișoara who turned against the regime, Gen. Ion Coman gave the order, through the Chief of Cult Department, Ion Cumpănașu, that, starting from that day on, the churches in the city had to be opened from 7 to 9 a.m.²¹. The order was obeyed solely until Wednesday afternoon (December 20th, 04.00 p.m.). Upon the insurances of the demonstrators, the administrator of the Cathedral, Ioan Botău, came to open the Cathedral, offered candles to the protesters and rang the peals. Starting with December 20th 1989, the space between the Cathedral and the Opera was taken over by the inhabitants of Timișoara until the moment of final victory. This was the place from where thousands of people heard the Proclamation of the Romanian Democratic Front and welcomed and saluted the message that Ceaușescu's dictatorship fell apart.

Tens of testimonies recorded in the 9 volumes of the Trial of Timișoara acknowledge and emphasize the fact that, during the fervent days of heroism and sacrifice of December 1989, the Orthodox Cathedral of Timișoara was a place of hope and a refuge for thousands of inhabitants of Timișoara who were animated by contradictory feelings, from fear to disappointment until fierceness and trust in the victory of the Revolution. The reading of these volumes as well as the perusal of other studies and articles²² can convince the honest reader who is willing to understand the historical truth referring to the events which had taken place in December 1989 in the Cathedral area of Timișoara, that these events are controversial solely for the ignorant people or for those interested in inventing sensational news, at any cost.

Ph.D. Dumitru **TOMONI**

²⁰ „România liberă”, year.L, no.14618, new series, of February 8-9, 1992.

²¹ Miodrag Milin, *quoted operas* p. 166

²² *Ibidem*; Lucian-Vasile Szabo, *Jurnaliști, eroi, teroriști... Revoluția de la Timișoara în presa locală (Journalists, heroes, terrorists ... The Revolution of Timișoara in the Local Press)*, Timișoara, 2009, p. 78; Dumitru Tomoni, *Catedrala Mitropolitană Ortodoxă din Timișoara (The Orthodox Metropolitan Cathedral of Timișoara)* in „Clio 1989”, Bucharest, 4th year, no. 1 (7)/2008, p. 158-160; Idem, *Catedrala Ortodoxă din Timișoara, loc de speranță și altar de jertfă în decembrie (The Orthodox Cathedral of Timișoara, a Place of hope and a Shrine of Sacrifice in December 1989)* in „Altarul Banatului”, Timișoara, 19th year, new series, no. 10-12, October-December, 2008, p. 156-161

Bullets, Lies and Videotape: The Amazing, Disappearing Romanian Counter-Revolution of December 1989¹ (I)

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I am an intelligence analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency. I have been a CIA analyst since 2000. Prior to that time, I had no association with CIA outside of the application process.

His name was Ghircoiaș... Nicolae Ghircoiaș.

And in Romania in December 1989 and January 1990, Nicolae Ghircoiaș was a very busy man.

We know, officially, of Nicolae Ghircoiaș' actions in the last days leading up to the fall of the regime of communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu on 22 December 1989, as a result of what he and others said at a trial later in January 1990. In bureaucratic parlance, colonel Nicolae Ghircoiaș, was the Director of the Criminalistic Institute of the Militia's [Police's] General Inspectorate. In colloquial terms, in December 1989 it appears that this amounted to being something of a "cleaner," or "fixer," the kind of guy who could make unpleasant things – such as corpses – go away, without leaving a trace.

After regime forces opened fire on anti-regime protesters in the western city of Timișoara on 17 and 18 December 1989, colonel Ghircoiaș was dispatched to recover the corpses of those with gunshot wounds from the city's morgue. The unautopsied cadavers of 43 demonstrators were stolen from the morgue in the dead of night and then transported to the outskirts of the capital Bucharest by refrigerated truck, where they were cremated.² Ghircoiaș was also in charge of collecting and destroying the hospital records and any other incriminating material that might indicate not just the death, but also the life of those who had perished – the official

explanation for the disappearance of these citizens was to be that they had fled the country, thus taking their documents with them. In other words, colonel Nicolae Ghircoiaș' job was primarily, it seems, the destruction of evidence.³

Colonel Ghircoiaș makes the rounds of Bucharest's hospitals

Unofficially, we also know of colonel Ghircoiaș' exploits after the Ceaușescu regime collapsed on 22 December 1989, exploits for which he was not charged at his trial and for which he has never been charged. Of the 1,104 people killed and 3,352 people injured during the December 1989 bloodshed, 942 of them were killed and 2,251 wounded after Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu fled power on 22 December 1989. At the time, personnel of the communist regime's secret police – known as the *Securitate* – and allied foreign mercenaries fighting to restore the Ceaușescu regime – collectively christened “the terrorists”- were thought to be the primary source behind the post-22 December bloodshed.

It was in this context, that doctors from Bucharest's various main hospitals recall colonel Ghircoiaș' sudden, unannounced appearances during the last days of December 1989 and first days of January 1990. Professor Andrei Firica of the Bucharest “Emergency Hospital” recounted in a 2004 media interview largely the same details he had conveyed to the press in the summer of 1990. According to Firica, some 15 to 20 suspected terrorists had been interned at the “Emergency Hospital” in varying states of medical distress. He says he made a small file of the medical situations of these patients. A Militia colonel, whom he later was to see in [prisoner] stripes on TV as a defendant in the Timișoara trial – i.e. fairly clearly Ghircoiaș – came one day and counseled him to keep nosy foreign reporters away from the beds of the “terrorists,” stating ominously that “these were just terrorist suspects and he [Dr. Firica] didn't want to wake up one day on trial for having defamed someone”! The colonel later came and loaded the wounded terrorist suspects onto a bus and off they went. Firica maintains the files he kept on the terrorist suspects “of course, disappeared.” He noted, however, that he asked his son, who had studied theater and film at university, to film the terrorists tied down to the hospital beds, and he claims he gave copies of this cassette to the Procuracy.⁴

although he probably had terrible pains. There were also two terrorists who were not wounded. One arrived at night, under some pretext. Those on guard suspecting him, immobilized him. He had on three layers of clothing and several ids. They tied him to the stretcher, but although he appeared rather frail, at a given moment he ripped the restraints off.^{6]}



[Dr. Andrei Firica, 2004: *From a diagnostic perspective, those who maintain that the terrorists didn't exist are telling an outrageous lie...In the Emergency Hospital, people were brought who were shot with precision in the forehead, from behind, just a few yards in the crowd of demonstrators, such people who did this can only be called terrorists...*^{8]}

Dr. Nicolae Constantinescu, chief surgeon at the Coltea Hospital, also was paid the honor of a visit by Colonel Ghircoiaș during these days: I remember that on 1 or 2 January '90 there appeared at the [Colțea] hospital a colonel from the Interior Ministry, who presented himself as Ghircoiaș. He maintained in violent enough language that he was the chief of I-don't-know-what "criminalistic" department from the Directorate of State Security [ie. Securitate]. ***He asked that all of the extracted bullets be turned over to him. Thus were turned over to him 40 bullets of diverse forms and dimensions, as well as munition fragments.***

To the question of whether he informed the Military Procuracy? Of course, I announced the Prosecutor's Office, and requested an investigation [of those shot in the revolution]. For example, when I showed them the apartment from where there were was shooting during the revolution, on the fourth floor of the 'Luceafarul' cinema, the prosecutors



told me that they sought to verify it and uncovered that there was a Securitate 'safehouse' there and that was it.

In 1992, I signed along with other doctors, university professors, renowned surgeons, a memorandum [see page 6 for an article apparently linked to the memorandum] addressed to the Prosecutor General in which we requested an investigation regarding the wounded and dead by gunfire. Not having received any response, after six months I went there to ask what was going on. They told me they were working on it, and they showed me two or three requests and that was it. One of the prosecutors took me into the hallway and told me "I have a child, a wife, it is very complicated." He asked me what I thought I was doing... I lit back into him, I told him I wasn't just any kind of person to be blown off.

I showed him the x-rays of those who were shot, I showed him the bullets in the liver. The x-rays exist, they weren't my invention, I didn't just dream all

*this up to demand an investigation! I told them that there are some people who wish to find out the truth and they signed a memo to the Procuracy and they aren't just anybody, but doctors with experience, experts in the field. In vain, we requested ballistics tests and other research, in vain we presented forms, documents, x-rays, studies. They did not want to undertake a serious investigation.*⁹

Romania, December 1989: a Revolution, a Coup d'etat, and a Counter - Revolution

This December marks twenty years since the implosion of the communist regime of Dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu.¹⁰ It is well-known, but bears repeating: Romania not only came late in the wave of communist regime collapse in the East European members of the Warsaw Pact in the fall of 1989 (Poland, Hungary, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria), it came

last – and inevitably that was significant.¹¹ Despite the more highly personalist (vs. corporate) nature of the Ceaușescu regime, the higher level of fear and deprivation that characterized society, and the comparative insulation from the rest of the East European Warsaw Pact states, Romania could not escape the implications of the collapse of the other communist party-states.¹² Despite the differences, there simply were too many institutional and ideological similarities, or as is often most importantly the case, that is how members of both the state and society interpreted matters. “Going last” [in turn, in show] almost inevitably implies that the opportunities for mimicry, for opportunism, for simulation¹³ on the one hand and dissimulation¹⁴ on the other, are greater than for the predecessors... and, indeed, one can argue that some of what we saw in Romania in December 1989 reflects this.

Much of the debate about what happened in December 1989 has revolved around how to define those events... and their consequences.¹⁵ [These can be analytically distinct categories and depending on how one defines things, solely by focusing on the events themselves or the consequences, or some combination thereof, will inevitably shape the answer one gets]. The primary fulcrum or axis of the definitional debate has been between whether December 1989 and its aftermath were/have been a revolution or a coup d’etat. But Romanian citizens and foreign observers have long since improvised linguistically to capture the hybrid and unclear nature of the events and their consequences. Perhaps the most neutral, cynical, and fatalistic is the common “evenimentele din decembrie 1989” – the events of December 1989 – but it should also be pointed out that the former Securitate and Ceaușescu nostalgics have also embraced, incorporated and promoted, such terminology.

More innovative are terms such as *rivolutie* (an apparent invocation of or allusion to the famous Romanian satirist Ion Luca Caragiale’s 1880 play *Conu Leonida fata cu reactiunea*¹⁶, where he used the older colloquial spelling *revolutie*) or *lovitutie* (a term apparently coined by the humorists at *Academia Catavencu*, and combining the Romanian for coup d’etat, *lovitura de stat*, and the Romanian for revolution, *revolutie*).

The following characterization of what happened in December 1989 comes from an online poster, Florentin, who was stationed at the Targoviste barracks – the exact location where Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu would be summarily tried and executed on 25 December 1989. Although his definitions may be too economically-based for my taste – authoritarianism / dictatorship vs. democracy would be preferable – and the picture he presents may be oversimplified at points, the poster’s characterization shows that

sometimes the unadorned straighttalk of the plainspoken citizen can cut to the chase better than many an academic tome:

I did my military service, in Targoviste, in fact in the barracks at which the Ceaușescu couple were executed... It appears that a coup d'état was organized and executed to its final step, the proof being how the President of the R.S.R. (Romanian Socialist Republic) died, but in parallel a revolution took place. Out of this situation has transpired all the confusion. As far as I know this might be a unique historical case, if I am not mistaken. People went into the streets, calling not just for the downfall of the president then, but for the change of the political regime, and that is what we call a revolution. This revolution triumphed, because today we have neither communism, nor even neocommunist with a human face. The European Union would not have accepted a communist state among its ranks. The organizers of the coup d'état foresaw only the replacement of the dictator and the maintenance of a communist/neocommunist system, in which they did not succeed, although there are those who still hope that it would have succeeded. Some talk about the stealing of the revolution, but the reality is that we live in capitalism, even if what we have experienced in these years has been more an attempt at capitalism, orchestrated by an oligarchy with diverse interests...¹⁷

This is indeed the great and perhaps tragic irony of what happened in December 1989 in Romania: without the Revolution, the Coup might well have failed,¹⁸ but without the Coup, neither would the Revolution have succeeded. The latter is particularly difficult for the rigidly ideological and politically partisan to accept; yet it is more than merely a talking point and legitimating alibi of the second-rung nomenklatura who seized power (although it is that too). The very atomization of Romanian society¹⁹ that had been fueled and exploited by the Ceaușescu regime explained why Romania came last in the wave of Fall 1989, but also why it was and would have been virtually impossible for genuine representatives of society – led by dissidents and protesters – to form an alternative governing body on 22 December *whose decisions would have been accepted as sufficiently authoritative to be respected and implemented by the rump party-state bureaucracy, especially the armed forces and security and police structures*. The chaos that would have ensued – with likely multiple alternative power centers, including geographically – would have likely led to a far greater death toll and could have enabled those still betting on the return of the Ceaușescus to after a time reconquer power or seriously impede the functioning of any new government for an extended period.

The fact that the Revolution enabled the coup plotters to seize power, and that the coup enabled the Revolution to triumph should be identified as yet another version – one particular to the idiosyncracies of the Romanian communist regime – of what Linz and Stepan have identified as the costs or compromises of the transition from authoritarian rule. In Poland, for example, this meant that 65 percent of the Sejm was elected in non-competitive elections, but given co-equal authority with the Senate implying that “a body with nondemocratic origins was given an important role in the drafting of a democratic constitution”; in fact, Poland’s first completely competitive elections to both houses of Parliament occurred only in October 1991, fully two years after the formation of the first Solidarity government in August 1989.²⁰

In Romania, this meant that second-rung nomenklaturists – a displaced generation of elites eager to finally have their day in the sun – who to a large extent still harbored only Gorbachevianperestroikist views of the changes in the system as being necessary, were able to consolidate power following the elimination of the ruling Ceaușescu couple.

The self-description by senior Front officials (Ion Iliescu) and media promoters (such as Darie Novaceanu in *Adevarul*) of the FSN (National Salvation Front) as the “emanation of the Revolution” does not seem justified.²¹ It seems directly tied to two late January 1990 events – the decision of the Front’s leaders to run as a political party in the first post-Ceaușescu elections and the contestation from the street of the Front’s leaders’ legitimacy to rule and to run in those elections. It also seems difficult to defend objectively as a legitimate description, since even according to their own accounts, senior Front officials had been in contact with one another and discussed overthrowing the Ceaușescus prior to the Revolution, since there had existed no real competing non-Ceaușescu regime alternative on 22 December 1989 (an argument they themselves make), and since they had clearly not been elected to office. Moreover, when senior former Front officials, Iliescu among them, point to their winning of two-thirds of the votes for the new parliament in May 1990 and Iliescu’s 85 percent vote for the presidency, the numbers in and of themselves – even beyond the bynow pretty obvious and substantiated manipulation, surveillance, and intimidation of opposition parties, candidates, movements and civil society/non-governmental organizations that characterized the election campaign – are a red flag to the tainted and only partly free and fair character of those founding elections.

But if the FSN and Ion Iliescu cannot be accurately and legitimately described as the “emanation of the Revolution,” it also seems reasonable to

suggest that the term “stolen revolution”²² is somewhat unfair. The term “stolen revolution” inevitably suggests a central, identifiable, and *sufficiently coherent* ideological character of the revolution and the presence of an alternative non-Ceaușescu, non-Front leadership that could have ensured the retreat of Ceaușescu forces and been able to govern and administer the country in the days and weeks that followed. The absence of the latter was pretty clear on 22 December 1989 – Iași, Timișoara, and Arad among others, had local, authentic nuclei leading local movements (for example, the FDR, Frontul Democrat Roman), but no direct presence in Bucharest—and the so-called Dide and Verdet “22 minute” alternative governments were even more heavily compromised by former high-ranking communist dignitary inclusion than the FSN was (the one with the least, headed by Dumitru Mazilu, was rapidly overtaken and incorporated into the FSN).

As to the question of the ideological character of the revolt against Ceaușescu, it is once again instructive to turn to what a direct participant, in this case in the Timișoara protests, has to say about it. Marius Mioc²³, who participated in the defense of Pastor Tökés’ residence and in the street demonstrations that grew out of it, was arrested, interrogated, and beaten from the 16th until his release with other detainees on the 22nd and who has written with longstanding hostility toward former Securitate and party officials, Iliescu, the FSN, and their successors, gives a refreshingly honest account of those demonstrations that is in stark contrast to the often hyperpoliticized, post-facto interpretations of December 1989 preferred by ideologues:

I don’t know if the 1989 revolution was as solidly anticommunist as is the fashion to say today. Among the declarations from the balcony of the Opera in Timișoara were some such as “we don’t want capitalism, we want democratic socialism,” and at the same time the names of some local PCR [communist] dignitaries were shouted. These things shouldn’t be generalized, they could have been tactical declarations, and there existed at the same time the slogans “Down with communism!” and flags with the [communist] emblem cut out, which implicitly signified a break from communism. [But] the Revolution did not have a clear ideological orientation, but rather demanded free elections and the right to free speech.²⁴

Romania December 1989 was thus both revolution and coup, but its primary definitive characteristic was that of revolution, as outlined by “Florentin” and Marius Mioc above. To this must be added what is little talked about or acknowledged as such today: the counter-revolution of December 1989. Prior to 22 December 1989, the primary target of this

repression was society, peaceful demonstrators – although the Army itself was both perpetrator of this repression but also the target of Securitate forces attempting to ensure their loyalty to the regime and their direct participation and culpabilization in the repression of demonstrators.

After 22 December 1989, the primary target of this violence was the Army and civilians who had picked up weapons, rather than citizens at large. It is probably justified to say that in terms of tactics, after 22 December 1989, the actions of Ceaușist forces were counter-coup in nature, contingencies prepared in the event of an Army defection and the possibility of foreign intervention in support of such a defection. However, precisely because of what occurred prior to 22 December 1989, the brutal, bloody repression of peaceful demonstrators, and because the success of the coup was necessary for the success of the revolution already underway, it is probably accurate to say that the Ceaușescu regime's actions as a whole constituted a counter-revolution.

If indeed the plotters had not been able to effectively seize power after the Ceaușescus fled on 22 December 1989 and Ceaușescu or his direct acolytes had been able to recapture power, we would be talking of the success not of a counter-coup, but of the counter-revolution.

A key component of the counter-revolution of December 1989 concerns the, as they were christened at the time, so-called “terrorists,” those who were believed then to be fighting in defense of the Ceaușescu couple. It is indeed true as Siani-Davies has written that the Revolution is about so much more than “the Front” and “the terrorists.”²⁵ True enough, but the outstanding and most vexing question about December 1989 – one that resulted in 942 killed and 2,251 injured after 22 December 1989 – is nevertheless the question of “the terrorists.” Finding out if they existed, who they were, and who they were defending remains the key unclarified question of December 1989 two decades later: that much is inescapable.

“Lost”... during investigation: when absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.²⁶

From early in 1990, those who participated in or were directly affected by the December 1989 events have attested to efforts to cover-up what happened. Significantly, and enhancing the credibility of these accusations, those who claim such things come from diverse backgrounds, different cities, and from across the post-Ceaușescu political spectrum. Further enhancing their credibility, in many cases, they do not attempt to place these incidents into larger narratives about what happened in

December 1989, but merely note it as a fact in relating their own personal experiences.

Let's take the case of Simion Cherla, a participant in the December 1989 events in Timișoara. Here is how Radu Ciobotea recounted Cherla's story in May 1991:

Simion Cherla also arrives, agitated. He received a death threat, wrapped in a newspaper. Next to it, in his mailbox, a bullet cartridge was also found. To suggest to him that that is how he would end up if...

--If I talk. Or if I have a copy of the file that I removed on 22 December 1989 from the office of the head of the county Securitate. There was a map of the 8 Interior Ministry formations from Timișoara and "registry-journal of unique ordered operational activities." I gave them to Constantin Grecu (since transferred to the reserves), who gave them to colonel Zeca and general Gheorghe Popescu. These documents were of great use... in the Army's fight against the terrorists.

--Do you know what the deal is with such formations?... When I looked at the map, my eyes glazed over. Their formations were for entire zones where 10 to 12 nests of gunfire were programmed to shoot at a precise hour and minute! Can you imagine! And I, because I was trying to help in the fight against the terrorists, I turned it over to them! ***So now I asked for it to be used at the trial. In the registry everything was written: who ordered, who executed the mission, the place, the hour, how long it last, the impact. Great, all these documents are now said to have disappeared. And I am threatened that I too will disappear like them.***²⁷

The discovery and then disappearances of such maps showing the placement and actions of Interior Ministry units – in particular, the Securitate – was recounted by others in the early 1990s.²⁸ Nor, as we saw earlier from Dr. Nicolae Constantinescu's testimony above, could one count on the military prosecutor's office. Jean Constantinescu [no apparent relation], who was shot in the CC building on 23 December 1989, stated the following in a declaration he gave just last year (as recounted by the investigative journalist Romulus Cristea):

I had two encounters with representatives from the prosecutor's office. The first prosecutor visited me at home, around two months after the events, he listened and noted my account, and as a conclusion, informally, he said something to me such as "we already know a good part of the shooters, they can be charged and pay civil damages, you can be part of the lawsuit and request appropriate damages." After hesitating, I added such a request, at the end of my written declaration, which I signed....

In May 1991, Gheorghe Bălaşa and Radu Minea described in detail for journalist Dan Badea the atypical ammunitions they found in the headquarters of the Securitate's Vth Directorate (charged with Ceauşescu's personal security) building, including dum-dum bullets and special bullets (apparently vidia bullets). They noted the civilians and soldiers who had witnessed this find, and mentioned that a certain Spiru Zeres had filmed the whole sequence, cassettes that were available for the military procuracy.³¹

Journalist and documentary-maker Maria Petraşcu, who with her since deceased husband Marius, had for years investigated the Braşov events, also drew attention to the type of ammunition used in December 1989 when she recalled in 2007 that, "For a long time the Braşov Military Procuracy didn't do anything, although they had evidence, statements, documents, photos and even the *atypical bullets* brought by the families of those killed or wounded."³² A soldier shot on 23 December 1989 in Buzău recently admitted that his doctors changed their declarations regarding the bullet with which he had been hit – identified by another soldier with whom he was interned as a 'vidia' bullet – to standard 7.62 mm ammunition.³³ In fall 2006, the daughter of a priest recalled:

In December '89, after he arrived from Timişoara, my father stayed with me on Ştefan Cel Mare Boulevard [in Bucharest]. We returned to our home, on the corner of Admiral Bălescu and Rosenthal. ***I found the cupboard of the dresser pure and simple riddled with bullets, about 8 to 10 of them. Someone who knew about such things told me they were vidia bullets. They were brought to a commission, but I don't know what happened to them.***³⁴

This echoes something that Army colonel Ion Stoleru was saying back in 1992: that the "terrorists" had "weapons with silencers, with scopes, for shooting at night time (in 'infrared'), bullets with a 'vidia' tip. Really modern weapons," to which he added, significantly, "***The civilian and military commissions haven't followed through in investigating this...***"³⁵

And yet, amazingly – despite all these testimonies regarding the existence and use of atypical munitions, or perhaps better put, precisely because of them – as of August 1991, Răsvan Popescu could report that "of the thousands of projectiles shot against the revolutionaries during December 1989, the Prosecutor's office has entered into the possession of...four bullets. A ridiculous harvest."³⁶

Banking on the absence of evidence...

If Răsvan Popescu's account is correct, it is understandable why functionaries of the Ceaușescu regime have long banked on an absence of evidence. For example, when asked if other than the standard 7.62 mm caliber weapons belonging to the Army were used in December 1989, Dr. Vladimir Belis, the head of the Institute of Forensic Medicine (IML) at the time, claims he doesn't know and can't say, because he claims no autopsies were ever performed—leading journalists to conclude that “therefore the tales of terrorists who shot with ‘dum-dum’ bullets, ‘bullets with vidia tips’ or bullets of large caliber, atypical for Romanian military units, will remain just stories that can neither be confirmed nor denied.”³⁷

Former Securitate officer-turned journalist, novelist, and celebrity, Pavel Corut, has written alternatively derisively and sarcastically – well-nigh tauntingly – about the existence of such atypical ammunition and its use in December 1989:

“...Later I read fantastical and pathetic accounts according to which this [Army] officer died by being ‘hit by vidia and explosive [dum-dum] bullets.’ It isn't the only case of a soldier killed accidentally in warfare...”³⁸

“Now we know that all the information... was false: there did not exist a special guard unit that pledged an oath of (legionary-like) fealty to the dictator, there did not exist snipers with infrared sighting systems, no one shot vidia bullets...”³⁹

“Vidia bullets don't exist anywhere in the world. And yet even the Army believed that the ‘Securitate-terrorists’ used vidia bullets.... All this information was designed to create [the impression of] terrorists. To show the people and the whole world fanatical terrorists.”⁴⁰

Last, but hardly least, military prosecutors with roots in the Ceaușescu era, have assimilated or mirrored such arguments. General Dan Voinea who headed the investigations from 1997-2001 and 2004-2008 said as much:

Romulus Cristea (journalist): “Did special ammunition, bullets with a vidia tip or dum-dum bullets, claim [any] victims? The press of the time was filled with such claims...”

Dan Voinea: *There were no victims (people who were shot) from either vidia bullets or dum-dum bullets. During the entire period of the events war munitions were used, normal munitions that were found at the time in the arsenal of the Interior Ministry and the Defense Ministry.* The confusion and false information were the product of the fact that different caliber weapons were used, and therefore, the resulting sound was perceived differently.⁴¹⁴² (Emphasis added)

The wonderful legalistic (alibi-bestowing) logic for Voinea and his colleagues then goes something like this: there exist victims requesting damages for injuries, loss of life, livelihood or property sustained during the violence of December 1989, their loss was real and deserves to be compensated by the Romanian state; but those initially considered guilty of causing much of this injury, loss of life, and damage and taken into custody in December 1989 – the “terrorist” suspects – were released in January 1990, and so juridically there do not exist defendants; nor does there appear to still exist in the hands of the military procuracy much of the material evidence presented in 1990-1991 – maps, videos, etc. – and, apparently, only four bullets; and no autopsies were officially performed on those shot in December 1989. So in essence, the only things left are the crimes themselves and the testimonies of those interviewed over the past two decades: no autopsy records, little material evidence, and the original suspects have gone missing... Conclusion: no atypical munitions existed, were used, or maimed or killed anybody, and there were no terrorists, everyone shot into everyone else in the chaos of the moment – or in other words, the exact argument which as we have seen has been with us since Florin Crisbasan and Emil Ivascu of Braşov related the former Securitate’s “line of reasoning” in mid-January 1990.

¹ For my previous publications on this topic, please go to <http://romanianrevolutionofdecember1989.com>:

“The Romanian Revolution for Dum-Dums (like me and perhaps even you),”

2008, <http://romanianrevolutionofdecember1989.com/2008/12/16/the-romanian-revolution-for-dum-dums-like-me-%E2%80%A6and-perhaps-even-you-by-richard-andrew-hall-phd/>;

“Orwellian...Positively Orwellian: Prosecutor Voinea’s Campaign to Sanitize the Romanian Revolution of December 1989,” 2006,

<http://romanianrevolutionofdecember1989.com/2013/05/21/orwellian-positively-orwellian-prosecutor-voineas-uncritical-reception-by-romanianists/>;

“THE 1989 ROMANIAN REVOLUTION AS GEOPOLITICAL PARLOR GAME: BRANDSTATTER’S “CHECKMATE” DOCUMENTARY AND THE LATEST WAVE IN A SEA OF REVISIONISM,” 2005 <http://romanianrevolutionofdecember1989.com/2009/07/25/the-1989-romanian-revolution-as-geopolitical-parlor-game-brandstatter-%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9Ccheckmate-%E2%80%9D-documentary-and-the-latest-wave-in-a-sea-of-revisionism/>;

“Doublespeak: The All-too-Familiar Tales of Nicolae Ceausescu’s Double,” *Habsburg Occasional Papers No. 3*, March 2004, <http://romanianrevolutionofdecember1989.com/2009/09/29/romania-december-1989-doublespeak-the-all-too-familiar-tales-of-nicolae-ceausescus-double-by-richard-andrew-hall/>;

“The Securitate Roots of a Modern Romanian Fairy Tale: The Press, the Former Securitate, and the Historiography of December 1989,” *RFE East European Perspective*, 2002, <http://romanianrevolutionofdecember1989.com/2009/07/17/the-securitate-roots-of-a-modern-romanian-fairy-tale-the-press-the-former-securitate-and-the-historiography-of-december-1989/>;

Richard Andrew Hall, "Theories of Collective Action and Revolution: Evidence from the Romanian Transition of December 1989," *Europe-Asia Studies* 2000, no. 6 (September 2000), <http://romanianrevolutionofdecember1989.com/theories-of-collective-action-and-revolution-2000/>;

Richard Andrew Hall, "The Uses of Absurdity: The 'Staged-War' Theory and the Romanian Revolution of December 1989," *East European Politics and Societies* vol 13, no. 3 (Fall 1999) (University of California Berkeley Press), <http://romanianrevolutionofdecember1989.com/the-uses-of-absurdity-romania-1989-1999/>.

² For a good discussion of this in English, which explains how cremation practices were at odds with Romanian burial traditions, see the article entitled "The Mask of the Red Death: The Evil Politics of Cremation in Romania 1989," in the journal *Mortality*, no. 15 (1).

³ For more information online, see, for example,

http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolae_Ghircoia%C5%9F,

http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opera%C5%A3iunea_Trandafirul,

<http://www.romanialibera.ro/a51078/cine-a-organizat-furtul-cadavrelor-din-morga-spitalului-judetean.html>,

<http://www.Timisoara.com/newmioc/53.htm>, <http://www.Timisoara.com/newmioc/67.htm>.

Even the 1994 SRI report admits that confusion surrounding the identity of those who were cremated stems from Ghircoiaș' burning—after the flight of the Ceausescu on 22 December of all relevant documents he had seized from the Timișoara county hospital http://www.ceausescu.org/ceausescu_texts/revolution/raportul_sri11.htm. Thus, it seems appropriate to say Ghircoiaș' job involved making things disappear...

⁴ Professor Andrei Firica, interview by Florin Conduratelyanu, "Teroristii din Spitalul de Urgenta," *Jurnalul National*, 9 March 2004, online edition, <http://jurnalul.ro/campaniile-jurnalul/decembrie-89/teroristii-din-spitalul-de-urgenta-71729.html>, cited in Hall, "Orwellian... Positively Orwellian," 2006. For similar accounts, see Florin Mircea Corcozsi Mircea Aries, "Teroristascuns in Apuseni?" *Romania Libera*, 21 August 1992, p. 1--"Colonelul Ghircoiaș, former director of the Securitate's penal investigative unit, brought together the individuals accused of being terrorists and made them disappear"; Andreea Hasnas, "Reportajul unui film cu TERORISTI," *Expres*, no. 10 (6-12 aprilie 1990), p. 5; Constantin Fugasin, "Unde ne sint teroristii?" *Zig-Zag*, 1990.

⁵ Screen capture from http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7rp6b_revolutia-romana-2225-dec1989-part_shortfilms posted by Alexandru2006.

⁶ Significantly this video is in direct contradiction and contests the claims of the Sorin Iliesiu who maintains that "General Dan Voinea has said clearly: The terrorists did not exist. Those who seized power lied to protect the real criminals... The diversion of the 'terrorists' has been demonstrated by [the] Justice [System], not a single terrorist being found among the dead, wounded or arrested (Sorin Iliesiu, "18 ani de la masacrul care a deturnat revoluția anticomunistă," 21 December 2007, <http://www.romanialibera.com/articole/articol.php?step=articol&id=6709>).

For a discussion, see Hall 2008.

⁷ Screen capture from http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7rp6b_revolutia-romana-2225-dec1989-part_shortfilms posted by Alexandru 2006.

⁸ Professor Andrei Firica, interview by Florin Conduratelyanu, "Teroristii din Spitalul de Urgenta," *Jurnalul National*, 9 March 2004, online edition, <http://jurnalul.ro/campaniile-jurnalul/decembrie-89/teroristii-din-spitalul-de-urgenta-71729.html>.

⁹ Dr. Professor Nicolae Constantinescu, interview by Romulus Cristea, "'Nici acum nu-mi dau seama cum am putut sa operez nonstop timp de trei zile,'" *Romania Libera*, 20

December 2006, online edition. See also Mihail Lechkun, AMFITEATRUL FACULTATII DE MEDICINA “Decembrie 1989, in spitalele din Bucuresti,” *Romania Libera*, 10 februarie 1994, p. 2

¹⁰The hyperbolic and popular academic designation of the Ceausescu regime as *Stalinistis* not particularly helpful. Totalitarianyes, Stalinist no. Yes, Nicolae Ceausescu had a Stalinist-like personality cult, and yes he admired Stalin and his economic model, as he told interviewers as late as 1988, and we have been told *ad nauseam* since. But this was also a strange regime, which as I have written elsewhere was almost characterized by a policy of “no public statues [of Ceausescu] and no (or at least as few as possible) public martyrs [inside or even outside the party]”—the first at odds with the ubiquity of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu’s media presence, the second characterized by the “rotation of cadres” policy whereby senior party officials could never build a fiefdom and were sometimes banished to the provinces, but almost were never eliminated physically, and by Ceausescu’s general reluctance to “spoil” his carefully created “image” abroad by openly eliminating high-profile dissidents (one of the reasons Pastor Tokes was harassed and intimidated, but still alive in December 1989) (see Richard Andrew Hall 2006, “Images of Hungarians and Romanians in Modern American Media and Popular Culture,” at [http://www.academia.edu/554879/Images of Hungarians and Romanians in Modern American Media and Popular Culture](http://www.academia.edu/554879/Images_of_Hungarians_and_Romanians_in_Modern_American_Media_and_Popular_Culture)). Ken Jowitt has characterized the organizational corruption and political routinization of the communist party as moving from the Stalinist era—whereby even being a high-level party official did not eliminate the fear or reality of imprisonment and death—to what he terms Khrushchev’s de facto maxim of “don’t kill the cadre” to Brezhnev’s of essentially “don’t fire the cadre” (see Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction*, especially pp. 233-234, and chapter 4 “Neo-traditionalism,” p. 142). The very fact that someone like Ion Iliescu could be around to seize power in December 1989 is fundamentally at odds with a Stalinist system: being “purged” meant that he fulfilled secondary roles in secondary places, Iasi, Timișoara, the Water Works, a Technical Editing House, but “purged” did not threaten and put an end to his existence, as it did for a Kirov, Bukharin, and sadly a cast of millions of poor public souls caught up in the ideological maelstrom. Charles King wrote in 2007 that “the Ceausescu era was the continuation of Stalinism by other means, substituting the insinuation of terror for its cruder variants and combining calculated cooptation with vicious attacks on any social actors who might represent a potential threat to the state” (Charles King, “Remembering Romanian Communism,” *Slavic Review*, vol. 66, no. 4 (Winter 2007), p. 720). But at a certain point, a sufficient difference in quantity and quality—in this case, of life, fear, imprisonment, and death—translates into a difference of regime-type, and we are left with unhelpful hyperbole. The level of fear to one’s personal existence in Ceausescu’s Romania—both inside and outside the party-state—simply was not credibly comparable to Stalin’s Soviet Union, or for that matter, even Dej’s Romania of the 1950s. In the end, Ceausescu’s Romania was “Stalinist in form [personality cult, emphasis on heavy industry], but Brezhnevian in content [“don’t fire the cadres”... merely rotate them... privileges, not prison sentences for the nomenklatura].”

¹¹ For a recent discussion of the “diffusion” or “demonstration” effect and regime change, see, for example, Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, “International Diffusion and Postcommunist Electoral Revolutions,” *Communist and Postcommunist Studies*, vol. 39, no. 3 (September 2006), pp. 283-304.

¹² For more discussion, see Hall 2000.

¹³For discussion of the term see Michael Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society* (Boulder, 1985).

¹⁴For discussion of the term see Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder* (University of California Berkeley Press, 1992).

¹⁵For earlier discussions of this topic from a theoretical perspective, see, for example, Peter Siani-Davies, "Romanian Revolution of Coup d'etat?" *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, vol. 29, no. 4 (December 1996), pp. 453-465; Stephen D. Roper, "The Romanian Revolution from a Theoretical Perspective," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, vol. 27, no. 4 (December 1994), pp. 401-410; and Peter Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), pp. 1-52 ff, but especially (chapter 7) pp. 267-286. For a recent effort to deal with this question more broadly, see Timothy Garton Ash, "Velvet Revolution: The Prospects," *The New York Review of Books*, Volume 56, Number 19 (December 3, 2009) at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/23437>. For a good comparison and analysis of public opinion polling performed in 2009 and 1999 about classifying what happened in December 1989, see Catalin Augustin Stoica in <http://www.jurnalul.ro/stire-special/a-fost-revolutie-sau-lovitura-de-stat-527645.html>.

¹⁶[http://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/Conu Leonida fa%C5%A3%C4%83 cu reac%C5%A3iunea](http://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/Conu_Leonida_fa%C5%A3%C4%83_cu_reac%C5%A3iunea)

¹⁷Entry from forum at <http://www.gds.ro/Opinii/2007-12-20/Revolutia:+majoratul+rusinii!>

¹⁸This is a point that was first made credibly by Michael Shafir in Michael Shafir, "Preparing for the Future by Revising the Past," *Radio Free Europe Report on Eastern Europe*, vol. 1, no. 41 (12 October 1990). It becomes all the clearer, however, when we consider that the XIV PCR Congress from 20-24 November 1989 went off without the slightest attempt at dissidence within the congress hall—a potential opportunity thereby missed—and that the plotters failed to act during what would have seemed like the golden moment to put an end to the "Golden Era," the almost 48 hours that Nicolae Ceausescu was out of the country in Iran between 18 and 20 December 1989, after regime forces had already been placed in the position of confronting peaceful demonstrators and after they opened fire in Timișoara. In other words, an anti-regime revolt was underway, and had the coup been so minutely prepared as critics allege, this would have been the perfect time to seize power, cut off the further anti-system evolution of protests, exile Ceausescu from the country, and cloak themselves in the legitimacy of a popular revolt. What is significant is that the plotters did not act at this moment. It took the almost complete collapse of state authority on the morning of 22 December 1989 for them to enter into action. This is also why characterizations of the Front as the counter strike of the party-state bureaucracy' or the like is only so much partisan rubbish, since far from being premised as something in the event of a popular revolt or as a way to counter an uprising, the plotters had assumed—erroneously as it turned out—that Romanian society would not rise up against the dictator, and thus that only they could or had to act. It is true, however, that once having consolidated power, the plotters did try to slow, redirect, and even stifle the forward momentum of the revolution, and that the revolutionary push from below after December 1989 pushed them into reforms and measures opening politics and economics to competition that they probably would not have initiated on their own.

¹⁹I remain impressed here by something Linz and Stepan highlighted in 1996: according to a Radio Free Europe study, as of June 1989 Bulgaria had thirteen independent organizations, all of which had leaders whose names were publicly known, whereas in Romania there were only two independent organizations with bases inside the country, neither of which had publicly known leaders (Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of*

Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 352). For more discussion of this and related issues, see Hall 2000.

²⁰ The presidency was also an unelected communist holdover position until fall 1990. See Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, pp. 267-274.

²¹ For a discussion of the roots and origins of these terms, see Matei Calinescu and Vladimir Tismaneanu, "The 1989 Revolution and Romania's Future," *Problems of Communism*, vol. XL no. 1-2 (January-April 1991), p. 52, especially footnote no. 38.

²² Stephen Kotkin associates the concept, accurately if incompletely, with Tom Gallagher and Vladimir Tismaneanu in Stephen Kotkin, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment* (Modern Library Chronicles, 2009), pp. 147-148 n. 1. Similar concepts have taken other names, such as "operetta war" (proposed but not necessarily accepted) by Nestor Ratesh, *Romania: The Entangled Revolution* (Praeger, 1991) or "staging of [the] revolution" [advocated] by Andrei Codrescu, *The Hole in the Flag* (Morrow and Company, 1991). Dumitru Mazilu's 1991 book in Romanian was entitled precisely "The Stolen Revolution" [Revolutia Furata]. Charles King stated in 2007 that the CPADCR Report "repeats the common view (at least among western academics) of the revolution as being hijacked," a term essentially equating to "stolen revolution," but as Tismaneanu headed the commission and large sections of the Report's chapter on December 1989 use previous writings by him (albeit without citing where they came from), it is hard to somehow treat the Report's findings as independent of Tismaneanu's identical view (for an earlier discussion of all this, see Hall 2008)

²³ Mioc does not talk a great deal about his personal story: here is one of those few examples, <http://www.Timisoara.com/newmioc/5.htm>.

²⁴ Quoted from <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2009/09/29/o-diferentiere-necesara-comunisti-si-criminali-comunisti/#more-4973>

²⁵ Peter Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 286.

²⁶ The origin of this phrase is apparently ascribed to the astronomer and scientist Carl Sagan, and only later became a favorite of former US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

²⁷ Radu Ciobotea, "Spitalulgroazei nu are amintiri," *Flacara*, nr. 19 (8 mai 1991), p. 4.

²⁸ See the sources listed in endnote 59, Hall 2006.

²⁹ <http://romuluscristea.wordpress.com/2009/04/21/cautari-dupa-20-de-ani/#more-2603> It would be interesting to say the least to know who the second prosecutor was, although I have my suspicions as to who it could have been.

³⁰ Mircea Florin Sandru, "Brasov: Intrebari care asteapta raspuns (II)," *Tineretul Liber*, 17 ianuarie 1990, p. 1, p. III-a).

³¹ I discussed all of this in detail, including a partial English translation of the article, in Hall 2008.

³² <http://www.portalulrevolutiei.ro/forum/index.php?topic=1.msg214> Reply #131.

³³ <http://1989.jurnalul.ro/stire-special/baiete-ai-avut-zile-526579.html>.

³⁴ Christian Levant, "Dacă tata nu-l salva pe Tökés, dacă nu salva biserici, tot se întâmpla ceva," *Adevarul*, 30 September 2006, online at https://adevarul.ro/sanatate/medicina/daca-tata-nu-l-salva-tokes-nu-salva-biserici-intampla-ceva-1_50abdabd7c42d5a663815a28/index.html.

³⁵Army Colonel Ion Stoleru with Mihai Gălățanu, “Din Celebra Galerie a Teroriștilor,” *Expres*, no. 151 (22-28 December 1992), p. 4, and “Am văzut trei morți suspecți cu fața întoarsă spre caldarîm,” *Flacăra*, no. 29 (22 July 1992), p. 7. Cited in Hall, 2008.

³⁶Răsvan Popescu, “Patru gloanțe dintr-o tragedie,” *Expres*, nr.32 (81) 13-19 August 1991, p. 10 (?).

³⁷Laura Toma, Toma Roman Jr., and Roxana Ioana Ancuța, “Belis nu a văzut cadavrele Ceaușeștilor,” *Jurnalul Național*, 25 October 2005, <http://jurnalul.ro/special-jurnalul/belis-nu-a-vazut-cadavrele-ceauestilor-34668.html> discussed in Hall 2008.

³⁸Paul Cernescu (aka Pavel Corut), “Cine a tras în noi?” *Expres Magazin*, nr. 66 (43) 30 October-5 November 1991, p. 12. Paul Cernescu is Pavel Corut’s acknowledged alias. During his journalistic career at Ion Cristoiu’s *Expres Magazin*, he began by writing under this pseudonym.

³⁹Paul Cernescu (aka Pavel Corut), “Cine a tras în noi?” *Expres Magazin*, nr. 65 (42) 23-29 October 1991, p. 12.

⁴⁰Pavel Corut, *Fulgerul Albastru* (București: Editura Miracol, 1993), p. 177. For background in English on Corut, see Michael Shafir, “Best Selling Spy Novels Seek To Rehabilitate Romanian ‘Securitate,’” in *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report*, Vol. 2, no. 45, pp. 14-18.

⁴¹General Dan Voinea, interview by Romulus Cristea, “Toți alergau după un inamic invizibil,” *Romania Libera*, 22 December 2005, online edition. Reproduced at, for example, <http://asociatia21decembrie.ro/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=31&sid=f9403c7a52a7ac9c8b53b8042226f135>. See also the claims of former military prosecutor Teodor Ungureanu (Facultatea de Drept, 1978) also in December 2005, at, for example,

<http://www.piatauniversitatii.com/forum/viewtopic.php?p=3912&sid=c76d79333718bc7fdad0eb8e22eb913> and <http://www.piatauniversitatii.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=202&postdays=0&postorder=asc&start=0>. Nor does Teodor Ungureanu believe in terrorists, vidia bullets, dum-dum bullets, or atypical ammunition:

“La cele de mai sus va trebui să adăugăm fabulațiile cu privire la celebrele “gloanțe-widia”. Prin lansarea acestei aberații, cei mai de seamă reprezentanți ai Armatei s-au compromis lamentabil. Ceea ce prezentau în emisiuni tv ori în paginile unor ziare ca fiind teribilele instrumente ale morții, nu erau nimic altceva decât miezurile din oțel care intrau în alcătuirea internă a proiectilului cal. 7,62 mm-scurt destinat armelor tip AKM. Tot așa aveau să fie făcute speculații asupra folosirii muniției explozive (de tip dum-dum), de către persoane care erau fie străine de efectele provocate asupra corpului uman de proiectile cu diverse energii cinetice (la momentul străpungerii), ori de fragmente din proiectile dezmembrate la un anterior impact cu un corp dur, fie de cei angajați într-o reală acțiune de dezinformare....”

⁴²According to Sorin Iliesiu, the film maker who claims to have edited the chapter on December 1989 in the so-called Tismaneanu Raport Final, the “spirit of Voinea’s findings can be found in the Chapter.” Indeed, the chapter includes snippets from an interview between Dan Voinea and Andrei Bădin (*Adevarul*, December 2006). The “indefatigable” Voinea, as Tom Gallagher has referred to him, continues to be defended by Vladimir Tismaneanu who has expressed support for Voinea’s investigations “from both a juridic and historic viewpoint” (see the entries for 21 September 2009 at <http://tismaneanu.wordpress.com>), avoiding any mention of the reasons for Voinea’s dismissal from the Military Procuracy, mistakes that Prosecutor General Laura Codruța

Kovesi says “one wouldn’t expect even from a beginner” (for more on this and background, see Hall 2008):

Ce îi reproșați, totuși, lui Voinea? Punctual, ce greșeli a făcut în instrumentarea cauzelor? Sunt foarte multe greșeli, o să menționez însă doar câteva. Spre exemplu, s-a început urmărirea penală față de persoane decedate. Poate îmi explică dumnealui cum poți să faci cercetări față de o persoană decedată! Apoi, s-a început urmărirea penală pentru fapte care nu erau prevăzute în Codul Penal. În plus, deși nu a fost desemnat să lucreze, spre exemplu, într-un dosar privind mineriada (repartizat unui alt procuror), domnul procuror Dan Voinea a luat dosarul, a început urmărirea penală, după care l-a restituit procurorului de caz. Vă imaginați cum ar fi dacă eu, ca procuror general, aș lua dosarul unui coleg din subordine, aș începe urmărirea penală după care i l-aș înapoia. Cam așa ceva s-a întâmplat și aici. Mai mult, a început urmărirea penală într-o cauză, deși, potrivit unei decizii a Înaltei Curți de Casație și Justiție, era incompatibil să mai facă asta. E vorba despre dosarul 74/p/1998 (dosar în care Voinea l-a acuzat pe fostul președinte Ion Iliescu că, în iunie 1990, a determinat cu intenție intervenția în forță a militarilor împotriva manifestațiilor din Capitală - n.r.).

Apoi au fost situații în care s-a început urmărirea penală prin acte scrise de mână, care nu au fost înregistrate în registrul special de începere a urmăririi penale. Aceste documente, spre exemplu, nu prevedeau în ce constau faptele comise de presupușii învinuiți, nu conțin datele personale ale acestora. De exemplu, avem rezoluții de începere a urmăririi penale care-l privesc pe Radu Ion sau pe Gheorghe Dumitru, ori nu știm cine este Gheorghe Dumitru, nu știm cine este Radu Ion.

„Parchetul să-și asume tergiversarea anchetelor”

Credeți că, în cazul lui Voinea, au fost doar greșeli sau că a fost vorba de intenție, știind că acuzații vor scăpa?

Nu cunosc motivele care au stat la baza acestor decizii și, prin urmare, nu le pot comenta.

Poate fi vorba și despre complexitatea acestor dosare?

Când ai asemenea dosare în lucru, nu faci astfel de greșeli, de începător. Ești mult mai atent când ai cauze de o asemenea importanță pentru societatea românească.

Excerpted from <http://www.evz.ro/detalii/stiri/kovesi-despre-revolutia-ratata-a-lui-voinea-a-gresit-ca-un-incepator-868918.html/>

Ph. D. Richard Andrew **HALL**

Heroism and Abjection in White Robes.
The Mysteries of Revolution behind the Hospitals of Timișoara,
Still Hard to Unriddle

Minor wounds, horrible deaths

The bodies of those who had been shot were stolen from the morgue, brought to Bucharest and then burnt in the crematory. The criminal regime was hence trying to clear the massacre remnants. The abominable atrocities committed in the hospitals of Timișoara during the Revolution of December 1989 represent just another dark page, among so many others, of those days. Hundreds of testimonies revealing both the staggering and courageous deeds of few revolutionaries and the outstanding commitment of several doctors as well as the horrifying operations to clean the remnants of the massacre have been gathered. The testimonies speak about the outstanding courage and commitment shown by the medical teams who did more than saving lives: they did everything they could to protect the injured against the brutal investigations and the subsequent aggressions of repressive forces. The same testimonies give us an account of the dreadful actions that had been committed in the hospitals. Nevertheless, the proofs in this respect are still unclear and there is no conclusive evidence to make us believe that any of the doctor or nurses or a stretcher bearers would have deliberately committed murders. However, there are several testimonies according to which some demonstrators who had been brought to hospitals with minor or severe gunshot injuries at the level of different areas of the body, were subsequently found (or just seen) dead (because their bodies have just... vanished!). According to the testimonies, the gunshot injuries of those victims had been inflicted at the level of the head (particularly in the forehead areas). However, no official records have been found in this respect! And again, there is nobody who could testify that he or she had indeed witnessed those Mob-style executions. This is the point where any trace of those events is completely lost and the testimonies are just leading to the realm of circumstantial or indirect evidences...

As for the involvement of the healthcare professionals in the repression, we can speak only about several collaborations with the law enforcement authorities. First of all, the heads of the healthcare facilities put themselves at disposal of either the prosecutors or chiefs of Securitate and Militia or at disposal of those vested with political powers in the party (the former Romanian Communist Party). The names of Rodica Novac, manager of Public Health Directorate of Timis County at that moment, and Ovidiu Golea, manager of County Hospital, in December 1989, appear both in

testimonies and in the investigations conducted later on with reference to what had really happened in hospitals. Their involvement was signaled at a moment of great importance for the Romanian Revolution sparked by Timișoara: the theft of the martyr-heroes' bodies from the hospital morgue and the loading of those bodies in insulated tank trucks which took them to be burnt at „Cenușa” Crematory from Bucharest. Full of controversies are also the actions of Asst. Prof. Petru Ignat, chief of Surgery I Unit of County Hospital. Several testimonies depict him as a zealous collaborator with the repressive authorities and emphasize his close relationship with local and state high officials.

Hospitals, under the tormentors' siege

During the Revolution and up to the fall of Ceaușescu, the hospitals have been besieged both from the outside and the inside. Militia and Border Guard troops (all under the control of the Ministry of Interior), as well as Army troops surrounded all healthcare facilities, particularly the County Hospital, because almost all wounded demonstrators had been brought to that last location. Since the Forensic Medical Institute and the city main morgue were and are still fostered by the County Hospital, there was a particular interest that nobody entered those perimeters, unless a special permit had been granted for that purpose. Inside, all hell had broken loose: while the doctors and nurses were desperately trying to save people's lives, the Securitate and Militia officers began to investigate the wounded. The collaboration of some doctors and nurses with the investigating officers and prosecutors was reduced to providing adequate spaces for interrogations. Other doctors and nurses decided to take a risk and protect the revolutionaries. Some of demonstrators were advised to declare that they had arrived in the area by chance, few people were simply hidden and no official records of their presence in the hospitals were filled in, and others were given sleeping pills or they were anaesthetized. As one can see, everybody acted differently and therefore, most of those behaviours need to be carefully analyzed.

As the time passed by, mass media has analyzed numerous puzzles of what had happened in the sanitary units. The press also expressed numerous opinions on the contradictions found in testimonies, the incongruities regarding the same aspects differently described by the eyewitnesses' testimonies and the reports prepared by the prosecutors in their attempt of finding out the truth, as well on the facts that have been omitted either by the testimonies and prosecutors' reports or by the law courts that judged different circumstances and persons.

Analyzing now the manner in which mass media reported all those events and contradictions we may conclude that some facts are still unclear while others seem to have been completely disregarded by the prosecutors who investigated the events of the Revolution or, if analyzed, they have been found irrelevant for the investigations. All that remains is the reality that despite the dreadful experiences from the hospitals, nobody has been found guilty and moreover, very few persons have been investigated...

Wounded soldiers; murdered soldiers

One of the mysteries that survived the time concerns the fate of some soldiers. Some of them were murdered, others were just wounded. Who murdered and hit them before Ceaușescu's fall and who did it afterwards? It's hard to give a straight answer to this painful question. Sometimes, just small pieces of truth emerge. At that time, even the mass media was puzzled. The more experienced journalists (former party activists) seemed to have sided not as much with the people, but with the new power (more precisely, the group which assumed power). A slight degree of servility still persists in all their approaches, and the lack of experience in terms of approaching freely different subjects leads to minor to severe discourse distortions. *Luptătorul Bănățean*, the descendant of the former communist party's newspaper, *Drapelul Roșu*, and the predecessor of the *Renașterea bănățeană* newspaper of Timișoara, is somehow getting closer, through a documentary made at Clinicile Noi hospital, amongst the wounded, to the exact meaning of professional journalism. Short and concise sentences render the testimonies of several injured people. As expected, the somehow bombastic language, which was rather natural given the post-revolutionary exaltation, emerges here and there. Nevertheless, the newspaper renders several testimonies whose relevance has survived the time. Let's take them one by one:

Florin Popa, a conscript from Târgoviște, ended up coming back home without a leg. He was one of the soldiers from the military unit deployed to defend the building of the National Radio and Television Station from Demetriade Street. From the balcony of an apartment where several servants of Ceaușescu's dementia had hidden, somebody opened fire. Severely wounded and despite the extraordinary efforts made by the surgeons, his left leg has been amputated. Crippled, in his early 20s...

Georgian Băran confesses that a miracle saved him from the claws of death. Without his drop of chance, his two underage children would have been orphans today. He joined a group of soldiers on a mission to neutralize two brainless men hidden in the cabin of a tower crane. After a deadly

crossfire, when it seemed that the murderers had been neutralized, he climbed to convince himself, to see how the men-hunters looked like. Unfortunately, one of them was yet unharmed and, when Giorgian lifted the cabin door, out there, tens of meters above the ground, his legs and one arm were riddled. „I didn't fall, he says now, when he is out of any danger, I was lucid, I instantly knew I had to hurry up and come down and reach the ground as long as the bleeding was still incipient and my muscles were still warm.”

A hideous scar marks Aurel Măntăluță's cheek. A bullet made it. His right hand is bandaged, his legs are immobilized. Making visible efforts to remember, he retraces his last steps: „I am a sergeant major and together with my colleague, sergeant Constantin Vâlceanu, we were coming to Timișoara from Giarmata, by his car. As we arrived in front of the first block of flats near the end line of the trolley no. 14, somebody threw something on our car's hood, something that exploded. Fire was opened on us almost instantly. We both got out of the vehicle, trying to find a shelter to hide. But we were both injured. All we got to say was: «Costică, I got hit». «I got hit, too», my colleague told me. And he was a father of two, as I was too. And he died...immediately he died.... Such a pity! He was just 37 years old!...”¹

Who were the criminals?

Who shot all these people? At least, until Ceaușescu's fall, the civilians had no weapons. We are speaking here about the demonstrators, the revolutionaries who were not members in any state or party structures. After the dictator fled, of course, the fault for the crimes that had been committed was attributed to the “terrorists”. None was proven, although there were enough testimonies that some terrorists had been captured. They simply vanished! There were also some persons killed as terrorists, but, like other puzzles of the revolution, we will never know if they were really terrorists or just innocent victims. It seems now outrageous that papers on which the word “terrorist” had been written were attached to the bodies executed in a Mob-style. Not even then, during those moments of maximum excitement, during those seconds of fire, when everyone holding a gun was

¹ Lucian-Vasile Szabo (coordinator.), *Mass-media, represiune și libertate. Revoluția de la Timișoara în presa locală, națională și internațională (Mass-media, Repression and Freedom. The Revolution from Timișoara in the local, national and international press)*, The Memorial of the Revolution of December 16th to December 22nd 1989 in Timișoara, “Gutenberg Univers” Publishing House, Arad, 2010, page 25.

shooting even his/her shadow, the facts were clearer than now. Neither in Timișoara or Bucharest, nor in Sibiu or Cluj. The press of that time gives us very few information on the victims and no clues on the murders. With reference to the cases presented above, significant and interesting details on the injured soldiers lying on hospital beds were given by the journalists. Who were the “slaves of Ceaușescu’s dementia” in the first case? This question is not and it definitely cannot be regarded as a reproach to the author of that article. At the same, it is not an exercise of imagination, because we are not in a fictional novel, this is not a counter-factual history involving “what if?”. The reality was much harsher. In some situations, soldiers shot soldiers, and civilians intervened in numerous confrontations, many of them being armed, particularly after the fall of the communist regime. And yet, who were “the brainless men hidden in the cabin of a tower crane”? Who threw explosives, apparently, a grenade, from an apartment, killing one man and wounding the other, as we’ve seen in the last case presented in the article? There is no answer and neither will it be. We will have to accept this truth and get used to it. There are some cases where justice cannot be served! And this is due to several reasons: the incompetence and lack of reaction of the authorized officials, their tendency to hide certain aspects and last but not least, the objective situation that there are no proofs or the proofs that do exist are too weak to incriminate someone...

„Fire was opened from the Mechanized Division No. 18”

One of the cases seems relatively clear. Everything happened before Ceaușescu’s dishonourable escape. On July 17th 1991, during the Trial of Timișoara, Adrian Zaharia submitted testimony before the court. Since the revolution caught him as conscript, his squad was deployed in the streets to defend “the conquests of socialism”. Here is the Court record: „On December 17th 1989, he was in formation in Libertatii Square. At about 4:30 p.m., fire was opened from the Mechanized Division No. 18. He was shot in the left shoulder and, when turning around, he was hit in the back too”². Two hypotheses derive from this testimony: 1. The bullets came from the guns of the two conscripts who opened fire, at the order of Col. Nicolae Predonescu, former chief of staff, from the small balcony of Mechanized Division No. 18. However, this aspect has already been discussed³. 2.

² *Trial of Timișoara*, vol. IX, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara” Association, 2010, page 171.

³ Details can be found out in the article *Mystification, wooden language and murderers*, in volume *Mass-media, represiune și libertate. Revoluția de la Timișoara în presa locală*,

Although unlikely, the bullets came from the gun of Constantin Joițoiu, a counterintelligence officer who, later on, has been judged (and sentenced, by the Court of First Instance) for having killed Lepa Bărbat and for having wounded Vasile Bărbat. The daughter, Ioana, was also slightly injured, sustaining nothing but a scratch. However what followed was a nightmare which goes beyond our imagination. I was tempted to say that it had been a horror film. But no, because we know that a film is purely fictional. The girl has actually lived a nightmare. She saw her mother killed and her father severely wounded. Everything that followed was like a journey to hell: nobody noticed her in the hospital and wherever she looked she saw blood, pain and dead people. At first, she and her father arrived at the Military Hospital, a healthcare facility that played a malefic role during the Revolution, because the doctors refused to offer any help to those who had been shot in or near the hospital area. The wounded father was finally taken and transported to the County Hospital. The 12 years' old girl accompanied him in an ambulance where the wounded were just stacked there: „The ambulance transported many, many wounded persons and I had to hold up one person who kept falling over my father, because I was afraid he might kill him there; my father was wounded in the belly, a bullet entered through the back and exited through his abdomen”. The nightmare lasted for endless hours. The 12 years' old girl saw the dead body of her mother; the nurses helped her to recover her mother's personal effects: jewellery, money and clothes. She spent the night in the hospital alone, without anyone taking care of her. She remembers she stayed “first in the emergency room, but I got sick because everywhere I looked I saw so many dead bodies, wounded people and blood...”. Separated from her father, she somehow managed to get to a medical office where she spent the night. In the morning, looking for her parents' clothes, she reached the morgue: „The morgue door was opened and I saw there lots of bodies! I saw people who had been shot dead, many, many dead young people”⁴.

Heroes' bodies, stolen

There are about 50 bodies still missing, according to the testimonies below. We will never know the exact number of the bodies nor where most of them disappeared. There was an exceptionally-well planned operation to

națională și internațională (Mass-media, repression and freedom, Revolution from Timișoara in the local, national and international press), Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara” Association, Gutenberg Universe Publishing House, Arad, 2010, page 25.

⁴ *Renășterea bănățeană*, no. 4, January 7, 1990.

clean off the traces and to foil any attempt of finding out the truth. It's hard to believe that justice would ever be able to clear this cobweb, to identify those who are guilty or, at least, to point out to those who are responsible for the massacre. When the night fell down the city, on December 18th 1989, the first team of death made an inventory of those who had been shot starting with the morgue and continuing with the entire County Hospital. The team's mission has not been facilitated by a forensic expert, but by Petru Ignat, associate professor and chief of the Clinic, at that moment. After the Revolution, he was the main character of several fulminating press disclosures⁵. During the Trial of Timișoara, the person who provided essential information was Nicolae Ghircoiaș, former Chief of the Institute of Criminology within the General Militia Inspectorate. In fact, he was the person who had been in charge of stealing the heroes' bodies, loading them in the refrigerating TIR and transporting them to Bucharest to be burnt. We have excerpted the following fragment from the court case: „On Monday, at about 6.00 p.m., at the order of Gen. Nuță, the defendant Ghircoiaș, together with Col. Obăgîlă, went to the County Hospital to find out the exact number of the wounded and the dead brought there. To ease their access inside the hospital, Col. Deheleanu had previously called Prof. Ignat, to make the necessary arrangements for finding out the information he wanted. At the hospital, Prof. Ignat called Dr. Novac in his office, asking her to supply the data requested by the Militia Officers”⁶. Rodica Novac was in fact the manager of the Public Health Directorate of Timis County, so.... the official superior of Petru Ignat!

The same Nicolae Ghircoiaș declared in Court that the wounds of the dead had been inflicted all over their bodies, not necessarily at the head level; this aspect seems to invalidate the theory that subsequent Mob-style executions took place inside the hospital. On the other hand, there has been confirmed the fact that the demonstrators were actually strafed and that no

⁵ The famous journalist Ioan Crăciun wrote many papers on this matter in a series of articles published in the first editions of the *Timișoara* Quotidian. The newspaper published also the disclosures made by Doctor Octavian Onisei. At a certain point, as chief editor, I answered, on May 1990 the invitation of some medical professions from the Surgery I Clinic of the County Hospital to meet in one of the surgery rooms. On other occasion, I had a long and relevant talk with the ex-wife of Professor Petru Ignat, but the data was mostly silenced. Some circumstances gave me the opportunity to closely understand the aforementioned doctor, since I had been hospitalized in the clinic he managed. He was commanding among his subordinates but he was also spreading fear. I found him arrogant and distant, although his professionalism could never be contested.

⁶ *Trial of Timișoara*, , vol. IX, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara” Association, 2010, page 35.

selective gunshots were fired solely on several protesters. The crowd was fusilladed: „As far as I could examine the bodies, some of them sustained 4 to 5 gunshot wounds, in the thorax area or in the abdomen. Very few, and I emphasize, very few of them had wounds at the level of the head. Naturally, the injuries were gunshot wounds, with blood all around them and definitely, they were not short-range gunshot wounds because no additional factors to verify such hypothesis were found[...]. They were grouped in clusters, indicating thus multiple fusillades; under no circumstances did those wounds point out to the use of normal fire weapons”⁷. This description was partly supported by Dr. Ovidiu Golea, manager of the largest hospital in the city, at that time. When he was heard during the Trial of Timișoara, he presented a classification of the gunshot wounds he had examined. The Court recorded his testimony: „Basically, the first wounded persons who were brought at the County Hospital sustained injuries at the level of both legs; after a while, the people who were brought there gunshot wounds in abdomen and head areas. Many of those who had died had wounds in the thorax and head”⁸. His testimony was supported by a different testimony given by Liliana Dohotariu, nurse at the Rescue Station of the County Hospital. She was probably one of the nurses who had taken care of tens of severe cases brought to hospital during those horrific days. She had carried so many dead or wounded persons as she lost count of them. With reference to the persons who had been murdered she declared: „Most of them sustained gunshot wounds in the head area. Almost all who died had gunshot injuries inflicted at the level of the head [...] as my colleagues said, we talked to each other, you know, most of the people seemed to had been killed before being taken to hospital. Those who had been shot in the heads ...”⁹.

Convulsions of the post-revolution mass-media

The 10th edition of the *Luptătorul Bănăţean* newspaper, published in the post-revolution version and which was to be the last edition too, appeared on Sunday, December 31st 1989. The editorial staff probably decided to take a break of few days because the new issue was announced for ... Thursday, January 4th.

The accounts on the Revolution are reduced to a column, in the lower side of the fourth page. Looking at the newspaper, we see a follow-up of the list identifying the wounded who were still in hospitals. Some names of the deceased are also mentioned: “Gabriela Tako, aged 10, died at the

⁷ *Idem*, p. 36.

⁸ *Idem*, p. 53.

⁹ *Memorial 1989*, Scientific and information bulletin, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara” Association, no. 2/2007, page 60.

Infants' Hospital. At the same hospital, while attending several children who had been injured, Elena Nicoară, aged 32, nurse at the Clinic of Pediatrics No. I, was killed by a criminal bullet". The case of Gabriela Tako was also mentioned by other publications.

The newspaper "*Amicul public nr. 1*" tells us the tragedy of Gabriela's family¹⁰. We have already talked about this case and we pointed out that the journalist remembered incorrectly the name of the surviving sister, Danka Doboşan¹¹. It is however extremely interesting the fact that it was a much too easy to die during those days. We are not speaking about the persons who had been shot and died on the streets, but about the wounded who arrived at the hospital alive and, yet, they still died. We do not insist, as well, on the severe cases, with deep wounds inflicted in vital areas. Outrageous are the deaths of several persons with different minor injuries, or the deaths of those people whose gunshot wounds had been initially seen by eyewitnesses in completely different areas, and which occurred several days later. This seems to be the case of Gabriela, too. She died a day after she was hospitalized, due to a hip wound, as the official documents reported!

The wounded investigated while still in hospitals

The doctors from the hospitals, particularly those with executive responsibilities, obeyed the orders given by the representatives of the repression forces and cooperated with the communist officials on numerous occasions. Nevertheless, those collaborations chiefly referred to the administrative contexts, and not to those pertaining to the effective practice of their profession. December 18th 1989 came with the interrogation of the wounded. Soon, psychosis took over the entire city. The wounded were virtually petrified. Some of them fled from the sanitary units going back home or taking refuge in their relatives or acquaintances' homes. „The Securitate officers are investigating the wounded in the hospitals!” was the hottest news that spread in no time, whispered at corners of the streets. The seed of truth was going to be amplified based on the conviction that the

¹⁰ *Amicul Public nr 1*, no. 4, with unstipulated date of appearance, but the period is March 1990.

¹¹ Lucian-Vasile Szabo, *Children of Revolution: murdered, wounded, and traumatized*, in *Mass-media, represiune și libertate. Revoluția de la Timișoara în presa locală, națională și internațională* (Mass-media, repression and freedom. The Revolution from Timișoara in the local, national and international press), Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara” Association, Gutenberg Universe Publishing House, Arad, 2010, page. 12.

Securitate officers started not only to arrest the wounded, but also to kill them inside the hospitals. Given the ferocity of the repression during those days, it was quite easy to believe that such horrors had really taken place. The investigations were carried out mainly by the prosecutors. Verifiable data and circumstantial evidences show that there were indeed several cases of people who had been brought to hospital with minor injuries and who were found dead afterwards, having numerous wounds inflicted in different parts of the body, chiefly at the level of the head. Although none of those cases has been proven, this does not mean that such atrocities had not been committed. Numerous data has been collected in relation to the inquisitors of the wounded. Here is what Dr. Ovidiu Golea, former manager of the County Hospital, declared during the Trial of Timișoara: „In the same morning of December 18th 1989, at about 10.00 or 11.00 a.m., the Securitate officer assigned to monitor the hospital, Capt. Gruș Vasile, came to me and told me that several groups of prosecutors were going to come to the hospital to investigate all patients who sustained gunshot injuries”¹². Rodica Novac, former manager of the Public Health Directorate, described the manner in which that action has been planned and carried out: „Dr. Golea informed me that the officials started the investigation of the wounded from the hospital; he also mentioned that the operation had been approved by him and accepted by all heads of the wards, provided that at least one nurse or doctor attended the interrogations”¹³. Indeed, the ordeal of the inquisition had started.

In some cases, the doctors simply refused to bring the wounded to the investigators. Some of the patients were declared too badly wounded as to face the interrogation and others were given sedatives. Dr. Francisc Băranyi, anesthesiologist at the Municipal Hospital (currently known as “Clinicile Noi” Hospital), gave an account on how some medical doctors succeeded to by-pass the zeal of the prosecutors: „The moment I learnt the Securitate officers were about to come, I ran like crazy to spread that news among the medical staff (and this is a very interesting fact: my entire personnel did everything I’ve told them to do and, somehow, I became the unofficial manager of the hospital)”. He knew, though, the young men in suits who came to see him were in fact Securitate officers, not prosecutors, although the confusion is now possible, because many institutions set their people in motion in Timișoara during that period. So, Dr. Băranyi instructed

¹² *Trial of Timișoara*, vol. IX, Revolution Memorial December 16-22, 1989 Timișoara, 2010, page 53.

¹³ *Idem*, p. 97.

his patients to declare that it had been nothing but a game of fate that they were exactly at the moment and in the locations where shots were being fired. There were some “reckless” persons who wanted to tell the truth, that they had attended the manifestations! Luckily, the doctor had enough time to talk to them. However, in the case of a Serbian, Dușan, with whom he could not talk to, he appealed to a simpler and more efficient solution which he describes in the same dialogue with Dr. Traian Orban, President of the Memorial of Revolution Museum: „I discretely advise Dr. Monika, by signs, to give him Diazepam. A moment later, the room is full of the Securitate officers. They are young, well-mannered but at the same time, very scared and quite impressed by the large number of the wounded. They’re going to one bed. «You?» «I don’t know what happened, I think that...» He sustained a minor injury: he had been shot in the leg. Now, there are in front of Dușan’s bed... Dușan is snoring. «Who’s this?» «He lapsed in a coma!» and they move on”¹⁴.

This episode was also depicted before the court, during the Trial of Timișoara. The details vary to a certain extent, but the essence is still unaltered. The testimony of the witness Rusu Ioan is also duly recorded: „The Securitate officers came to the hospital to interrogate the wounded; Dr. Bárányi told them that no guns are allowed in the hospital and advised them to let their weapons at the hospital’s front desk. Rusu Cristian, my youngest son, was kept away from the investigations, as he had been anaesthetized in the surgery room”¹⁵. It is thus underlined the presence of mind of several doctors and nurses who acted efficiently to protect the victims of the repression initiated by an abusive regime and not to facilitate de investigations of the so-called suspects!

The authors of the abuses, still unpunished

Unfortunately, others did not get away so easily. Although after the Trial of Timișoara which continued in Bucharest, most of the defendants were left unpunished and in the end, after the second appeal, all of them have been acquitted, the depositions given in front of the panel of judges have often revealed aspects of unspeakable tragedy as well as the spiritual purity of the defenders of freedom and the fanaticism of the slaves of the communist regime, a fanaticism that has been emphasized by everything they did to protect it. Here is another testimony given during the hearing of

¹⁴ *Memorial 1989*, Scientific and information bulletin, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara” Association no. 2/2007, page. 56.

¹⁵ *Trial of Timișoara*, vol. IX, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara” Association, 2010, pages. 111-112.

witnesses. It is the testimony of Angelica Toda who: „got shot in the leg, while walking on the street in the Modex area, in the evening of December 17th, at around 6.30-7.00 p.m. The fire came from the soldiers who were coming from Alba Iulia Street to Opera Square. She was brought to the CFR Hospital. Scared by the rumors describing the repressive actions carried out by the Securitate officers in hospitals (rumours which were in fact spread by the Security Officers- *author's note*) she fled from the hospital. On December 19th, Capt. Balint looked for her at her place of work; verbally abused and threatened, she was brought to the Securitate headquarters where she endured the ordeal of countless hours of investigation, in the presence of Teodorescu Filip...”¹⁶. Angelica Toda was a 20 years' old kindergarten teacher who wanted to avoid unnecessary complications. The fact that she was taken from her place of work is really important. The people's fear that the Securitate officers were coming to get them was justified because, as we can see, those fears came true. At the CFR Hospital, the supporters of the totalitarian regime were much more zealous: since they looked through documents (somebody must have given them access to those documents) they had the chance to identify the “insurgents” much more easily...

Directly related to what had happened during the Revolution is also the interesting article *Beyond question marks is blood!*, signed by Ildico Achimescu. This is a well-documented material dealing with several aspects concerning the puzzles of the Revolution. The main theme is focused on the bodies that had simply vanished from the morgue of the County Hospital. The article accurately identifies the exact date when the bodies were stolen: the night of December 18th to 19th. At this point of time, nobody knows what happened to them. The author advances the theory of common graves from the Cemetery of the Poores, located in Calea Lipovei Zone. The recovery of the bodies to be buried according to the Christian tradition and to have their memory was one of the burning matters at the beginning of the 90's. Within this context, Ildico Achimescu remembers the position taken by the authorities in relation to the bodies exhumed in the Cemetery of the Poores: „We have been told, and this has been also acknowledged by the official reports prepared by the coroners, that those victims could not have been a consequence of the bloody repression of the popular Revolution from Timișoara, because their death occurred at least one week prior to the events”¹⁷.

¹⁶ *Idem*, p. 117.

¹⁷ *Renașterea*, no. 1, January 4 1990.

Nevertheless, the author is skeptical about the findings of the medical authorities, particularly because, during that time, the lack of trust, mostly justified, in the institutions of the communist party was shared by the entire population of the country. The background was thus propitious to lay the bases of one of the most hallucinating press stories which heated the spirits up to paroxysm. However, the context was more than favourable to stimulate such inflammations. Moreover, the author makes reference to the strange case of Paraschiv Dominic, an alleged terrorist, who would have said that he had guarded the morgue to hide any traces that led to the theft of the bodies of those who had been killed in the Revolution. As everybody knows, the case of Paraschiv Dominic, “the terrorist”, has never been elucidated!

The journalistic investigation goes on

The disappearance of the 40 heroes' bodies from the morgue of the County Hospital of Timișoara has been elucidated later on. The theft was retraced step by step, by those who committed that macabre operation. During the Trial of Timișoara they all stated that they have had no clue on what was about to happen to the bodies, once brought to Bucharest. However, although the route of the convoy is now very clear, nobody has been definitely charged and convicted in this case. The entire responsibility was attributed to Gheorghe Diaconescu, the former Romanian assistant prosecutor, who had been present in Timișoara during those hot days. Outrageous is also the fact that he hasn't even brought to trial...

“These bodies weren't supposed to leave the morgue, and particularly, the Institute of Forensic Medicine – the External Laboratory of Timișoara” was the bitter declaration given by Prof. Dr. Traian Crișan, former manager of the Institute of Forensic Medicine of Timișoara. Before the court, he declared that he had made continuous efforts, both before and after Ceaușescu's fall, that a prosecutor be assigned to investigate the disappearance of those bodies. This idea comes out from the depositions recorded by the court: „The witness states that although the 40 bodies had been under the custody of the Institute of Forensic Medicine, they were taken without any approval, and in his opinion that action was a crime of the darkest dye. «No one, including the manager of the Health Department within the hospital (in fact, the Public Health Directorate of Timis County, *author's note*) could allow the bodies be taken without the knowledge and consent given by us, the employees of the Forensic Medicine Institute and particularly, without the approval of the District Attorney office, because we

were speaking about deaths provoked by gunshots! We are talking about murders here!»¹⁸.

No easy life for newspapers

The difficulties faced by the press of Timișoara are detailed in the pages of the *Renasterea Banateana* journal which is in fact the successor of the communist gazette *Drapelul Rosu*. The journal struggled to find a path to survive. The former managers were hardly cast out (this is another interesting aspect because at the former communist publications from other Romanian counties this thing did not happen!), but the old reflexes were still kept. In other words, “six of one and half a dozen of the other” gives the exact definition of the developments in the post-Revolution press: the affiliation to a new political power, the rejection of both the ideas which were too totalitarian and the principles which were too innovative, in accord with and on behalf of the new power, as well as the fear of complex approaches. It is no wonder that different types of reactions, even violent ones, emerged in relation to the news itself and the manner in which the information was presented. The public’s reproaches point out to the events from the hospitals, the manner in which the wounded were attended, as well as to the collaboration of the doctors and nurses with the repressive forces. It is the merit of the journalists of the *Renasterea banateana*, the single Romanian newspaper of Timiș County at that time, to have reproduced some of those interpellations in its pages. The pages also reflected the echoes of some reproaches regarding the activity of the editors, and although those echoes were sparsely recorded, fierce, even moralizing replies were given. „We are waiting for evidences! We receive telephone calls at the editorial office, we are even stopped on the streets and asked: «Why don’t you write down about the doctors, who, inside the hospitals or in the Ambulance vehicles or in other places, opened fire on the wounded or the unarmed?»». It is certain that during those tragic moments, the predominant majority of the doctors proved abnegation and heroism; nevertheless, we do not exclude the possibility that, under the immaculate robe of this noble profession, some criminal intents could have hidden. But, thee, dear honourable readers, these statements demand reliable, indisputable proofs. If you do have certain information, please notify the military district attorney; this way you do your patriotic duty.”¹⁹

¹⁸ *Trial of Timișoara*, vol. IX, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara” Association, 2010, pages. 55-56.

¹⁹ *Renasterea bănăţeană*, no. 4, January 7, 1990.

The proofs are to come several months later and only few doctors are to be incriminated. The news turned into an avalanche of disclosures - the new gazettes, particularly the private journals, were trying to solve the puzzles, sometimes dealing with the rage of those facing serious questions - and information given to the district attorney's office (the former name of the actual Prosecutor's Office). That trend was followed by several gazettes, such as *Timișoara*, *Gazeta de Vest*, *Amicul Public nr. 1*, *Dialog liberal*, *Ecou 17*. A fundamental contribution was brought by the *Orizont* magazine which, for several months, has almost abandoned its literary-artistic profile, entering the battlefield specific to the generalist press. It was necessary because the editors of the *Orizont* magazine were young writers and important civic activists during a period when the need for accurate information was more than obvious.

I did my duty. Is this wrong?

Let's come back to the County Hospital, at the morgue and the Forensic Medicine Institute. This institution was about to be subject to a huge scandal, because it should have managed more responsibly the situation of the wounded and the dead. Unfortunately, it failed to do so and, as a matter of fact, it probably couldn't. We saw how the party leaders and the officials from different governmental institutions set up a complex plan which was strictly obeyed. Furthermore, the officials did not even bother to discuss that plan with the coroners who had not even the slightest idea on what was about to happen. The employees at the Forensic Medicine Institute were evasive and contradictory in statements even after December 22, 1989. They did this during a period when the mourning families were looking for their dead, so it is no wonder that the popular rage was rubbed on the workers there. Later on, during the Trial of Timișoara, Rodica Novac, the former manager of the Public Health Directorate of Timiș County, was to bring new details about the reaction of the head of that institution, during the Revolution days: „The head of the Forensic Laboratory, Prof. Dr. Crișan, «was extremely annoyed and angry » because the dead were effectively stolen from the morgue: «Never in the history of medicine has such horrible thing happened...»²⁰.

This was a problem that concerned the journalists of the *Renașterea banățeană* journal but the result of their work was rather contradictory. The journal published an important article. Under the main headline *Our editing*

²⁰ *Trial of Timișoara*, vol. IX, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara” Association, 2010, page 97.

office received... an ambitious title was printed: *The coroners did their job at all times!*. The context was quite complex and complicated, because there was very few information on the bodies of those who had been shot and who simply vanished, and, among the persons charged of their disappearance, were the coroners, too. The subject also approached the horrors found in the Cemetery of the Poor, where more bodies had been exhumed. The stand taken by the coroners from the Institute of Forensic Medicine of Timișoara was firm, providing the first coherent details on the victims that had vanished: „There have been prepared several forensic findings reports for the 37 citizens killed by gunshot wounds (actually 40 missing persons) and whose bodies had been stolen in the night of December 18/19 from the morgue of the County Hospital. As for those who could not be identified, we prepared police sketches (eye colour, hair colour, face shape, particulars, etc.) and the Criminal Investigation Service took their pictures and their fingerprints. All these documents were kept by us and submitted, on January 3/4, 1990, by the district attorney, Tiberiu Suciu, to the Military District Attorney's Office of Timișoara, representing thus the single clear evidences on what had happened”²¹. The doctors also stated that they could not prepare the death certificates because they did not have all necessary elements. This was the reason why they needed the films made by the Militia Criminal Investigation Service to identify all bodies.

The same press release states that the coroners have examined the bodies exhumed from the Cemetery of the Poor and have found that those people had died earlier than assumed, and therefore, those bodies were definitely not the bodies everybody was looking for. There is one note of the editing office, a pretty fervent note, written in a somehow vengeful manner which characterized the entire publication: „We have been given NO explanation related to those bodies from the Cemetery of the Poor, the bodies who have been found sewed or tied with wires, including the body of that newly born child!? We are still waiting!”. Obvious, this note comes in contradiction to both the title of the press release (the title must have been chosen by the editing office) and the sobriety of the text drawn up by the doctors. On the other hand, the information in the text contradicted the rumours spread in the entire city, as well as the desperation of the mourning families, arduously striving to find their relatives either dead or alive.

Later on, the gazette provided more details concerning the dead exhumed from the Heroes' Cemetery and the Cemetery of the Poor. The article written on one page and a half was signed by Dressler Milan

²¹ *Renașterea bănățeană*, no. 7, January 11, 1990.

Leonard, medical doctor and bachelor of juridical sciences. As we can see, the author clears the problem of the people buried in the Cemetery of the Poor about whom he says they had no connection to the Revolution. Moreover, those were homeless persons with no relatives identified. Providing pure data, with no other comments, Dr. Dressler renders in fact a service to the community, because the information he supplied is of high interest for the public.

Highly important is also the presentation of the findings from the County Hospital Morgue acknowledged in the morning of December 19th 1989: „In the morning of December 19th 1989, we found 11 (eleven) bodies which sustained deadly gunshot wounds, out of the 53 bodies which had been initially recorded and the very few which appeared probably after the theft (reference is made to the 40 heroes' bodies who were stolen and then incinerated in Bucharest). During the following days, new cases were added to those already existing, so on December 21st 1989, 25 cases with deadly gunshot wounds were listed in the morgue records; during the same day, 21 standard coffins and 4 box-type coffins were provided to us”.

A brief account of the secret burials

Some light is shed on the burning problem concerning those who had been shot. It is not enough though, because the coroners did not have the chance to investigate all the deceased prior to the theft of the 40 bodies and no information was available about how many other bodies had been brought during that night, particularly because nobody had attended those operations. However, the formalities continued in respect to the bodies that had been left behind: „We started to release the death certificates and the bodies to their families. In other words, 15 bodies were released and ten bodies remained still unidentified, despite the efforts made by many next of kin who joined us trying to help. Those 10 bodies remained here until December 27th 1989; they started to rot because the morgue fridges were full. In fact, the fridges were broken”²². This is how the decision to bury the bodies was made accomplished on December 28th 1989.

Despite the justifications of Dr. Milan Dressler, who claimed he had made all necessary efforts and arrangements to find the next of kin of those bodies, his undertakings seem at least superficial. Maybe a person who spent so many years among bodies is not so easy to impress. He could have been at least more sympathetic or more careful considering that a coup d'état had just taken place. During all this time, the mourning families went

²² *Idem*, no. 14, January 19, 1990.

from door to door at the provisional authorities; they searched all cemeteries and other suspicious places hoping they might find something about their missing ones. Even the *Luptătorul bănăţean*, as the *Renaşterea bănăţeană* journal was called at that time, published several appeals desperately asking for information. The management of the city garrison and particularly the officials with the Institute of Forensic Medicine could have sent at least a brief note to the paper but they didn't...

Another article brings up, again, the fate of martyr heroes buried on December 27th 1989 in the Heroes' Cemetery²³. Once more it is proven, beyond any doubts, that the provisional authorities of that time, mainly represented by the chiefs of the military garrison, had acted wrongfully, in secrecy, and then denied their actions. Despite the allegations according to which the heroes had been christianly buried and attended by priests, a question still remains on the fact that due public honours had never been offered. The fact that Timișoara was under fire at that time is an excuse that can be supported to a certain degree. However, there is no excuse for not having announced their families who were spending nights and days crying at the gates of those institutions. The greater the drama as those mourning families would find their dead on January 14th 1990 buried in the Heroes' Cemetery.

Awakened truth, truncated facts...

The problem of the heroes clandestinely buried in the Heroes' Cemetery, was to be revived in the following issue of the journal, in a statement signed by Maria and Virgil Boțoc, the grieving parents of a 14 year's old girl, Luminița Boțoc, shot in Calea Lipovei Zone on December 17th 1989. The statement is more than revealing, because after hopeless searches which lasted over one month, the distressed parents were to find their daughter buried in the Heroes' Cemetery: „I think that Dr. Dressler was far from acting rightly when he said, at the radio and TV, that the population has been called upon to help identifying the dead. We all know that no such announcements were made or broadcasted. I think the manager from the funerary house lies too, because there are people, among the grave diggers, who said they had refused to dig up the common grave and the authorities had to work the entire night to dig up the grave, using an excavator from G.I.G.C.L. They also said the dead were buried in the same

²³ *Timișoara*, no. 3, January 26, 1990.

night, and the priest performed the service the following day despite the fact that the bodies had already been buried”²⁴.

Everything steams up when it comes to this burial performed under these suspicious circumstances. There are some aspects which have never been cleared. Interestingly and extremely relevant is the case of Remus Tășală. He is one of the dead whose bodies were exhumed from the Heroes’ Cemetery. A statement given during the Trial of Timișoara sheds some light on several mysterious deaths. It is worth mentioning the testimony given by Herbert Hupfel, as it has been officially recorded: „The case of Remus Tășală, shot in the proximity of the Hospital of Ophthalmology; wounded in the neck, he was brought initially to the clinic and then he was taken to the County Hospital, for a surgical intervention. He died several days later and as the eyewitnesses testified, he had another gunshot wound between his eyes”²⁵.

Rule of Chaos in Public Institutions

The article *Fire was opened by mistake*, published in the *Renașterea bănățeană* journal gives us an account about the chaotic manner in which the authorities acted during those days as well as about the enormous pressure exerted on the soldiers, a month after the Revolution. Night has fallen over the city, embracing with wings of darkness the Hospital of Paediatrics. A window left opened was hit by the draft, and the noise gave everybody there the chills. A soldier went to search the area. Just to be safe, he armed the gun. Seeing that nothing was going on, he and the persons present there headed out to the cafeteria to have a coffee. The soldier took out the charger from the gun forgetting that he had armed the gun. Handling the gun, it accidentally went off and a nurse was injured²⁶.

The actions taken by the authorities were so wrong, sloppy and unprofessional that today they would perfectly match the situations set out by the Criminal Code! Outrageous was to be also the discovery made by Aurica Bontе when she found the body of her child buried in the cemetery. The young man had been buried having on him all his identity documents! Here is what she said: „It was no surprise that I found him shot to death. He was wearing just a shirt, trousers and socks, although the Institute of Forensic Medicine had described us his entire apparel (black otters, white socks, tartan trousers, white sweater, blue-jeans jacket, sparkling belt). I fell

²⁴ *Idem*, nr. 4, 28 ianuarie 1990.

²⁵ *Trial of Timișoara*, vol. IX, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara” Association, 2010, page 119.

²⁶ *Renașterea bănățeană* no. 24, January 30, 1990.

over the coffin and I kissed him. But my tears would be interrupted of what I saw: the diggers who were there found my son's identity card (series B.E. No 730650, issued on December 20, 1981, by the Militia of Timișoara City) in the right pocket of his trousers, and inside it, his employee's badge (issued by Agro-Industrial Enterprise of Timiș County under the no. 925, on September 15, 1989)". The question asked by this grieving mother via the newspaper is quite morbid: „Although he had on him all his identity documents, who determined that he was an «unidentified body» and treated him as such?”²⁷.

They risked their lives... Who were they?

It was difficult to keep any evidences or records during those days and nights of horror, when tens of dead people and hundreds of wounded citizens were being brought to hospitals. They were taken to hospitals either by Ambulance vehicles or by private cars. Both the healthcare professionals and the citizens of the city who volunteered to help the wounded, showed not only solidarity with those in pain but also a tremendous courage. All were risking their lives because bullets were flying almost everywhere. Most of the records along with the observation charts and other medical documents were to vanish in the tin air. Actually, all documents were taken by the repressive teams. Numerous persons acknowledged that during the Trial of Timișoara. The court recorded all those painful testimonies referring to the death toll and the number of the persons who had been injured and wounded, as well as the circumstances in which some of them had been hit. Several similar testimonies, in terms of the account of the events, acknowledge the fact that fire was opened on the demonstrators firstly on Sunday, December 17th 1989 in Libertatii Square. Here is the account given by Rodica Novac, head of the Public Health Directorate, at that time, and not by a simple eyewitness from the street: „On Sunday, December 17th, at about 4.45.-5.00 p.m. (most probably, at dusk), a young man with gunshot wounds in his lower limbs was brought to our Emergency Service. During the following hours, we almost failed to keep track of the number of the wounded and the dead. Over 100 wounded needed emergency interventions. The hospital was not prepared for such «avalanche» of emergencies”²⁸. The mention regarding the first wounded citizen is important, because it confirms that fire was opened by the Army exactly from the small balcony

²⁷ *Idem*, no. 28, February 6, 1990.

²⁸ *Trial of Timișoara*, vol. IX, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara” Association, 2010, page. 96.

of the Mechanized Division No. 18. This fact is also recorded in the Fight Journal of that Division, and I myself saw and felt that very moment from several meters away from the place where the bloody episode had taken place. Little had I known then that I was witnessing the onset of the men hunt, which was to last for three long days...²⁹.

The *Timișoara* newspaper dedicated three articles to what had really happened during the days of the Revolution. Actually, the articles made direct references to both the victims recorded then and the fact that almost nothing was known in relation to what really happened to them. One of those articles focused on the testimony given by the intern George Radu who declared he had taken part in the process of selection of the dead bodies, during the night of December 17th to 18th. He confirmed that he saw 42 bodies: eight dead women, among whom he saw a two years' old girl, and thirty four dead men. Later on that night, all those bodies vanished and the prosecutors, the militia and the Securitate officers seized all documents and medical records prepared on that occasion³⁰. Next to that article, the newspaper published a touching account of those days, signed by Ioan Bânciu and titled: "Soțul" ["It's me...your loving husband..."]. In very few words, he tells the tragic story of his family. His beloved wife, Leontina Bânciu, had been shot on December 17th 1989, in the Decebal Bridge area, and had passed away, in her husband's arms while being taken to the County Hospital. Three minor children remained motherless. Her body was never to be found. It has been assumed that she had been taken, together with other bodies, to be burnt in „Cenușa” Crematory from Bucharest. Ioan Bânciu still doubts this matter, because the justice failed to bring unquestionable evidence. There is also a theory according to which, a second transport of the bodies had been made during that night and the ash had been thrown in the field, near Slatina.

Documents burnt by the militia officers

The manner in which some militia, Securitate and army officers understood to repress the revolutionary actions from Timișoara was translated by misguided zealous, barbarian actions performed even inside

²⁹ Details can be found out in the article *Mystification, wooden language and murderers*, presented in volume *Mass-media, represiune și libertate. Revoluția de la Timișoara în presa locală, națională și internațională (Mass-media, repression and freedom. The Revolution of Timișoara in local, national and international press)*, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara” Association, Gutenberg Universe Publishing House, Arad, 2010.

³⁰ *Timișoara*, no. 3, January 26, 1990.

the healthcare facilities. It is known the fact that the hospitals, particularly those where most of the wounded had been brought, were surrounded by the armed forces. The role of the officers and soldiers was to detain all persons who were suspected to have been attended the demonstrations and to forbid the access of their next of kin. As the bodies' seizure was arranged, the troops proved to be efficient also in stopping the access to the data and to the personnel of those institutions. Here is a record, from October 1990, published by the *Timișoara* newspaper, when the Trial of Timișoara was still ongoing in Timișoara: „Claudiu Vărcuș fell in the street, on the crosswalk, between the Cathedral and Capitol Cinema. Wounded, he was lifted and transported to the Hospital of Othopaedics. Mrs. Vărcuș, Claudiu's mother, tells us what happened to her in the morning of December 18th at the County Hospital. Those who waited information on the dead and wounded were threatened by guns. Not long after her testimony was recorded by the court, the presiding judge asks Mrs. Vărcuș to identify the individual who threatened her at the hospital. She says she saw his picture in the newspaper and that militia officer is Veverca Iosif! After a brief hesitation, the woman puts her hand on Veverca: «This is him, she says, I am sure of it!»³¹. That individual was well-known for his cruelty and some of his “heroic actions” took place in the county hospital of Timișoara city. A dramatic testimony was to be given by Ecaterina Ioana, before the court. The panel of judges recorded her brief testimony: a deposition of few sentences, which proved to be revealing in respect to what had happened at the Revolution, on the streets, in the institutions, as well as about the extreme cruelty shown by the repressive forces. Here is what the court recorded: „[...] taken by force, in the night of December 16th, from Sinaia Square and brought to the county militia, with other persons who had been arrested too. She was beaten in the yard: «I couldn't stop shivering, I was so afraid I didn't know what to do...». During the same night, at about 4.00 a.m., few women were also taken and then released: «They spread us on the streets». On Sunday, December 17th, at about 1.00 p.m., while she was in Maria Square, she was taken again by Col. Sima and brought in a corridor, under the pretext «let's see Mr. Tőkés». There, she was severely beaten, with the fists and «a tooth flew out of her mouth and since then, I cannot hear with one ear». On December 18th, at the County Hospital, where she

³¹ *Idem*, no. 110, October 4, 1990.

went to get a legal certificate for the previously endured beatings, a civilian named Veverca approached her and hit her in the abdomen with his feet”³². It is obvious that the repression forces tried to erase, as much as they could, the remnants of the crimes they brought about. They worked thoroughly with the demonstrators’ bodies, as they did with the documents, too. It is worth mentioning that the Surgery Clinic No. II of the County Hospital kept double records, as never before. Who was the person so cautious, and who proved so much courage, given the fact that the medical documents from other clinics had already been seized and destroyed? This was an act of courage, because here it is what the court recorded with reference to those documents: „The defendant, Militia Col. Ghircoiaş Nicolae, stated that, at the orders of Gen. Nuţă Constantin, he went on December 19th 1989 at Timis County Hospital, where, asking for all evidences and records regarding the persons who had died due to gunshot wounds, the hospital manager gave him 12 ledgers and registers as well as all observation charts of the patients who had been transferred from one section to another, which, without signing for their receipt, he burnt at the militia inspectorate, in the presence of Lieut. Col. Corpodeanu Ioan. He also declared that, at the same General’s order, on December 22nd, he brought all those documents to the unit crematory, where, in his presence, were burnt by Major Popovici Gelu”³³.

Ph. D. Lucian-Vasile **SZABO**

³² *Trial of Timișoara*, vol. IX, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara” Association, 2010, page 114.

³³ *Idem*, p. 280.

Mystification, wooden language and murderers
Theses Supported by the Mass-media of Timișoara Concerning Army's
Involvement

The Army opened fire but the justice refuses to investigate

The role played by the Army and the crimes committed during the Romanian Revolution and particularly those committed in Timișoara are controversial merely from the juridical point of view, because there are no doubts that the generals, the officers, the non-commissioned officers and the conscripts under the Ministry of National Defence have planned the repression, or have actively and murderously participated in trying to stop the revolutionary movement. It was no sooner than December 20th 1989 when the armed forces retreated from the streets of Timișoara and dissolved the eight combat formations installed starting with the evening of December 17th. It is true that the militaries (those under the command of the Ministry of National Defence) were part of the (repressive!) combat formations together with the Militia and Securitate officers as well as the Fire Fighting brigades or even the patriotic squads. However, the Army gave most of the troops. The streets were full of cordons of militaries dressed in khaki. There could have been (and there were!) troops belonging to the Border Guard Service, because they functioned under the Ministry of Interior. The Guard and Securitate troops, under the command of the same ministry, wore specific blue uniforms. And among them, as in the case of the Border Guard troops, there were many conscripts, although they were compulsory serving in the army.

It is also true that the population made a small distinction between the affiliations of the militaries involved in repressing the Revolution and then, in defending it, after Ceaușescu fled and abandoned power. Although the people saw them in uniforms of different colours, they knew they were regular troops, with many young men serving the national military structures, irrespective of their subordination. At the beginning of the 90s, when there have been initiated the first legal actions against those who had opened fire on the people or who had taken other measures to quash the fight for freedom, it came as a shock to find out that nobody from the Ministry of National Defence was under investigation. Several years later legal proceedings have been initiated against some high ranked officials in the army. We can remind here the trials from Cluj and Bucharest where Gen. Mihai Chițac and Victor Atanasie Stănculescu have been charged with the the crimes of the revolution and convicted later on.

The Martyr Path is not a relevant proof. Is it so?

The confusion was going to be maintained for a long time. The news broadcasted by Mediafax Agency on July 9th 2008 was of high importance. Here is the announcement: „The troops from Securitate, Militia, civilian Securitate Division and the USLA (Special Counterterrorist Unit) acted together with the militaries to quash the manifestations from Timișoara, in December 1989, according to the combat ledger submitted to the case of the Revolution of Timișoara, pending the docket of the Supreme Court”. Nothing is though said that the combat ledger belonged to the Army, more exactly, it belonged to the Mechanized Division No. 18 from Timișoara! Furthermore, that combat ledger was used by Victor Stănculescu in his defence at the trial.

Even from the beginning, the post-revolutionary press underlined the involvement of the Army in the repression. The documents point out to some areas in Timișoara which had been under the exclusive control of the officers under the Ministry of National Defence. One such example is Calea Girocului Boulevard, which subsequently became the Calea Martirilor Boulevard particularly because this is the place where the zealous officers under the Ministry of National Defence acted barbarically.

The incriminating list of the army officials involved in the repressive operations points out to Gen. Ștefan Gușe and officers Paul Vasile, Constantin Rogin, Eugen Bădălan, Dumitru Marcu. Many pages have been written about their involvement in the massacre that took place in Timișoara. The Governmental Commission set up at Timiș County level to investigate the facts closed its findings report as follows: „The fact that Lieut. Col. Rogin Constantin took full command of the two military units and ordered the quashing of the manifestations, by any means necessary, including firing on the demonstrators, results from the statements given by Maj. Paul Vasile, Maj. Marcu Dumitru, Capt. Neagu Adrian, Lieut. Maj. Cristea Mariceel, as well as from the statement given by Trandafir Sorin, former conductor and mechanic of the TAB (armoured personnel carrier) which transported Lieut.Col. Rogin Constantin. According to the testimony given by the same person, Lieut. Col. Rogin Constantin gave the order to open fire on the manifestants. In consideration of the aspects described above, we recommend the beginning of the criminal investigation of Maj. Paul Vasile and Lieut.Col. Rogin Constantin”. This is just one example of the investigating authorities which were to reach this conclusion.

The press has permanently underlined, year after year, the fact that many suspects are still at large and they are not held responsible. On the other hand, we found several suspicious stands taken by some journalists, at

least in first phase. There were some publications that have hardly managed to break the pattern of the wooden language stereotypes which were more than a common rule before the Revolution. A slight dose of mystification of truth is also infused by the pages of the *Renașterea bănețeană* journal, especially because the journalists there adopted a festive, even exalted and false tone of their discourse, despite the “hot” events that have been covered. Sometimes, this dose of falsity is also induced by the fact that things are not as the authors of those articles insisted on (and not suggested!). Significant is the 6th issue of the journal which appeared on Wednesday, January 10, 1990 which highlighted an article under an interesting headline: *O replică ce dăinuie peste timp: Armata e cu noi!* [*An Echo that Survived the Time: The Army is By Our Side!*] and the title *E liniște, vă mulțumim, ostași!* [*It's Silence Now, Thank You, Soldiers!*]. Beyond the strained, wooden language and the unjustified glorious tone, the controversy still remains, since many revolutionaries knew the Army had played a significant role in the repression. There was also the question of the enemies, because nobody proved (yet!) the existence of at least one terrorist... Too little were being written about the Revolution itself and too bombastic, distraught titles, such as: *Cu gândul (și fapta!) la campania agricolă de primăvară* [*The Spring Agricultural Campaign, in Our Thoughts (and Deeds!)*] came out in force, AGAIN!

Whom did the Army fight against?

It's now Sunday, January 14th 1990 and the 10th issue of the *Renașterea Bănățeană* journal appears on the stands. The deeply rooted trend is again followed: bombastic titles and heroic-military language. Significant is the headline *File de vitejie din zilele Revoluției* [*Pages of Heroism during the Revolution Days*] followed by the title *Armata își face datoria!* [*The Army Does Its Job!*]... where we recognise the strained discourse and the well-known wooden language. The text signed by Maj. Ion Luchian brings up no new information but bombastic expressions of ode and eulogy. Sometimes, some memorable paragraphs emerge like out of the blue: „Suddenly, from almost nowhere, a long blast breaks the blackness. The subunit enters the defence formation and starts searching the place from where fire was opened. The sound is clear, I would say that the bullet is felt in the air, but nothing can be seen. It's like we don't know who's going to be the next target! The area is now surrounded and the hidden beast feels that he or she has to give up. In these long seconds, the enemy's bullet kills our comrade, sold. Tudorel Buzea. He fell on duty, with his gun in his hand, on the barricades of the Revolution – with no hesitation to spare his blood or

his life for the people's just cause". Besides his comrades, the hero Tudorel Buzea was in that combat military formation deployed to defend the Water Plant against the terrorists. Unfortunately, in spite of that memorable phrasing ("The sound is clear, I would say that the bullet is felt in the air"), the author has no journalistic skills because he fails to cover the basic elements of the message such as the date, the place and the exact circumstances of what had happened.

By mid-January, the Army was to effectively take over the leadership of Timiș County. There was no authority capable of controlling the Army's actions. We find more details from the 9th issue of the *Renașterea banățeană* journal, published on Saturday, January 13th 1990. The journal gives an account about the population's protests against the dazzling manner in which the County Council of the National Salvation Front was set up and also about how the public offices were distributed. After the protests, Lorin Fortuna resigns from his office of President of the Front. Given this general confusion, the power is practically taken over by the Army, by its ruler, Gen. Maj. Gheorghe Popescu, the commander of Timișoara Garrison. Army representatives are being sent to all economic agents in the city to supervise the processes regarding the election of the managing boards thereof and the assignment of the representatives to the conference organized by the National Salvation Front, at the county level. The tone adopted by Gen. Popescu in the communicate addressed to population is more than similar to the tone used by an autocrat prince: „I, the commander of Timișoara Garrison, General Major Gheorghe Popescu, notify thee the following...”

The controversial figure of Nicolae Predonescu

Significant is also the behaviour of by Lieut. Col. Nicolae Predonescu during that period. He acted as deputy commander of the 18th Mechanized Division of Timișoara. Actually, he was the unofficial leader of the division because Commander Gheorghe Popescu, previously retired then re-employed, was overwhelmed by the events. Predonescu appears in some images captured in January 1990, rudely sitting on one table of the meeting rooms in the former Party County and giving instructions to the revolutionaries who were trying to set up a civil authority in the county. Predonescu is the same person who spread the news that other forces had opened fire on the population in Calea Girocului Zone. In his defence, Stănculescu was to invoke, in July 2008, a report prepared by the Ministry of National Defence, where he made a reference to this officer. We quote from Mediafax Agency: „Also, Col. Nicolae Predonescu reported that

«during the Revolution, from December 16th to December 20th 1989, the City of Timișoara has been subject to total lack of knowledge concerning the real situation, amplified by an obvious provocation from the Army, the Militia and the Securitate and accomplished by forces unknown to us, materialized in instigating groups directed to attack the people »”.

The aforementioned Combat Ledger made several other references to this effect. An episode occurred on December 17th 1989 in Libertății Square and which I witnessed was described in detail. Although I approached that event several times in my writings, the information given by that ledger comes as significant supporting evidence. According to the Combat Ledger, „a guardsman stationed at the commander’s balcony, in the presence of Lieut.Col. Predonescu, fired few bullets in the air”. Instantly, two victims fell down, so if fire had been opened in the air, no victims would have been reported... As a matter of fact, the officer wants to inoculate the thesis according to which the victims had been the result of the operations conducted by some unknown troops. In reality, the things are clear: Nicolae Predonescu instructed two conscripts (not one!) who, at his order, opened fire on the persons who were standing at that time on the sidewalk facing the officer. I myself took part in saving one person who had been shot in the hand and chest, and I saw how the militaries changed their guns’ chargers! Outrageous and unbelievable is the fact that Nicolae Predonescu was ranked as General by President Traian Băsescu...

When truth is in fact a lie...

The 12th issue of the *Renașterea banățeană* journal published on Wednesday, January 17th 1990, focuses on the following article: *The Truth about the Army*. This is actually the beginning of a long series of doubtful journalistic materials, designed to rehabilitate the public image of the army officers. The situation was quite sensitive. During the Revolution, even starting with December 16th according to some sources, but certainly on December 17th, the slogan „The Army Is By Our Side!” emerged from the crowd. After Ceaușescu’s runaway, the army forces took over the offensive against the terrorists, assuming the role of law and order enforcement authority (the militia officers as well as the Securitate officers had no longer the courage to appear on the streets, as a matter of fact, most of the Securitate officers had been arrested!). Many people believed (and still do!) that the representatives of the Army were those who opened fire on the population. This „Truth about the Army” was to be received with suspicion. At that date, no information was available about the states of unrest and confusion within that institution. Why? Simply because the Army was still

populated by brave soldiers, such as Viorel Oancea, who spoke to the crowd from the Opera balcony on the morning of December 22, before Ceaușescu's fall, and many others who refused to obey the order to open fire. On the other hand, there had been some extremely zealous officers who, according to several testimonies and documents, were considered to be the real executioners.

The truth was to be hidden by manipulation. The journalists used numerous such techniques, interlacing factual and fabricated information, covering significant aspects, using a special rhetorical tone and style directed to the reader (addressing the reader's feelings, involving the sense of patriotism and respect due to the authorities and to the „armed hand of the people”), trying even to attract compassion feelings, by making an appeal to real facts omitting though the real signification thereof. Here is an eloquent example: „Dear esteemed readers, we hereby inform you that the news referring to the caterpillar tanks which would have crushed down the people is wrong. These vehicles were just following the order to return to Garrison to defend it”. This is just another lie. The justice clearly proved what the eyewitnesses and the doctors have already known: a woman had been squashed by the armoured-plated vehicle!

Why should journalists be pulled by their ears?

Nobody can say that the author of that article had been wrongfully informed. It's out of the question. The author was lying just to save his skin, because the lines were actually written by Lieut. Colonel Constantin Zeca, former commander of the Mechanized Division of Timișoara. The text continues with numerous turns to the reader's emotional side, trying to induce the feeling of guilt to public opinion and even to spread fear: „From the discussions we had with some officers and soldiers from the military unit, we understood that when some extremists opened fire on the combat vehicles and physically abused the crews and as a consequence, several officers had been hospitalized – it is the case of Lieut. Maj. Bănicioiu Ion, First Sergeant Buță Constantin – our officers did not fight back”. Zeca has the merit to provide the names (family names only!) of the soldiers killed in line of duty: Motiga, Tudor, Galaftion, Constantinescu and Buzea.

In that article, Constantin Zeca, who subsequently became a high-ranked general, as other officers in the Romanian Army who were suspected of involvement in the repression (while other officers, especially those in the Committee of Action for Army Democratization– CADA, were to be oppressed and disbanded!), cannot help criticizing the journalists who have (already!) become uncomfortable: „It is the moment when all servants of the

free and democratic pen should prove patriotic thinking and understand that everything which is written and published must bring normality to our county and ought not generate suspicion and distrust". Nice indications!

Blunt offensives against the press

The 6th issue of the *Renașterea banățeană* journal, printed on Wednesday, January 10th 1990, emphasizes the first position taken by the journalist Harald Zimmerman. He gives an account on what had happened in Calea Girocului Zone, on the blockage of the tanks in their way to the centre of the city and on the people shot there by the Army (let's not forget that, back then, nobody had any doubts that those innocent victims had been brutally murdered by the Army). The determination of the fighters for freedom is depicted in short sentences, simple words, with no metaphorical charge: „At that moment, I saw simple people proving outstanding courage and heroism. Only fifty steps away from the firing squad, the demonstrators continued to shout „We are the people, who are you shooting at?”. A minute later, there and then, they started to frantically dance the Hora of Unity. Unfortunately, they did not live enough to finish it ...”. Harald Zimmerman's article has the merit to have made a first attempt of psychological approach of that moment. He gave up the bombastic formulas deprived of substance and revealed one of the most intimate mechanisms of motivation emerged in the action to confront the regime and the death squads: „The noise made by a tank in full speed is a psychological weapon hitting from the distance. But nobody ran away. They waited in silence until six tanks entered the trap set on Calea Girocului. Their retreat was impeded by a trolley set across the boulevard”. The author shows everyone could give simple but accurate accounts on what had happened during the Revolution. Unfortunately, this attempt did not last long!

In the Thursday's newspaper (January 18th 1990), the process of hiding out the truth under a suggestive title: *Adevărul despre armată* [*The Truth about the Army*] continues with a pitiful article signed by Lt. Col. Alexandru Șelaru. In fact, the article consists of two responses, one for a previous article, signed by Harald Zimmerman, and one to a report compiled by the Free Television of Timișoara. The officer's aplomb to clear the air is stirred up by the insistences of the television reporters: „I ask: on what grounds and based on whose objection did the reporters put us to a real indictment?”. The discussion referred to the theses according to which the demonstrators had been shot from inside the military unit on Calea Lipovei. Subsequently, the theses were confirmed and the responsible officers have been investigated and convicted. As for the attempt to take down Harald

Zimmerman's allegations, Alexandru Şelaru finds nothing else than a surprising-rhetorical question: „Who shot the population? Was it the Army?!” As the article refers to what had happened on the evening of December 17, 1989 in Calea Girocului, the answer is clear: yes! The Army did shoot the people there, and that fact has been proven later on although the murderers have never been put behind bars...

The entire article is written either in this bombastic, euphuistic style, glorifying the Army and its holy mission in the service of the people, or in a malicious, sometimes sarcastic tone. No arguments are put forth by the lieutenant colonel in his article. On the contrary, he mystifies the truth, covering his cunning intention by rather jingoistic phrases: „Dearest esteemed citizens of Timișoara, who, irrespective of your age, gender and social category have had the courage to set off the Revolution and spark the holy flame of freedom within the entire country, please allow me to insure you that the Army has always been on the people's side, in its thoughts and soul, along the entire history of the Romanian nation! Furthermore, to help developing and consolidating the democratic principles we are all longing for, the Army is and will always be on people's side, no matter what!” This sequence of empty, meaningless words comes to cover an omission acknowledged by the author himself at the beginning of the article: „I have never intended to describe the events differently, as I was far from being there when they happened...”

No lesson learnt from evacuation

For two days, on January 23rd and 24th 1990, *the Renașterea banățeană* journal was not released, its place being taken by the *Timișoara* newspaper. As the change was not enough, on Thursday, January 25th 1990, the *Renașterea banățeană* journal met again its readers and continued with the mystification of the Army's role during the Revolution. The author of the flowery and euphuistic phrasing, emphasizing fabricated truths was Col. Eng. Nicolae Opreș. Here is one of his allegations, published under the title *Zile și nopți de veghe* [Days and nights on the watch]: „Yes! The Army was, from the very first moment, on the Revolution's side!” No, it wasn't! The colonel continues and ardently speaks about the fight and heroism of the soldiers who defended freedom. The battles were dramatic: „There were days and nights when we knew nothing about cold, tiredness, and the word fear was ripped out of our mind. There were days and nights when we were fighting a better equipped, perfidious and fanatic enemy”. But, in the end ...did the brave Romanian soldier overpass the hardships and gain the final victory, didn't he?! It's useless to ask how the colonel knew “the

enemy”(the famous “terrorists”, we assume) had those qualities! Was at least one of them caught? No! So, all he did is to use a simple manipulative rhetorical question within a context dazzled by the general psychosis of that time, a psychosis which was deepened by the fact that the soldiers were so scared that they were often opening fire with no reason whatsoever. The conclusion we draw is that the Army was incapable to catch at least one terrorist in the entire country! There are, of course, a few cases when people were taken as terrorists and shot to death, but the justice could never shed light on these files.

Doubtful is also the technique approached by the author: instead of speaking on behalf of the Army, he preferred to intermingle with it, to even stand in for it and to take upon himself the Army’s unworthy aura of heroism (as we understand now, two decades later). Moreover, not only that the supposed merits of the Army were reflected in the person of the “brave” aspirant writer, the colonel, but he somehow managed to generate the reverse phenomena, because, by using the exaggerating technique, the author increased the magnitude of the actions carried out by the military corps he was representing. The exaggeration is thus prolonged by reciprocal potency, since, the more he praised the whole (the Army, in its entirety), the brighter became the image of the colonel, (a desk officer, we assume, due to his military rank and training as an engineer, since the officers ranked as majors, at the most, had been deployed on the streets).

Fawning on the General

The fact that the press could be done differently is proven by the “*Orizont*” magazine. Starting as cultural publication, it changed its directing, choosing to serve the new post-revolutionary journalism, answering thus the urgent need for accurate information. For example, the second issue of the “*Orizont*” magazine dated January 12th 1990 is somehow more cultural, engaging in the effort to recover some authors who had been held at the periphery of the literary life or who had been completely forbidden. Miodrag Milin publishes the second part of his chronology *Șapte zile care au zguduit România* [*Seven days that shook Romania*]. One passage that brings up the events occurred on December 16th, at noon, nearby the Reformed Church, catches our attention: „The Mayor (we are speaking about Moț, *narrator’s note*.) let them know that the pastor’s evacuation warrant had been cancelled, and therefore, he could remain there. The population saluted the decision. Then they all shouted: Freedom! – Freedom! As Nemeth felt, that was a double-meaning shouting: freedom for the pastor but also freedom for the people”.

Coming back to our theme, in the third page of the magazine, Antoaneta C. Iordache renders an extremely vivid interview with Lieut. Colonel Dumitru Damian and Maj. Viorel Oancea. They are depicted following the order of their ranks and offices held in their military unit. For the first time, the press brings to light precious information about the brave officer Viorel Oancea, who, in the morning of December 22nd 1989 (when Ceaușescu was still holding the power and Milea committed suicide!), was going to confirm, at least partially, that „The Army is on our side!”, speaking to the crowd from the Opera balcony, a balcony that had been occupied by the revolutionaries. Highly important are also some details concerning the matter of being a professional journalist at a time when the confusion reached its climax, the proportions were hard to be kept under the control and the people were too scared to speak freely (this is the case of certain officers whose main concern was to avoid speaking too much or being too vocal).

When the reporter warns Lieut. Col. Damian that they might have approached a too sensitive subject, the officer replies: „As far as we are concerned, this is out of the question. Anyway, we'd appreciate if we could review the interview together, before publication. Maybe you could show it to General Popescu too... (Ge, Popescu was the commander of Timișoara Garrison, at that time, *narrator's note*). The reporter answers promptly: „Why not?!” and writes down everything in the pages of the publication.

The account might be correct

The 5th issue of the “*Orizont*” magazine, published on February 2nd 1990, comes with an interesting interview conducted by Iosif Costinaș with Lieut. Col. Petre Ghinea, one of the officers in charge of defending the city against those generically referred to as “the terrorists”. As we all know, nobody doubted the presence of those fully armed covert agents decided to put an end to the Revolution. Numerous testimonies were recorded to that effect and even some “reliable” traces have been found. During that time, the *Renașterea banățeană* journal published a series of articles (many of them being signed by Army officers) where the bloody confrontation with the hostile elements was used, as we have seen from the analysis of that particular journal, to glorify the Army. The language was highly exaggerated and the facts depicted there had nothing to do with the truth. Iosif Costinaș does by no means let his interlocutor to talk nonsense, although they both believe in the existence of the terrorists. Petre Ghinea proves to be a responsible, rational and open-minded person, who does not

venture in disclosing unreliable information and taking pride of any merits, even if they do and did exist.

We render a fragment of that interview, which we consider significant not only from the perspective of what had really happened then but also in relation to the information existing at that moment about the “terrorists”: „Towards midnight, I heard some screams in the Opera Square. I instantly headed out there, driving the transporter that I controlled. As I was crossing the Alba Iulia street, where I saw people running for their lives, I got closer to the underground passage. Around the steps of the underground passage, I saw lots of young men facing down the ground. By signs, I advised them to run and somehow, I protected them. Someone opened fire on us from the Banat Museum. I could hear the bullets hitting the armoured vehicle. At the same time shots were also fired from the attics of several buildings nearby. We headed out to the museum and we turned on the transporter’s reflectors, lighting the small park nearby. Capt. Ilie Hîrța managed to see a terrorist through the telescopic sight. He fired. The terrorist fell and immediately after that, his «colleagues» smashed down our reflectors. We retreated, by-passed the museum and searched the place where that terrorist had fallen. No trace of him, but blood ... Fire was opened on us from the Central hotel. The bullets damaged our transport’s tyres...”

„We will do everything we can”... And yet, nothing

In the same magazine we find another interview signed by Iosif Costinaș. This time, the interviewee is Gen. Maj. Ioan Dan. Even from the beginning of the interview we are somehow emphatically informed that the chief assistant of the Military Prosecuting Department „had the amiability to offer us this interview in exclusivity” (the first interview from a series of dialogues which were published to inform the readers on the ample juridical investigation from Timișoara and also on the trial pending to be settled as well as on the future trials that are to follow). This interview is also an eloquent proof of the journalist’s power to get through and discuss with the people directly involved in the matters that were approached, as everybody knows that it was not an easy task to get a meeting with a general and convince him to accept an interview, given the reluctance of these high officials to make public statements!

From the interview we learn that the prosecutors had worked under difficult conditions, because “we did not know in fact where to begin”. Significant is also the answer given by Gen. Dan regarding the actions taken by the Army: „In Calea Lipovei, the military unit has not been attacked by the

manifestants (who wanted to regroup at a considerable distance from the unit's fence, to go downtown). But machine guns started to fire at them. Those who pulled the trigger were some officers who thought they would be promoted for their promptness and «abnegation». Until today, just a former political locum tenens and a former executive officer had been arrested. The investigations continue". And the investigations did continue, because those two individuals were indeed indicted several years later. But, in the end....they had been acquitted...

So the power was in the Army's hand!

The 233rd issue of the *Renasterea banăţeană* journal published a text that could be an epilogue to everything we have described here. It is an interesting article signed by Willy Golberine, reporter at *Paris Match*. In fact, it is one of the most beautiful articles that have been ever written on the Revolution of Timișoara. The article begins with a vivid recollection of the Occident's reaction in respect to what was going on in Romania at that time: „Nobody knew how the news «was leaking» from Romania. The only thing that was certain was in fact that everything was happening with the speed of light. The first set of news was broadcasted to the West even on Sunday evening, and made reference to some violent demonstrations and two deaths". However, that information could be verified only for a short period of time, because in the following days the number of victims was going to increase to 4632! The article also reveals the real mechanism that amplified and mystified the events, because: „All witnesses, except for one, remained anonymous. Most of them claimed they had accurate information from reliable sources working in the medical system". The tone is malicious and partly justified. In essence, the mystification was firstly accepted by the occidental mass media which was willing to accept any kind of dreadful news, particularly such breaking news. On the other hand, we cannot overlook those 60000 victims of the communism, since that number was also mentioned during the trial of Ceaușescu spouses. However, the most important aspect is that 117 people have died and hundreds have been injured in Timișoara. This figure, this death toll represents a morbid number. And these are not just some “fabricated” victims...

The reporter was to be disappointed when arriving in Timișoara, because he found a feasting city. And, the feast (true!) is not an appealing subject for a journalist. The group of journalists wanted to visit the Securitate headquarters but they were not allowed. They were asked to get proper approvals from those at the Opera balcony. Eventually, the journalists managed to get the approvals, but they soon found out that the

approvals were not valid, so they were guided to see the Army officials. There, another unpleasant surprise for the experimented reporter: „So the Army was in control! Not the people, as the officials were claiming!” The deception was strengthened by the visit in the Cemetery of the Poor where the foreign journalists witnessed the macabre show of unearthing the bodies. „It was perfect. We simply could not help wondering why there weren't any relatives there, mourning their loved ones. As a matter of fact, we, the 30 foreign journalists, petrified with pain, were the only ones who were witnessing something that seemed a horrifying crime. We have been trapped: we got what we were looking for. We deserved to be fooled”. But far from being a game or just a show for the Westerners, things were tragic.: „And yet, eight journalists died in December in Romania”, would conclude Willy Golberine.

Ph. D. Lucian-Vasile **SZABO**

The Truth in White Robe Is Sometimes Stained...

No Clarifications Yet for What Really Happened in the Hospitals of Timișoara

A Commission Hard to Set Up

The investigation of the crimes committed in the hospitals of Timișoara during the protest movements from 1989 has been conducted by the prosecutors appointed by the Military Prosecuting Authority, subsequently known as the Prosecutor's Office attached to the Military County Courts of Timișoara, Bucharest or Cluj Napoca, as well as by the prosecutors assigned by the Military Section of the Prosecutor's Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice. Some elements have been clarified in the course of the pre-trial investigations performed during the legal actions initiated in different cities of the country. The Trial of Timișoara, subsequently ended (the way it has been ended!) in Bucharest, was to become famous. However, most of the aspects, still unclear, have caught mass-media's attention. We are talking about a press (journals, radio or television stations) which has been set free (within some limits, though!) after the fall and execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu. Although just one year has passed since the beginning of the Trial of Timișoara (March 1990) and the press has never stopped revealing numerous controversies, the public debate was fading away, infusing at the same time, the idea that the many questions would never find their answer and the rumours of the past were turning now into solid facts, despite the fact that many of them have been officially validated! Within this context, there has been set up a commission in charge of the investigation of the events that had occurred in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989. The setting up of this commission was actually the result of the pressure exerted on the authorities by the "17 Decembrie" Association which gathered both the persons injured during the events of 89 and the grieving families. Although the commission operated as a discipline and ethical standards commission, having no authority to substitute for any other legal organisation, it was entitled to investigate the healthcare professions charged of having committed serious crimes as well as some aspects related to the activities carried out within the main healthcare facilities of the city. For example, the commission members have not limited to investigating the conduct and attitude shown by some medical doctors, registered nurses, nurses, stretcher bearers or auxiliary staff involved in providing medical services, they have also analyzed several aspects related to the theft of the

bodies from the city morgue and tried to find an answer to the ardent question: where any people shot and killed in the hospitals of Timișoara, during the events of the December 1989?.

The activity conducted by this commission has not been easy. The commission has often been bound to face up and overcome a series of obstacles, such as the fear of some members to join the meetings or the threats and direct intimidations addressed to its more vocal and active members. Its role has been contested by some people while others simply refused to appear or give statements when summoned... Nevertheless, the results are outstanding since several aspects have been clarified for good. One such aspect is of high interest for the public: none of the medical doctors and the members of the nursing staff and no employee of the hospitals have deliberately killed any person during that period. At the same time, the commission acknowledged a series of mistakes. In light of the events of December '89, the mistakes that had been made were almost impossible to be avoided given the absolutely exceptional conditions under which the healthcare professionals had to carry out their activity: avalanches of dead bodies and injured people and constant interventions of the heads of different institutions involved, such as the hospital management boards, the militia, the Securitate or even the Romanian Communist Party. According to the findings of this commission, it is also obvious that some employees at the administrative level of the healthcare facilities as well as several medical doctors and heads of clinics have deliberately collaborated with the representatives of the communist regime, and the possibility that those persons might have been members of the repressive bodies still stands. Within this context, we find extremely interesting the manner in which the interrogation of the injured persons had taken place inside the County Hospital. It is more than obvious that this operation could have not been performed without the help given by some members of the management board of the hospital.

Justifications and Refusals

The subsequent attitude of those members was completely different. Rodica Novac, former manager of the Public Health Directorate of Timis County, and Ovidiu Golea, manager of Timis County Hospital during those stormy days, agreed to appear before the commission to provide the necessary clarification. Of course, both of them tried to find relevant justifications for their actions, minimizing some attitudes that were clearly derogatory and emphasizing others that might better themselves in relation to the new regime. Dr. Petru Ignat, Associate Professor and former head of

the Surgery Clinic I within Timis County Hospital, has never given up his stand and refused any contact with the commission. There are numerous records of these aspects which indicate the actual state of facts and the difficulties faced by the commission in clarifying certain events occurred within the premises of the Surgery Clinic I of Timis County Hospital, managed, at that time, by Dr. Petru Ignat, Assoc. Prof., Ph.D. Here is a fragment excerpted from the documents prepared by the commission: “Dr. Golea Ovidiu agrees at once, stating that it will be better if he is announced one day before the meeting. We agree on this condition. Dr. Ignat requests more details on the activity of the commission and says that, in the event that his agenda is full, his assistant or the head nurse will come. He is told that SOLELY his presence is requested. After this last specification, Dr. Ignat refuses to appear before the commission, stating that he had already given a statement and consequently, there is nothing else to be declared”¹.

The Trial of Timișoara investigated just few events that were reported to have occurred in the hospitals of Timișoara during the Revolution of December 1989 because it was focused on the trial of the representatives of the repressive body. The main charge, as it was specified in the bill of indictment, was referring to connivance to genocide; nevertheless, some indictees were brought before the court being charged with aiding and abetting to genocide. One indictee was also charged with embezzlement and another indictee was charged with destroying official documents and evidences. The moment a complete and proper definition of the genocide was given, the court also ascertained several other aspects, such as the theft of the bodies belonging to the martyr heroes who had been shot during December 17th to December 18th 1989 in Timișoara by the repressive forces. The entire trial was centred on this episode as well as on identifying the circumstances that allowed the occurrence of those atrocious events to demonstrate the guilt of the indictees in relation to the charge of genocide, without paying a special attention to those who had carried out the orders to transport and incinerate the bodies at “Cenusa” Crematory in Bucharest. Although many references have been made to the “theft” or “unlawful removal” of the bodies of those who had been shot, the court has never determined whether that operation had been legal or not. Despite the fact that the operation has been included in the general plan aiming to wipe out

¹ Minutes prepared by the Commission set up to investigate the events that had taken place in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989, dated February 20th 1992.

all traces of the events occurred in Timișoara, no court decision was passed with reference to that particular matter.

Officers carrying bodies

The bodies were removed from the morgue of the County Hospital of Timișoara, although they were under the custody of the Institute of Forensic Medicine – External Forensic Medicine Laboratory of Timișoara. Moreover, no employee of the Institute of Forensic Medicine attended that operation! According to the testimonies given before the court, the operation was carried out with the assistance of Dr. Ovidiu Golea, head of the County Hospital at that time. Furthermore, he had effectively participated in that process, as emphasized in the prosecutor's indictment, which quoted the deposition given by Ion Corpodeanu, former Lt.-Col. and deputy chief of Timis County Militia: "With reference to the operation involving the removal of bodies, he declared: «Col. Ghircoiaș and Dr. Golea, who were present throughout the entire operation, pointed out the bodies which had to be loaded in the van». He also stated that, at Col. Ghircoiaș's order, the lights in that area were turned off during the entire operation of loading the bodies in the van"².

At that moment, Nicolae Ghircoiaș was the chief of the Institute of Criminal Investigation Technique within the General Inspectorate of Romanian Militia. The order to turn off the light was given to Dr. Golea who, in his turn, instructed accordingly the hospital superintendents. While, Ghircoiaș was to be initially tried and convicted, Ovidiu Golea has never appeared before the court. However, he came to one meeting of the commission set up to investigate the events occurred in the hospitals of Timișoara in December 1989. Naturally, he was legally disqualified to act as the head of the hospital and he continued to act as a medical doctor. Moreover, later on, he was to set up a successful private clinic bearing his name.

Facing the inquiries related to the removal of the bodies, Dr. Golea was to declare before the commission that he had not been aware initially of the fact that the bodies were to be taken. When speaking to Ghircoiaș, he had thought that the latter had been asking for information about two young people who had died due to an incident occurred close to the hospital, actually, nearby the Blood Centre. The same explanation was also given in respect to his involvement in the removal of the bodies which had been under the custody of the Institute of Forensic Medicine. One member of the

² *Trial of Timișoara*, vol. I, edition supervised by Miodrag Milin, "Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara" Association, 2004, p. 18.

commission, Dr. Marius Nicolcioiu, asked him directly whether he had been told that the officers arriving at the hospital during that night had actually come to pick up the bodies. Dr. Golea answered: “No. They asked for the key. When we went to the basement, I opened the padlock. Corpodeanu told me to hand him over the keys I had used. I gave them to him and he went to the morgue backdoor and opened it. He grumbled something: «There are too many, we have to clear the morgue». Then he got out and, accompanied by some officers who came out from nowhere, he left. I returned to the morgue particularly to see what Ghircoiaş was doing there. I saw other two civilians coming from the basement. Ghircoiaş was looking at the dead from the morgue. All bodies had their chest uncovered. As a matter of fact, I saw bodies which were also completely dressed and undressed. After a while, Ghircoiaş asked me about the location of the people who died in the hospital. A similar discussion I had also with Stela (Gilovan, registered nurse, author’s note) on Monday morning – all dead people had to be separated. I showed him the place where the hospital kept the bodies of the people who had died within the hospital. When Corpodeanu returned, he was accompanied by two or three persons. He was quite agitated. We were all sitting, waiting in the hospital hall. The moment I saw so many people coming, I asked permission to leave because everything started to look suspicious. He told me: «You stay here!». I leaned on a table and waited. Neither at that moment nor now have I had the faintest idea on which criteria he used when selecting the bodies”³.

Suspicious over the years

The charge brought against Ion Corpodeanu was concisely presented in the indictment prepared by the case prosecutors: “During the night of December 18th / 19th 1989, he ordered and actively participated in the operation involving the unlawful removal of 40 bodies from the morgue of Timis County Hospital. The bodies were subsequently transported to Bucharest, at the “Cenuşa” Crematory”⁴. The specification “forty bodies” picked up by the law enforcement officers drew our attention because the rumours of that time invoked 41 or even 42 bodies sent to the incinerated in Bucharest. This aspect is not fully clarified because there are some testimonies which claim that the number of the bodies loaded in that insulated tank truck would have been even higher than 42. Nevertheless, it

³ Excerpt from the statement given on April 20th 1992 before the Commission set up to investigate the events that had taken place in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989, p. 10.

⁴ *Trial from Timișoara*, vol. I, ed. cit., p. 18.

is possible that not all bodies have been actually transported to Bucharest. The statements given by the workers from the “Cenușa” Crematory were all in the same key: 40 bodies arrived at the crematory. In an article published by Timișoara newspaper, Dr. Octavian Onisei presented a testimony given by a patient, Gheorghe Butunoi, who claimed he had counted, from the window of his room, numerous “parcels” carried to the vehicle: “I was one of the people shot in the Saturday evening of December 17th 1989 and admitted to the County Hospital, in the Surgery Unit No. I, on the 3rd floor. On December 18th, at around 1:30 a.m., looking out of the window which was oriented towards the hospital morgue, I saw a refrigerated truck. A white star on its hood kept my attention. Although it was night, I managed to see the silhouette of Cap. Ciucă, who was supervising the transport of 19 bodies wrapped in sheets. After a while, the «operators» stopped and took a cigarette break. At that moment, sensing that they were being watched, they turned off the external lights of the hospital. The transport of the bodies was resumed and, as far as I remember when I reached the number 29 or so, I saw three children transported in arms, and when I counted the 35th body, I saw the body of a woman who had been cut and sewn longitudinally. They let her down and searched the body for earrings and rings. I counted until the 65th body was brought, but my leg injury was starting to hurt really bad so I returned to my bed. However, I could still hear the noise of the vehicle for one hour or so”⁵. Is it possible that those bodies be taken and disposed of (burnt) somewhere else, for example, at Slatina, since there are several testimonies which claim that such operation would have been conducted there too?

Interrogation of the wounded, inside the hospital

One of the most horrifying but yet not surprising operation, which followed the logics of both the communist regime and the state secret police, consisted in the interrogation of the injured admitted to different hospitals in Timișoara, particularly to the county hospital. It has been clarified the fact that on December 18th and December 19th 1989, a number of officials arrived at this large hospital, where almost 80% of the persons injured as a result of the cruel repression of the demonstrations occurring during those days, to question those citizens, even those who had sustained severe injuries. It is also known that the investigators came also to the City

⁵ Lucian-Vasile Szabo, *Jurnaliști, eroi, teroriști [Journalists, Heroes, Terrorists]*, Partoș Publishing House and “Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timsioara” Association, Timișoara, 2009, p. 123.

Hospital, currently known as Clinicile Noi Hospital. We have already depicted the courage proven by the healthcare professionals who managed to protect the injured and hide the fact that they had been among those who had been protesting on the streets⁶.

It is more than obvious that the interrogation of the injured, inside the hospital, represents a painful and highly sensitive episode. Technically speaking, when it comes to serious and violent disorders in the community life, not only that the law enforcement officers are entitled but have also the legal obligation to request information from the people involved in such actions to clarify the circumstances of occurrence thereof and to take the necessary measures to restore the public order. In any democratic state, the interrogation of the wounded is allowed in the hospital provided that the life and health of the person subject to investigation is not put at risk. Unfortunately, in December 1989 Romania was not a democratic state and the interrogation of the wounded was in fact the first step of a more elaborate investigation which directed all efforts of the communist regime to repress the movement which became more and more firm. Surprisingly or not, the purpose of those interrogations was not centred on finding the truth, protecting the injured and identification of those who had opened fire on the population. Specific to the totalitarian states, the investigator's modus operandi aimed at gathering as many information as possible to subsequently incriminate the persons who had been questioned, the persons who had been killed, the persons who had been arrested as well as others who had attended the protests. The incrimination was to be made in relation to the legislation in force in that dictatorial communist state whose vision of "order" meant hushing up by any means necessary. These are the reasons why most of the people who had been questioned declared that they had accidentally got in the middle of protests and implicitly, in the firezone. Indeed, most of these statements were true! Very few people had assumed, either at hospital or in the detention rooms, an active role in the events. It however became clear that the active participation and determination has brought together thousands and then tens of thousands of people in Timișoara, otherwise, we wouldn't be talking about the first free city of Romania even from December 22nd 1989!

Consequently, the cohort investigators bringing together Securitate officers, prosecutors and militia agents, intended to gather plenty of evidences to punish those who had turned against the regime and not to

⁶ Lucian-Vasile Szabo, *Heroism and Abjection in White Robe*, in *Memorial 1989*, Scientific and Information Journal, no. 1 (8)/2011.

identify and charge those who had opened fire! In light of what had happened to the patients admitted to Surgery Clinic I of the County Hospital, the entire medical system may be held liable for moral misconduct. And, under those circumstances, what causes irritation is the manner in which there has been conducted the process of questioning and not the interrogatories themselves. There are several testimonies that clearly describe the conditions under which the questioning of patients had been carried out. A. Mehringer, nurse within that Surgery Clinic, declared that only the persons with minor injuries and who were able to talk had been brought for interrogation. She also declared that the interrogation of the patients had been made based on the approval expressed by the head of the clinic, Dr. Petru Ignat, Assoc. Prof.: „All wounded persons were gathered in the large wing of the clinic. Although the interrogation began, no member of the medical staff was attending that process. Dr. Ignat asked Mrs. Kruk (she lives now in Germany) if the patients (the wounded) could be transported. The patients were taken one after another, irrespective of their injuries. Cristun was there all the time”⁷.

„They flew at me the moment I regained consciousness”

No interest in protecting the ailing patients was shown by the officials of the county hospital. The wounded, even those with serious medical conditions, found themselves facing the Securitate officers. Eloquent is the testimony given by Dan Gavra, one of the revolutionaries who had been questioned at that time. By the time he came out of anaesthesia after having his leg amputated, he had already been taken to be questioned: “The moment I regained consciousness, the dictator’s bulldogs flew at me. I was questioned by two prosecutors who assailed me with tens of questions, like what I was doing there, near Decebal bridge, where I had been shot, since I was living in the opposite part of the city, or where the crowd which I had joined was heading to if it hadn’t been stopped near the bridge area, or who our leader was ...”⁸. Dan Gavra was one of the fortunate people who had been transferred to the Clinic of Orthopaedics. In spite of the poor, almost insalubrious condition of the building where the clinic was operating and

⁷ Minutes prepared by the Commission set up to investigate the events that had taken place in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989, and dated July 10th 1991. Cristun was the name of a chief nurse of the department who supported Dr. Petru Ignat.

⁸ The testimony is written down in the heartbreaking volume *Candelă împotriva timpului [A Candle against the Time]*, authored by Titus Suciuc and Vasile Bogdan, Memorial of Revolution of 1989 Press, Timișoara, 2011, pp. 358-359.

notwithstanding the pain and discomfort which overwhelmed everybody who entered the premises, the wounded were much safer there. Moreover, despite the fact that most of the medicines and medical equipments were not available and the wounds were festering rather than healing, the care, support and attention given by the medical staff frequently compensated those deficiencies. According to other testimonies from that time, the environment within the Clinic of Orthopaedics was different, not only from the perspective of the prosecutors' inquiries: "Even before the victory, we had enjoyed a completely different treatment than the treatment usually provided at the county hospital. Nobody was questioned here. No prosecutor or Securitate officer came to our rooms and no patient was interrogated anywhere within this building"⁹.

This confusion and failure to make an accurate distinction between a prosecutor and a Securitate officer persisted over the time. Nobody will ever know exactly what state agency was represented by the persons who questioned the wounded. They were probably sent by the Securitate because the prosecutors did their best to avoid being involved in such situations. During the Revolution and long afterward, there were numerous rumours saying that the Securitate agents planned and conducted those investigations. The rumours persisted over the years and not even the military prosecutors strove to shed light on this puzzle. This aspect is also mentioned in the indictment prepared for arraignment of the defendants in the Trial of Timișoara, when the offenses committed by Sima Traian, former head of the Securitate Division in Timis County, was also described: "He also admits that he made the arrangements for both the investigation of the demonstrators who had been arrested and the questioning of the wounded admitted in hospitals"¹⁰. This is a first proof that the Securitate dealt with the investigations. However, it was not the only state agency involved because some inquiries were also conducted by militia officers and even by prosecutors. However, the prosecutors failed to make a distinct and thoroughgoing analysis of those aspects. They focused chiefly on the charge of genocide to which they added all other crimes. And this is how the different behaviour of the healthcare professionals is again emphasized. Most doctors and nurses have heroically tried to save lives and protect their patients against the pressure exerted by the representatives of the authoritarian system. Nevertheless, there were some doctors who have

⁹ Idem, p. 359.

¹⁰ *Trial from Timișoara*, vol. I, edition supervised by Miodrag Milin, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timsioara" Association, 2004, p. 15.

chosen to collaborate with the authorities, as it was the case of the patients brought to the Clinic of Surgery I from the County Hospital, where a large part of the wounded was admitted...

In 1991, Dan Gavra appeared also before the Commission set up to investigate the events that had taken place in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989, where he provided important clarifications on what had happened during those days. Although one year and a half has passed, the painful experiences were still fresh in his memory. Dan Gavra described the manner in which the medical staff had acted. According to his account, it seemed that the medical staff supported the investigators rather than helped the patients: “**Dr. Nicolcioiu**¹¹: On December 19th you were at the hospital. How did you know the prosecutors were looking for you? **Gavra**: I was taken to a different room and the two men asked me about several demonstrators, particularly about a bearded man. A lady (nurse) with a malicious smile attended our discussion. They threatened me that they were going to arrest me for I had sold my country”¹².

A separate discussion also took place in relation to the exact locations in the hospitals where the interrogatories had been conducted. For example, at Clinicile Noi, the interrogations were conducted in the wards and the investigators moved from one bed to another. Testimonies of both Dr. Băranyi Francisc¹³ and Ioan Rusu¹⁴, eyewitness, are similar in this respect. We see here a different manner of approaching the wounded compared to what happened at the county hospital. It is also true that the persons in charge of questioning the wounded from the Clinicile Noi showed a wiser self-restraint in speech and behaviour¹⁵. The sedation of patients and hindering the investigators’ efforts to find out more information on both the wounded and other demonstrators were other courageous

¹¹ Dr. Marius Nicolcioiu was the medical doctor appointed as the president of the commission set up to investigate the events that had happened in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989.

¹² Statement given before the Commission on May 8th 1991.

¹³ **Memorial 1989**, Scientific and information journal, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – December 22nd 1989 in Timișoara, no. 2/2007, p. 56.

¹⁴ *Trial of Timișoara*, vol. IX, edition supervised by Traian Orban and Gino Rado, “Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – 22nd 1989 from Timișoara” Association, 2010, pp. 111-112.

¹⁵ An account of the situation given by Lucian-Vasile Szabo in *Eroism și abjecție în halat alb [Heroism and Abjection in White Robe]*, in **Memorial 1989**, Scientific and information journal, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – December 22nd 1989 in Timișoara, no. 1 (8)/2011, p. 18.

actions acknowledged by Dr. Vladimir Fluture before the Commission ... the very same commission where he was a member:”During the events of December 1989, some clinics and hospital took a stand. In our clinic, for example, more than three thirds of the patients were under the effect of morphine”¹⁶. At the County Hospital, in the Clinic of Surgery I, there was a special ward assigned for the questioning of the wounded. Although people were talking about the wards no. 16 and 17, the data and information gathered by the commission pointed out the ward no. 19. Dr. Octavian Onisei, who worked as a doctor in that department, provided valuable information on what had happened there during those stormy days. Numerous disclosures were published as a serial in the *Timișoara* newspaper. It was the beginning of February 1990 when the information on the effects of the repression was hard to be revealed. In the very first episode of his serial of disclosures, Dr. Onisei declared that “the first information on the investigations of the wounded, inside the hospital, starts to take shape: the investigators’ improvised questioning room was set up in the wards no. 19”¹⁷.

It is worth mentioning that the personnel vested with executive responsibilities at the level of the medical system was fully aware of and furthermore, supported the investigation of the wounded in the hospitals. This aspect is clearly emphasized by the testimonies given during the Trial of Timișoara, being also recorded in the court documents. Rodica Novac, former manager of the Public Health Directorate, claimed, as we shown in the previous chapter, that Dr. Golea, former head of the County Hospital, had confirmed that the wounded had been taken to be investigated and those operations had been previously endorsed by the heads of departments. According to her statement, she had been assured that the wounded had been attended by mid-level practitioners¹⁸. However, the testimony given by Dan Gavra, quoted above, as well as the statements of other nurses and doctors, were to deny the attendance of the wounded by medical

¹⁶ Minutes prepared by the Commission set up to investigate the events that had taken place in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989, and dated November 13th 1991

¹⁷ Statement given before the Commission..., on May 8th 1991.

¹⁸ *Trial of Timișoara*, vol. IX, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th -22nd 1989 from Timișoara, 2010, p. 97. Details are given by Lucian-Vasile Szabo, *Eroism și abjecție în halat alb [Heroism and Abjection in White Robe]*, in *Memorial 1989*, Scientific and information journal, Memorial of Revolution of December 16th – December 22nd 1989 in Timișoara, no. 1 (8)/2011, p. 18.

practitioners. Those testimonies speak only about the nurses who had guarded the doors of the wards where the wounded had been questioned...

The wounded selected to be questioned

There have been doctors who took a trenchant stand both before and outside the commission, particularly when finding out that its means to reveal the crimes committed during the tumultuous days of the revolution were quite limited. One of those doctors was Dr. Octavian Onisei. Another was Dr. Ciprian Duță. He said all he had to say in a statement he made for “17 Decembrie” Association. Somehow, the information he provided leaked out to the press, disturbing numerous persons from the healthcare sector in Timișoara. He was then called to appear before the Commission to shed light on several aspects. Facing the questions asked by the members of the Commission, Dr. Ciprian Duță touched up some of the information he provided in relation to the questioning of the wounded at the County Hospital. He explained how the selection had been made and he gave a brief account on the number of the persons who had been interrogated: “They asked us to identify the patients in serious and critical condition. We said that half or even more than half were in serious and critical condition and they could not be questioned. As far as I remember, 6 or 7 had been finally interrogated”¹⁹. Subsequently, the facts proved that the persons with minor injuries had been questioned and that a special room had been assigned for that operation, as the same doctor said: “We sent a few with minor injuries. I asked one young man about the questioned they had been asking him. He told me he had declared that he had been shot when getting out from the movie theatre. Both investigators identified themselves as coming from Bucharest and asked for a room to conduct the interrogation. They also requested a list with all the persons who had sustained gunshot injuries and their current condition”²⁰.

Dr. Ciprian Duță also declared that an official notification related to the interrogations conducted inside the hospital had been filed. We must specify that the operation described above had been conducted at the Clinic of Surgery I and not to the clinic managed by Dr. Assoc. Prof. Petru Ignat. This statement is part of the document we have previously quoted: “That young man told me he had been threatened. The second day, on December 20th 1989, a notification was sent to the District Attorney’s Office, where we

¹⁹ Minutes prepared by the Commission set up to investigate the events that had taken place in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989, and dated November 13th 1991

²⁰ Idem.

expressed our strongest objections with reference to what had happened in the hospital – the interrogations”. The same document reported that the “Securitate guys” (as the persons who had conducted the interrogation of the wounded were called, author’s note) came back on the 19th and 20th of December 1989, asking for the complete list of the entire medical staff on duty from December 17th to December 18th 1989.

A tough relationship with mass-media

In 1991 and 1992, when the Commission set up to investigate the events that had taken place in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989 was still operating, I have closely supervised its activity and I have written numerous articles about the hearings. Several articles were quite hard to be published due to the limits imposed to press, at that time. On one occasion, I was allowed to attend the hearing provided that nothing discussed there be published! One of the elements upon which I insisted along the time was the clarification of the circumstances of several suspicious deaths in the hospital. There has been said more than once, and the rumours were extremely persistent and fervent both during the Revolution and afterwards, that people had been murdered in hospitals. Four or five cases were always coming back to us. At the beginning of 1991, I have published an article in the “Acum” weekly newspaper from Bucharest, managed by Stelian Tănase, where I approached the cases of Dumitru Gârjoabă, Remus Tășală, Gheorghe Cruceru or Alexandru Grama. Interesting is the fact that the Service Prosecuting Authority of Timișoara took notice of the information I provided and began an investigation of those suspicious deaths. Romeo Bălan, an honest prosecutor, has never expressed a peremptory conclusion on the fact that those men had not been murdered inside the County Hospital, nor could he reach such conclusion, because his decisions were made depending on the data recorded in the very few medical records that survived over the time. Moreover, there were no conclusive evidences to undoubtedly indicate that the unidentified victims registered in the forensic medical reports were in fact the 40 dead people claimed by the families and whose bodies had simply vanished from the morgue.

The prosecutor’s report is known as “Report on the persons who died in Timișoara during the Revolution of December 1989 and who are claimed to have been shot inside the County Hospital”. Although all cases seemed clear in the opinion expressed by the Military Prosecuting Authority, the report mentioned also several confusions, particularly those related to the “Gârjoabă” case. Nonetheless, when speaking about the suspicious death of

Remus Tășală whose body was found in the mass grave from the Heroes' Cemetery of Timișoara, the prosecutor Romeo Bălan could not disregard the evidences and admitted that, due to an additional wound that has been found later on, he could not eliminate the possibility of an execution within the hospital: "The family as well as the witnesses Hüpl, Simionescu and Lazăr Mihai declare that the victim sustained an additional gunshot injury in the right zygomatic arch area. Since that injury was not there when he was brought to the hospital, everybody assumed that Tășală has been shot again when he was in the County Hospital. The family brought a picture taken at the funeral ceremony which showed a lesion in the right zygomatic arch area but we were not able to determine whether that lesion was in fact a gunshot wound"²¹.

The subject was to be resumed after more than one year because the efforts of the Commission set up to investigate the events that had taken place in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989 were focussed chiefly on the cases of suspicious deaths. Here is what Dr. Marius Nicolcioiu declared: "nevertheless, the chain of events was somehow disturbed by new elements. For example, the "Tășală" case: wounded while he was protesting in the "700" Square, he is initially taken to the Clinic of Ophthalmology where he is given first aid then he is advised to go to the County Hospital. He leaves together with six friends. Several days later, he is found shot in the head". This is just one puzzle among many, many others which will probably remain unsolved. In the same document, the Commission emphasized the following aspects: "With reference to the "Gârjoabă" case, we acknowledge the existence of an observation chart prepared for him. It is common knowledge that the observation charts are prepared for the living patients (in our case, for the persons who have been wounded and were still alive) and not for dead bodies (...). Some people say that Gârjoabă was in the hospital on December 19th 1989 and that he saw, from his window, how the bodies were removed"²². On the other hand, his body was among the bodies that have been removed from the morgue, as it results from the data made available by the prosecutors. Nonetheless, this version was also the final official conclusion reached by the case prosecutors.

²¹ This report is listed among the documents released by the Commission set up to investigate the events that had taken place in the hospital of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989.

²² Minutes prepared by the Commission set up to investigate the events that had taken place in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989, and dated June 15th 1991.

Interesting is also the conclusion drawn by the Commission: the aspects related to what had happened in that hospital are not essentially different from those previously pointed out by mass media!

The Commission, subject to threats and intimidation...

The entire investigation of the events that had taken place in the hospitals of Timișoara during the Revolution from December 1989 faced numerous and constant obstacles. Paradoxically, the prosecutors dealt with no direct, intimidating oppositions nor did they face any threats. Indeed, rallies and demonstrations have been organized and numerous complaints and petitions have been filed but no prosecutor was intimidated or received any death threats related to their or their families' lives. It is obvious that the governmental officials had no access to essential evidences and that the truth was well hidden by any means necessary. Therefore, some people said that they had no knowledge on those events, they had not been there, they had seen or heard nothing, or that it had been too much noise or too dark or they have forgotten or they simply could not remember anything. Few have lied deliberately while others have manipulated the facts by omitting certain aspects. There was no way to convince the people involved in the repression of the protests from December 1989 to recognize their deeds, not even when confronted with undoubted evidences!

At the same time, the journalists involved in revealing the atrocious crimes and abominable acts committed in the hospitals of Timișoara, were also threatened. The methods varied, from simple threats, physical corrections and deaths under mysterious circumstances to summing up to appear before the prosecutors or even before the courts of law. These are classical and obvious methods of intimidation and some of them were applied also to the prosecution witnesses (persons injured during the Revolution, families of the dead, protesters and eyewitnesses). The intimidations also targeted the courageous doctors who were members of the Commission set up to investigate the events that had taken place in the hospitals of Timișoara in December 1989. On several occasions, Dr. Marius Nicolcioiu, president of the Commission, had to face such challenges. A fragment from the minutes prepared by the Commission is quoted hereinafter: "On Friday, April 12th 1991, early in the morning, at about 6:30 a.m., I was parking my car in front of the buildings near the hospital. Two other drivers were parking their cars and two men were heading to the buildings. When close enough, they firmly turned to me and by the time I got off the car and wanted to lock the door, one was standing in front of me, almost touching me with his left hand, and asking me to "have a talk" while

the other positioned behind me. Scared, I got in the car and waited. At that moment, two women started screaming and they left. I remember that, when getting closer to the car, they said: «White car with special plates» and when they left they told me that I would never see my car again. I started the car to park it in the hospital yard and I saw them in the ER, talking to the doorman. «What do you want from me?» I asked them. They replied that they were police officers and wanted to check my identity documents. The stretcher keepers immobilised them but soon, they let them go without informing the Police²³. As we can see, those “guys” acted conspicuously, even careless, with determination, their attack being stopped eventually by the screams of those women. Moreover, the incident took place early in the morning, at around 6:30 a.m., and this fact shows that Dr. Nicolcioiu had been previously monitored and the attackers knew his vehicle. The same minutes gave us other details: “The police officials refused to register my complaint submitted by my sister. As a matter of fact, after setting up this commission, I received several anonymous phone calls where I was cursed”. And others claimed they had been subject to intimidations as well. In their case, the intimidations consisted of artificial problems created at their places of work. As Dr. Nicolae Mocanu, member of the Commission said: “Their methods were so corrupt and dirty so that we could hardly carry out our activity. I found myself involved, with no motivation whatsoever, in two cases of malpractice discussed by the College²⁴. And this was only to harass me!”. The press, particularly the newly launched newspapers took a stand against those attempts to hinder the disclosure of the truth in relation to what had really happened in the hospitals, as well as against the intimidations which targeted the members of the Commission.

Nonetheless, in spite of the position taken by the journalists, the intimidations continued, under different forms. For example, the retirement was one of the methods used to get rid of the people too vocal or too active. At the beginning of 1992, when the Commission has just started to go deeper into those problems, Dr. Marius Nicolcioiu received an official decision by means of which he was informed that he has been discharged. Dr. Tiberiu Bratu, former manager of the County Hospital, declared: “With reference to Dr. Nicolcioiu, I personally consider, and this is my opinion,

²³ Minutes prepared by the Commission set up to investigate the events that had taken place in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989, and dated April 17th 1991.

²⁴ College of Physicians, an authority who deals with the professional offenses committed by the medical staff. Paradoxically or not, the Commission has been set up as a specialized body within the College of Physicians ...

that he should continue to work in the hospital, particularly because he is the president of the Commission vested to find out the truth about the Revolution of Timișoara”²⁵.

Later on, when some aspects began to be clarified, the pressures were to be gradually increased. Dr. Marius Nicolcioiu mentioned again the intimidations, declaring that an attempt on his life was made: “On April 12th 1991 I was subject to a physical aggression and in October I was almost run over by a truck”. He also talked about the difficulties faced by the Commission: “Initially, I did not want to become a member of this Commission but I agreed in the end. A few days after the setting up of the commission, I was invited to join a tour around Europe. I responded that I had managed to avoid coming from Bucharest in a coffin and consequently, I did not want to come from Rome in a similar way. Even from our first meetings I said that our activity would face countless obstacles and I advised everyone who was afraid to step out. I also recommended the immediate withdrawal from the commission of those who had been secrete informers or had collaborated with the Securitate.”²⁶.

Sometimes, someone’s character is all that matters...

The initial purpose of the Commission’s meeting scheduled on June 15th 1992 was related to the need to analyze an article published in the *Renășterea bănățeană* journal and authored by Dr. Vasile Ivan. He worked as a medical doctor at the Clinic of Surgery I (within the County Hospital), which was managed before and after the Revolution by the same controversial manager, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petru Ignat. We used the term “controversial” because, as we have seen, he supported the repressive forces during the Revolution. His professional merits cannot be contested nor can he be accused that he had murdered people or that he had deliberately refused to treat them. The single aspect that can be challenged is his character. His involvement is closely related to the disappearance of the medical documents and taking over certain management tasks and duties, substituting thus the responsibility of both the hospital manager and the managing board of the Public Health Directorate. He had kept permanent

²⁵ *Timișoara*, no. 18 (425), January 29th 1992.

²⁶ Minutes prepared by the Commission set up to investigate the events that had taken place in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989, and dated June 15th 1992. The reference to a potential “return in a coffin”, has its purpose because Dr. Marius Nicolcioiu has been sentenced to death by the communist regime. His image has been hardly rehabilitated and he managed to develop a successful career in the medical sector.

contact with the representatives of the communist regime and several meetings had been held in his medical office. Dr. Ivan, as disciple of the surgeon Petru Ignat, he himself a first class expert, has never managed to make a distinction between the medical doctor Petru Ignat and the person Petru Ignat, a person devoid of any moral or ethical principles, always ready to serve the dictatorial regime... On that occasion, the president of the Commission pointed out: "The initial purpose of this meeting, held today, was to give a clear answer to the article published by Dr. Ivan in the *Renașterea bănățeană* journal. In the meantime, some particular aspects have been approached and therefore, our discussions should be open. We need to broaden our discussion. The journalists should be present and everyone should write exactly what he or she has understood and what he or she feels. Numerous aspects should be clarified. The representatives of the communist regime, including without limitation to the party and the Securitate had been present to and inside the County Hospital, as they had been in any other institution or establishment. Given those circumstances, the collaboration with them had been mandatory"²⁷.

Interviewed by the Commission, one of the nurses declared that Dr. Vasile Ivan did nothing else but putting on an act and dissimulating. Indeed, the doctor was an excellent public speaker and some of his expressions and gestures might seem too pretentious. His attempts to enter the political stage, after 1992, proved to be unsuccessful. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning his bond with and loyalty to Prof. Dr. Petru Ignat as well as his unconditioned support for the latter, even after finding out about his mentor's affiliation to the totalitarian mechanism and even after learning that atrocious crimes had taken place in the Clinic of Surgery I, the place that had fostered a genuine commandment of repression. There are no clear and undoubted evidences that people had been killed in the hospital, although some deaths are still covered by mystery, as we have shown above. However, there are evidences that show a strong partnership between the authorities with regard to the disposal of any documents and records that might indicate the signs of repression. In other words, there are evidences that indicate the support given by the hospital management in relation to the removal of the bodies and the disappearance of the medical records. Initially, Dr. Ivan refused to appear before the Commission because he considered it subjective. Later on, he somehow changed his opinion and he even gave an exhaustive declaration. In the first part of his declaration, he presented a concise summary of both the events that had taken place in the

²⁷ Idem.

hospital during the Revolution and the activities in which he had been involved, emphasizing the surgical intervention he had performed. He also highlighted the professional behaviour of Dr. Petru Ignat and Dr. Ovidiu Golea, pointing out, without any explicit mentions, that both doctors had successfully discharged their duties. However, he said nothing about the persons, others than the medical staff and the patients, who had come there and nothing about the collaboration with the communist officials.

The final part of the declaration made by Dr. Ivan is more than grotesque: he resorted to manipulation, suggesting a collective blame, accusing the member of the Commission that they themselves were the beneficiary of the same system to which Petru Ignat also obeyed, that no differences should be made because everybody collaborated with the communist regime because...that was the normal thing to do! Furthermore, in his opinion, the professional performances of the members of the Commission were by far inferior to the achievements of the former head of the Clinic of Surgery I and that the Commission hindered Dr. Ignat's promotion because of their pettiness, envy and vigilantism: "Dear gentlemen appointed to analyze the events occurred during the Revolution, just bear in mind that most of you are faculty members! Do not forget that most of you had been secretaries of the branches of the Romanian Communist Party or the committees of the Romanian Communist Party and that you had been promoted to different academic positions! Please be so kind to explain the reasons or name a law based on which you are deliberately delaying the file for promotion submitted by the associate professor Dr. P. Ignat, requesting countless documents from the Military Prosecuting Authority, Civil Prosecuting Authority and God knows what other authorities you may have in mind! Now I'm asking you, dear sirs, have you all submitted such papers to your files?"²⁸

Despite of the aspects mentioned above, the Commission set up to investigate the events that had taken place in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989 has tried and it has mostly succeeded to keep the appropriate balance while conducting the investigations. As we have seen, it has not been spared by the charges of partiality and subjectivism, being accused that it would have tried to "reveal", at all costs, the "misdeeds" of certain doctors and to ruin their careers. On the other hand, there have been numerous persons who claimed that the Commission was too prudent in terms of drawing up the final

²⁸ Declaration kept in the records of the Commission set up to investigate the events that had occurred in the hospitals of Timișoara from December 16th to December 23rd 1989.

conclusions. The prudence shown by the Commission was imposed by the fact that no concrete evidences were found to actually prove and verify that some actions that had been initially declared as “real” had indeed occurred (e.g. the accusation that certain patients with gunshot wounds had been killed in the County Hospital). Although the Commission had limited possibilities of investigation, it managed to prove and clarify numerous aspects, such as the collaboration between several persons with executive responsibilities in the medical system and the representatives of the communist regime. All these aspects have been proven beyond any reasonable doubt in spite of the fact that the members of the Commission were not qualified investigators nor did they have available the specific means and legal instruments which were available to the prosecutors or the forensic officers.

Ph. D. Lucian-Vasile **SZABO**

The Foreign Secret Agents and the Revolution

During the last twenty years since the events of December 1989 in Romania, there have been countless allegations, particularly in mass-media, that foreign secret agents had been involved in the Revolution and, even more, that the Revolution itself had been set off by such foreign agents. Numerous scenarios, drawing in Soviet, Serbian, American or Hungarian covert agents were shaped. Even Nicolae Ceaușescu was more than certain that foreign agents had been involved in covert operations in Timișoara. He may have changed his opinion on December 25th 1989 when he saw the members of that peculiar “revolutionary” panel of judges. It was too late, though because he was sentenced to death and executed immediately after the sentence was ruled. Even now, after more than 20 years, there are still some voices that support this allegation.

It is good to know that until the end of Cold War, covert agents operated in almost all European embassies and definitely, Romania was not left out. As a rule, the identities of the covert agents were known by the officials in the State Security Department and consequently, they were under careful supervision. At that time, Romania was known as a country with a very strong and active counter-intelligence department.

There is no doubt that due to great political and social changes occurred in the central and east-European countries in 1989, these counter-intelligence activities were intensified on the territories of the member states to the Pact of Warsaw. However, starting from these covert counter-intelligence operations which were somehow carried out in the “natural meaning” of those times, it is tough too much to state that those agents took the people out on the streets or that they were hidden in different buildings, from where they opened fire on the people. It is hard to believe the Securitate people had no knowledge on such activities or that they even tolerated thereof.

Let's see what the high officials of the State Security Department declared during the *Trial of Timișoara*, in relation to the allegedly foreign secret agents from Romania.

Maj. Gen. Macri Emil, former chief of the Economic Counter-Intelligence Department of D.S.S (*State Security Department*):

„When I spoke about the actions carried out by the Army I forgot to mention an event which I consider important: The Army didn't need any kind of information from us. As a matter of fact, neither did they ask for it nor did we give such information, because they brought along all necessary forces

and equipments there (including the necessary means to have access to intelligence). To be more specifically, the army deployed a tactical unit within the Army Intelligence Division, in Timișoara. You may wonder how I know these things. Well, on Monday, the workers from one of the objectives we monitored, ELBA, as I recall, caught three persons they considered suspects and surrendered them to Lieut. or Capt. Ștef, a Securitate officer in charge of monitoring the factory. He then took them to the Militia Inspectorate and after completing the identification procedures he found out that all three were agents with the Army Intelligence Department (D.I.A.): an officer, a non-commissioned officer and a soldier. They had identification badges and service orders and furthermore, they were armed. I contacted Coman and I somehow admonished him that he allowed such provocations. He acknowledged that a powerful Army Intelligence Department squad was deployed in the city. He told me something about 50 agents, but I don't really know if there were 50 or 100 agents. He also asked me to somehow disregard their potential lack of experience".¹

„Nevertheless, in relation to the major issue for which we all gathered here, the identification of the instigating foreign agents, Atanasiu has never reported such data and even if we had no knowledge on this information data or similar data, I ought to have known such intelligence and such characters.”²

Col. Teodorescu Filip, former deputy of the Chief of Counter-Intelligence Department within the D.S.S. (State Security Department).

P.C.: - That's all. „Consequently, I contacted the Chief of Counter-Intelligence Service, Dragoman Romul, who, until the end of that day, after verifying, upon my express request, the accuracy of the information on the presence in the country of certain covert operatives, notified me that such information was not confirmed. He assured me that he had no knowledge to that effect.”

T.F.: - Exactly!

P.C.: - And I understood that during that entire period, you haven't...

T.F.: - We did not manage to obtain any kind of intelligence to that effect...

P.C.: - „I reiterate that during the entire period of the events from Timișoara, in spite of all our efforts, we could not get any information that

¹ *Procesul de la Timișoara (Trial of Timișoara)*, vol. I, page. 30

² *Procesul de la Timișoara (Trial of Timișoara)*, vol. I, page. 76

foreign counter-intelligence agents would have conducted covert operations designed to undermine the already weakened situation from County Timis.”³
„...Therefore I want to emphasize that, on the morning of December 18th, Macri called me, Sima, Radu Tinu, Atudoroaie, Anastasiu and Carașcă and informed us about Vlad’s order to contact the informative network to identify the root causes of the incidents that had occurred as well as the initiators thereof. Each of us, following our line of work, obeyed the order. Major Carașcă, at Macri’s express order, contacted Tudor Stănică, to investigate those that had been arrested, I also underline that the data we transmitted to Bucharest clearly pointed out that the actions were and are spontaneous and are not the outcome of any previous arrangements or are not due to the involvement of some foreign agents.”⁴

T.F.: - I have nothing to call down on me concerning my activity during those days and the events occurred in Timișoara.

P.C.: - *Focusing solely on the facts, do you think that by the entire activity you carried out here you had a certain contribution to restoring order?*

T.F.: - No, I couldn’t and I didn’t.

P.C.: - „No. Reviewing all my actions that followed the Securitate lines both in Timișoara and in the county, I consider I had no contribution in restoring the situation prescribed by the central bodies from Bucharest.”

T.F.: - And, as a matter of fact, this was not my duty.

P.C.: - „As a matter of fact, this was not my duty.” *Well, I must repeat the question: is there any record pertaining to the modern period to acknowledge the winning of a war without a well-built intelligence system?*

T.F.: - I really don’t know! And I’m not saying that just to...

P.C.: - *You hold a bachelor degree, as far as I know...*

T.F.: - Yes. Now that you brought this up, please let me divagate too: obviously, the counter-intelligence system which I have served for almost 20 years has very strict and precise tasks as well as clearly defined enemies – and, if they’re listening to me right now, they must agree, even if we haven’t effectively met until now – that these enemies are in fact the Counter-Intelligence Services: the corps and the agents of those counter-intelligence services that are acting against our country. The counter-intelligence service has not emerged now, out of the blue sky! We have inherited it ...

P.C.: - *Ok, let’s put ...*

³ *Procesul de la Timișoara (Trial of Timișoara)*, vol. I, pg. 291

⁴ *Procesul de la Timișoara (Trial of Timișoara)*, vol. I, pg. 315

T.F.: - One second, if you may...

P.C.: - *Please, please, you may continue if you want!*

T.F.: - And we did nothing else but to continue the work. Our enemies and our preoccupations are hardly related to any aspects involving social-economical and domestic affairs. We have no such tasks and neither did we or could we have. Furthermore, since we were part of the leadership of this counterintelligence service, we struggled, as much as we could, to avoid interfering in these kinds of things. Although there were many attempts for such interferences, we managed to avoid them. We succeed following our mission and directions because we had plenty of enemies, and I am not speaking now about those who are breaking storefronts, but about professional, well-trained and qualified operatives and agents, holding bachelor degrees, as you said before; we could not cope with them without having our own highly qualified professionals able to identify, document, supervise and annihilate their covert operations in Romania. Based on the expertise I acquired during the years, I express my full conviction that the events which had taken place not only in Timișoara but within the entire country, had been fully exploited. I myself would have done the same. A certain silent and respectful agreement functions among covert and counter-intelligence agents, you know...

P.C.: - *You're talking about... a certain ...etiquette.*

T.F.: - Yes, an unwritten etiquette ... an unwritten etiquette. And I am more than positive that they exploited it and they brought here everything they need, to be enough for many years to come. And, honestly speaking, I do not envy those who are to work in thus system...They will have so much work to do...⁵

Lieut. Col. Anastasiu Gabriel, former locum tenens of the Chief of Domestic Intelligence Division within the State Security Department.

A.G.: - Coming back to our main topic. I declared that the only information we had and which could be gained following this line of work and which we subsequently reported in the evening of December 18th referred to the fact that there was no data to acknowledge that foreign nationals would have participated or not or otherwise would have been involved or interested in participating or acting to destabilize the situation in the county, as well as to the fact that, due to the events that had happened particularly on the night of December 17th, most people ... or the Romanian students living in hostels asked for permission to leave. So, given this context, any possibility to gain

⁵ *Procesul de la Timișoara (Trial of Timișoara)*, vol. I, pg. 324-325

information on these aspects was practically reduced to zero. There was also no data to confirm the rumours alleging that until that day, there have been certain reports that suspicious foreign or even Romanian nationals would have illegally entered the country ... to maintain or somehow participate in the events occurred here, in Timișoara.

P.C.: - And two more are left: the border...

A.G.: - As a matter of fact, I referred to the border reports: that there were no signs of...

P.C.: - Let's continue! The other institutions and the environment...

A.G.: - Yes, as a matter of fact, you have to know that little information came from the rural environment; no special events were reported then. Obviously, the officers could not travel to the villages they were responsible for, and in their absence, I have no knowledge that the constables, who were also in charge of the Securitate operations in those villages and communes who were conducting such operations under the strict supervision of the Securitate officers, would have reported any particular events to that effect.

P.C.: - And this situation referred to the entire period.

A.G.: - Yes. I was severely criticized, perhaps severely called down by Gen. Macri who admonished us (me and the officers accompanying me) that we came from Bucharest for nothing; that we haven't been able to provide any data that could be accepted by the Department officials. In fact, I think that no other counterintelligence units from different divisions gained any information to satisfy the officials from Bucharest or to consolidate the idea that such destabilization was in fact the result of the covert operations carried out by secret agents with different foreign intelligence services. However, if working by the book, this information was impossible to be gained by any intelligence unit... I honestly do not think that any unit could have had the means or capacity to report such situation. As a matter of fact, even from Tuesday, at noon, Gen. Macri, draw our attention on the fact the he had been admonished by the Department officials for having failed to transmit the information they expected in Bucharest in relation to the events occurred in Timișoara.

P.C.: - Who was asking for such information?

A.G.: - Naturally, the officials within the State Security Department, if we take into consideration everything that had been said during the teleconference. Obviously, the information was demanded by the former government.

P.C.: - Yes. „During the entire period of December 17th to December 22nd 1989, at the level of the Domestic Intelligence Division, there have been gained accurate data and information which acknowledged that the foreign

students and other foreign nationals, as well as the Romanian villagers and former runaways did not join the street manifestations and nor did they intend to join..."

A.G.: - No such data was available...

P.C.: - „Starting with the morning of December 18th, as a consequence of the events from the preceding night, they were allowed to leave home. So they were on holiday. As at the government level there has been accredited the idea that the street demonstrations from Timișoara had been initiated, organized, supported and maintained by foreign governments, I was severely criticized by Gen. Macri to having failed to provide reliable data to be subsequently transmitted to the higher officials from the State Security Department ...”

A.G.: - Practically, we came in Timișoara for nothing (and I'm speaking about me and the officers in my unit).

P.C.: - „He admonished me that I and the five officers in the Department came in Timișoara for nothing. More exactly, we had been useless.”

A.G.: - If I may intervene, your Honour! To support my statement, I have to say that starting from Wednesday it was more than obvious that nothing pointed out to instigations or covert agents or runaways. It was all about some activities attended by workers from different fields of activity...

P.C.: - *How many people attended that demonstration? Because this is what you are talking about, isn't it?*

A.G.: - I don't know the exact number, but, from the Militia Inspectorate, I saw the columns of people and I asked my colleagues from Timișoara where those people were coming from. I learned those people were living in that area (as far I as knew, the Inspectorate was located on the Leontin Sălăjan Boulevard) including thus the UMT, the Gloves Factory, the Socks Factory. It was clear that those were properly organized columns and it was also obvious that those actions were nothing else than manifestations initiated by the population and not instigations or attempts of destabilizations made by foreign agents. Surely, we have been criticized for not being able to gain such data, but, the truth is that we could not obtain that data. Basically, I think such data has never existed.⁶

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Another interesting and relevant declaration was also given by the Chief of Sibiu County Securitate, Col. Teodor Petrică, who, during the *Trial of Nicu Ceaușescu*, declared:

⁶ *Procesul de la Timișoara (Trial of Timișoara)*, vol. I, pages. 363-365

T.P.: - Your Honour, I am pretty sure that the events from Sibiu were not accidental. The events of Sibiu were in fact a consequence of the presence of some special tactical units, here in Sibiu. I don't know who brought them, I don't know whom they belong to. Those people deployed on key point on certain buildings, because it is certain that they were, those people ...

P.C.: - „I firmly believe that the events from Sibiu were generated ...” We want your exact words! So: „...[they] were generated by the presence of some special tactical units placed in key points on certain buildings ...”

T.P.: - The buildings that surrounded the Inspectorate, the buildings from the city.

P.C.: - „...surrounding the Inspectorate, as well as from the city” Right?

T.P.: - Persons who entered our unit ...

P.C.: - „...persons who...” So they belong to those special teams, right?

T.P.: - Yes.

P.C.: - „...belonging to those special teams, they entered the premises of the General Inspectorate of Militia ...”

T.P.: - And they opened fire...

P.C.: - „...and they opened fire...”

T.P.: - ...to create panic and confusion.

P.C.: - „... to create panic and confusion..”

T.P.: - To give a reasonable reason...

P.C.: - „...To give a reasonable reason...”

T.P.: - ...for the Army of Sibiu...

P.C.: - „...for the Army of Sibiu...”

T.P.: - ...to fight back...

P.C.: - „...to fight back ...” TO what?

T.P.: - To that fire they opened.

P.C.: - „...to the fire opened by those elements.”

T.P.: - And at the same time, and I emphasize, loudly and clearly, to compromise the Securitate and Militia ...

P.C.: - „To compromise the Securitate and Militia...”

T.P.: - ...and to show that these were the bodies culpable for having created, for having murdered the victims from Sibiu.

P.C.: - „...and to create the impression that both the Securitate and Militia were guilty for the victims from Sibiu.” This is a conclusion which I inserted it word by word. Can you provide us other elements, can you try to be much clearer, and can you supply additional data, from your professional point of view, as an operative agent, in relation to the manner and the moment when

these elements arrived in Sibiu? Have you had any data of how they arrived here?

T.P.: - No, Your Honour, We had no such information on the presence of those individuals in Sibiu. To be clear, and I declare this to the best of my knowledge and belief. We had no such data, not even afterwards. Nevertheless, I found out that on Wednesday night, December 20th, a ROMBAC plane, arriving from Bucharest, landed in Sibiu. The passengers of that plane were mostly men, each of them holding just a suitcase. That plane took off from Otopeni Airport and not from Băneasa, as it was the usual procedure for a plane whose final destination was Sibiu and which should have been an A.N.24 plane. I also found out that to these 80 persons, 7 other passengers joined from Sibiu. When those 7 passengers embarked on the plane, those 70-80 men, more or less, were already sitting in their seats and waiting for the plane to take off. And, I repeat myself, each of them was holding a suitcase. I do not know what they were carrying in their suitcases. All that I can tell you now, and again, I repeat myself, are simple facts that I learned later on, but, during the second appeal, I will bring witnesses in this respect. These witnesses had those aspects recorded in their charts, in their records...

P.C.: - This aspect is more than important with reference to the situation from Sibiu, so, if you have any suggestions, they might be useful to this case too.

T.P.: - No, I can't give you any witnesses! They do exist and I know them, but I cannot nominate them now because, as far I as understood, the court is not interested in this aspect! I have been warned on this fact several times now...

P.C.: - On the contrary, please feel free to give any statements and provide any details...

T.P.: - Yes, you may verify, Your Honour, and if it is not so, surely, I have given a testimony which may probably increase the punishment of 18 years in prison I have to serve, Your Honour..

P.C.: - This is not the case...

T.P.: - It doesn't matter!

P.C.: - Not for a moment did I have any suspicion on the problem of objectivity...

T.P.: - No, I take upon myself everything that I say ...

P.C.: - I asked if you could bring more information...

T.P.: - Yes!

P.C.: - To finding out the truth!

T.P.: - To find out the truth, please verify the lists of those who came from Bucharest and you will be surprised to see that their addresses from Bucharest were fabricated!!

P.C.: - *"I have no information on the existence of those elements, prior to the events from Sibiu. However, later on, I had all elements needed to make a connection which I consider reliable and accurate."* What you do not know and, you see, this is why I say we are interested in all aspects, I invite you to bring up any element you consider valid until to the moment of your hearing, the Court insisted much on this information about that plane.

T.P.: - It seems rather simple, Your Honour. There are 7 persons who came from Sibiu.

P.C.: - *As I said, my last phrase: „...that made a connection between the elements I'm speaking about and the Rombac plane travel from the night of December 20th on Otopeni-Sibiu route, about which I have information that, besides the 7 inhabitants of Sibiu, when they got on the plane, there were approximately 70-80 men, each holding a suitcase."* It is about.....you know, a special suitcase or an ordinary one?

T.P.: - No, I can't say what type of suitcase they held. I really don't know!

P.C.: - *You are free to give any other details you may think fit, because you said, that Court could not force you to provide any information you may deem essential for your defence during the second appeal. We only invite you to give us any other information, and I guess you can see the importance of this aspect for our case. In your opinion, who is responsible for the operation that had taken place in Sibiu and which had resulted in so many casualties?*

T.P.: - Yes, Your Honour, I understood! But, with all due respect I have no other data on that Rombac plane.

P.C.: - *But you do know that that boarding list contained fictional addresses, don't you?*

T.P.: - Yes.

P.C.: - *What address, what...?*

T.P.: - I was referring to those persons,I was referring to the 78 male passengers ...

P.C.: - *„I guess that, in relation to those male passengers, the addresses from Bucharest are fictive."*

T.P.: - Your Honour, from December 22nd to December 23rd, all Security officers have been arrested at the order given by the former managing board of the UM (Military Unit) 01512. Most victims, Your Honour, if you could see a checklist drawn by the investigation commission....I don't want to make any more comments on the way it had been drawn up ...

P.C.: - *The idea is....Please, focus on the main idea!*

T.P.: - Yes, I will give you the idea. You will see that most victims appeared after the December 23rd, Your Honour, from December 23rd to December 30th. Basically, 62-64 persons..

P.C.: - „I want to stipulate that most victims were registered in Sibiu, after the date of December 22nd”

T.P.: - The same date on which, practically the Security officers were arrested.

P.C.: - „, A date on which, practically the Security officers were arrested.”

T.P.: - The logical question seems to be: who killed them? Who did they fight with? Was it the Army?⁷

*

To fill in this picture in terms of the involvement of the foreign agents in provoking the events from Timișoara and Bucharest, we have analyzed the statistic reports on the entries and exits of foreign nationals in/from Romania, from December 1st 1989 to December 14th 1989, prepared by the Department for Passports, Aliens' Records and Border Crossing Control within the Ministry of Interior of the Socialist Republic of Romania. At the same time, we compared this data with the static reports from December 1st to 14th 1988 and we emphasized below our findings:

| December 1 st to 14 th | Entries | | | Exits | | |
|---|---------|---------|------------|---------|---------|------------|
| | 1988 | 1989 | Difference | 1988 | 1989 | Difference |
| | 131.176 | 110.896 | - 20.280 | 130.230 | 110.938 | -19.329 |

Ranking by countries, in terms of entries and exits of foreign nationals⁸:

| December 15 th | Entries | | | | Exits |
|------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|----------|-------|
| | Total | Business | Transit | Personal | |
| | | | | | |

⁷ *Procesul lui Nicu Ceaușescu (Trial of Nicu Ceaușescu)*, tape no. 20, the AMR archive, Audio documentary collection no. 2.

⁸ Reports drawn up by the Department for Passports, Aliens' Records and Border Crossing Control within the Ministry of Interior of the Socialist Republic of Romania.

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------|-------------------|--------------|
| | | purposes | | interest | |
| | 10.896 | 307 | 5.887 | 4.700 | 9.076 |
| Bulgaria | 2.303 | 22 | 1.491 | 790 | 1.669 |
| Yugoslavia | 1.528 | 2 | 389 | 1.137 | 967 |
| Hungary | 1.240 | 120 | 85 | 1.035 | 998 |
| U.S.S.R. | 3.317 | 53 | 2.207 | 1.057 | 2.549 |
| December 19 th | Entries | | | | Exits |
| | Total | Business purposes | Transit | Personal interest | |
| | 4.478 | 252 | 4.226 | - | 4.802 |
| Bulgaria | 1.017 | 23 | 994 | - | 1.084 |
| Yugoslavia | 26 | 3 | 23 | - | 11 |
| Hungary | 217 | 141 | 76 | - | 422 |
| U.S.S.R. | 2.522 | 62 | 2.460 | - | 1.988 |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| December 20 th | Entries | | | | Exits |
| | Total | Business purposes | Transit | Personal interest ⁹ | |
| | 3.971 | 282 | 3.698 | - | 7.101 |
| Bulgaria | 984 | 31 | 953 | - | 983 |
| Yugoslavia | 40 | 4 | 36 | - | 137 |
| Hungary | 204 | 133 | 71 | - | 280 |
| U.S.S.R. | 2.091 | 26 | 2.065 | - | 3.978 |

Macri Emil, Teodorescu Filip and Anastasiu Gabriel arrived in Timișoara in the morning of December 17th 1989 particularly to identify the foreign agents allegedly involved in the events occurred in the city as well as to confirm the interference of certain states in the domestic affairs of Romania. Nonetheless, according to the information and data that have been gathered and analyzed and, as much as they would have wanted to prove

⁹ The column "personal interest" includes the persons who have entered the country as tourists and those who have been involved in the small-scale cross-border traffic.

those suppositions, they had failed and consequently, had had to invalidate such allegations in the reports sent to Bucharest.

The statistics compiled by the Department for Passports, Aliens' Records and Border Crossing Control within the Ministry of Interior of the Socialist Republic of Romania, point out that the number of foreign citizens who have entered the country, from December 1st to December 14th 1989, decreased by 20.280 people compared to the number afferent to the same period of the previous year.

Nevertheless, it is ancient history that "unidentified individuals" did exist and acted in different areas of the city during those tumultuous days. I will remind here just two factual examples of their involvement in the events that took place in Timișoara in 1989. Almost all storefronts from the centre of the city have been smashed on December 16th and 17th 1989. In this respect there are tens of testimonies given by the demonstrators, depicting in great details all those who have broken the store windows. They were bald-headed, robust, well-dressed young men, equipped with special truncheons, who, after smashing down the storefronts, one by one, by quick and well-practiced hits, were instantly leaving, with no attempt whatsoever to steal or break in and enter the stores they've just vandalized. Those individuals were also seen by the law enforcement officers deployed in the area, who, surprisingly or not, have taken no actions against them but against the protesters who were demonstrating against the communist regime. Another peculiar aspect reported by numerous eyewitnesses refers particularly to the days of December 17th – 19th when, amongst the military cordons deployed in the most important areas of the city, between soldiers, one could see older shabby individuals, wearing partial military uniforms, who were definitely no soldiers.

Who were those "unidentified individuals"? Why did some circles insist, even vehemently, to endorse the idea that people had been brought out into the streets by foreign secret agents? Why, even after 20 years, allegations such as "the bodies of those who had been burnt at "Cenusa" Crematory were in fact the bodies of some covert agents", are still being made? Far from attempting to find an answer to all these questions, at this point in time, I am confident that such answers do exist and eventually, they will come to light.

Gino **RADO**

The Role Played by Mass-media during the Romanian Revolution of 1989

1989 was the year of the greatest social and political changes in Central and Eastern Europe, the year when the communist regimes of the Warsaw Pact member states were falling one by one. Communication, by all channels available at that date has brought a major contribution to those changes. Starting with the means of mass communication (*i.e.* television, radio, written press) to individual communication (personally, by telephone or by mail) the informational war reached its climax in 1989.

In dealing with the communist regimes, the democratic states have engaged in a permanent battle at the mass-media level, using all means available at that time to make sure that the effects of their messages had the expected outcome. Maletzke¹, a German researcher once said that the effects of communication stand for all changes brought about by mass media, at individual and social levels, through the messages it broadcasts. This is the reason why all countries showed a major interest in this informational war. The image of Romania in was as worse as it could possibly be. The Romanian society was effectively suffocated by the dictatorial regime implemented by Ceaușescu. And one of the main goals of this regime was to back out, to manipulate and even to obstruct any type of communication. As the regime fostered by Ceaușescu became harsher and harsher, starting with the seizure and fully control of mass-media, continuing with blacking out every form of communication (mails, phone call conversations), individual surveillances and basically, the control of everything that involved or implied sending and receiving messages, irrespective of their form, and ending up with the implementation of what they called “the small cultural revolution”², in 1971, the ordinary Romanian citizen has been deprived of any chance or possibility to speak freely.

The Romanian mass media, fully controlled by the communist regime, promoted the cult of personality and the communist propaganda through messages constantly broadcasted by radio and television, and well as by the written press. Following a more comprehensive analysis

¹ The German researcher Gerhard Maletzke defined, in 1963, the notion of mass communication

² „Mica revoluție culturală” (“The Small Cultural Revolution”) was launched by Nicolae Ceausescu after his visit in 1971, in China and North Korea

of the Romanian mass-media macro-effects from 1989, we can say that we could identify here both the *agenda setting theory* as well as the *spiral of silence theory* (*Schweigerspirale*). This theory, formulated by the researcher Elisabeth Noelle Neumann³, and perfectly folded over the Romanian realities of 1989, sounds as follows: a minority group of people could take a dominant stand if their point of view is presented and supported by mass-media and if they talk about it and support it publicly, while the others, which represent in fact the majority, may have a different opinion which they prefer to keep it silent because they are afraid of either being isolated and publically sanctioned or being subject to repression. Undoubtedly, this aggressive activity carried out by the Romanian mass-media ultimately led to a generalized dissonance with the Romanian society. A significant contribution to that effect was also brought by the international mass media which, particularly by means of the several radio stations such as “Free Radio Europe”, “BBC”, “Voice of America” and „Deutsche Welle”, promoted by Noel Bernard and Vlad Georgescu, known for their exceptional comments on the cultural and political issues, showed sympathy and support for the Romanians’ opinions and expectations. These messages supported the hopes of the Romanians in relation to the forthcoming fall of the communist regime.

Even if the Romanian communist regime tried to block any kind of communication from and to outside the country, ending up in isolating the state, categorically refusing to implement the reforms required by Gorbaciov himself, who applied the *perestroika*⁴ in the Soviet Union, the Romanians managed somehow to take notice of all these major changes. The hopes have almost reached their peak when “BBC” and “Radio Free Europe” aired, on March 11th 1989⁵, the *Letter of the Six*, followed by the presentation of the great social and political changes occurred in the member states of the Warsaw Pact. The

³ Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, manager of the Demoscopic Institute of Allensbach, published the theory in an article called „Spiral of Silence: a Theory of Public Opinion”, in 1974.

⁴ *Perestroika* was the central element of the politics adopted by Mihail Gorbaciov aimed to reform the Soviet economy and society.

⁵ *Scrisoarea celor șase* (*Letter of the six*) is a document written by a former communist dignitary Gheorghe Apostol and signed by other five significant members of the Romanian Communist Party: Alexandru Bârlădeanu, Silviu Brucan, Corneliu Mănescu, Constantin Pârvulescu and Grigore Răceanu. In this letter Nicolae Ceausescu was accused for his politics which breached the final Agreement of Helsinki, the Constitution of the Romanian Socialist Republic. He was also publicly charged with using the State Security for personal interests and with his harsh economic politics which caused a severe crisis of food.

Hungarian television, particularly the „Duna” channel, broadcasted several documentaries focused chiefly on the Hungarian minority of Romania, and which were leading an important campaign to support the reformed pastor László Tőkés.

Many people wondered why the revolution started in Timișoara because everybody knew that, in that city, the standard of living was higher than in other regions of the country. One of the reasons may be the fact that the inhabitants of Timișoara were better informed, and, as a consequence, the level of expectation of the citizens of Banat was higher. Many inhabitants from Timișoara were watching the Hungarian and Serbian TV channels, and again, everybody knew that those channels had already gained more freedom and power in shaping the public opinion. On the other hand, the direct contact through the small-scale cross-border traffic at the Hungarian and the Yugoslavian border opened new horizons of expectations. We should not forget the fact that the Swabians from Banat had a closer relation with the German Federal Republic.

The protest of László Tőkés and his reformed parishioners, from December 14th and 15th 1989, against the intention of the communist authorities to evacuate the pastor, followed by the solidarity of almost the entire city gathered to support the protest, led to the onset of the revolutionary events that followed the 16th day of December 1989.

During the first days of the confrontations between the inhabitants of Timișoara and the repression forces, the Romanian officials made all efforts to reduce to silence the events from Timișoara, seeking to isolate the city from the rest of the country and ending up in closing the country's borders. Initially, the Romanian authorities denied before the foreign chancelleries the existence of a conflict in Timișoara, and the national mass-media totally ignored the events.

Due to this informational blockage caused by the Romanian authorities, the sources of information were very few and almost impossible to verify. The news broadcasted by the international mass-media in relation to the events of Timișoara was contradictory and full of false elements. Here are several headlines of the article published by the German press, describing the events of Timișoara:

„Bild”: „Bayonets against the people, 400 deaths?! Massacre in Romania.”

„Süddeutsche Zeitung“: „Reports on hundreds of deaths during the mass protests from Romania. Army Units surround the cities of Timișoara and Arad.”

„Frankfurter Rundschau“: „Eyewitnesses describe the atrocities from Romania.”

„Bild“: „Romania: blood bath, 2500 deaths. Children were shot. Secret Service burns the bodies.”

„Allgemeine Zeitung“: „The army attacks randomly and brutally. Timișoara devastated. Massacre among the unarmed population. Minorities, abused and persecuted.”

„Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung“: „Protest manifestations in several Romanian cities. Obviously, more than 1000 deaths. Reports on numerous incinerations of bodies...” „The exiled Romanian from Budapest reported, on Wednesday, that the population of Timișoara is armed and violent conflicts occurred. According to the information supplied by Taniug Agency, 2000 people would have been killed until Tuesday evening. The news agencies of DDR, AND, reported more than 3000 people killed.”

The Hungarian press agencies sent telegrams regarding the developments from Timișoara starting with December 17th 1989. Basically, the information they transmitted was pretty accurate. However, there was some data which subsequently could not be confirmed.

December 17th:

„The police spread the demonstration organized by tens of thousands of Hungarian ethnics who defended Tőkés. The manifestation turned into an anti-Ceaușescu protest. The Hungarian television announces that the Romanian border is closed. The Romanian Ambassador in Hungary refused to send a protest letter to Bucharest against the manner in which László Tőkés was treated.”

December 18th:

Budapest, 09:59 a.m.

„The Hungarian government declares that it will try to gain more detailed information on the confrontations between the demonstrators and the militia. Tens of people gathered before the Romanian Embassy to protest.”

Budapest, 02:48 p.m.

„The militia used water cannons and opened fire on the demonstrators from Timișoara. People have been arrested and wounded, but no further details are known. A West-European diplomat declares that he learned about the wounded and the arrested, but he could not confirm any deaths. Many tourists, who returned from Timișoara, declare that shootigs have been heard. Ample anti-Ceaușescu demonstrations are organized in Timișoara and Arad. The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs declares that he has no knowledge on such events. Pastor László Tőkés was arrested. Sources told us that a woman died during the confrontations.”

Budapest, 11:29 p.m.

„An eyewitness claims that the Romanian Securitate officers have killed tens of people when they opened fire on the demonstrators, on Sunday. The city is devastated, another eyewitness reports. Over 10.000 people attended the demonstrations. The spokesman says that the Ambassador of the United States of America at Bucharest will officially protest against the bloody repression of the demonstrators. The Hungarian Television announces that the cities of Timișoara, Oradea and Arad have been isolated and surrounded by the Army forces.”

Although all news channels around the world broadcasted breaking news on the latest developments from Romania, the Romanian authorities kept quiet. On the evening of December 20th 1989, Nicolae Ceaușescu came to the national television channel, where he delivered a speech declaring that foreign secret agents, helped by groups of hooligans were operating in Timișoara. In his opinion, those instigators, through their violent actions, vandalized all public institutions aiming to destabilize the political situation of the country. He also claimed that those actions had been conducted from outside the country by foreign interests which were trying to jeopardize and interfere with the Romanian sovereignty.

The Romanian mass-media started to broadcast information starting with December 22, when Ceaușescu left the building of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. The public television became famous through the broadcast of the so called *Revoluții române în direct (Romanian Revolutions live)*. During all this time, all Romanian news channels have been intoxicated with false information which, once broadcasted, fuelled the confusion created from December 22nd to December 25th 1989. During the same period, at the popular manifestations from Timișoara, the following slogan „You

deceived the population via television!” was heard for the first time in Romania.

The Romanian Revolution continued in 1990 too. On March 11th 1990, the *Proclamation of Timișoara* was first read publicly. The Romanian mass-media and particularly the self-styled „The Free Romanian Television continued the process of manipulation and disinformation. The major events from Romania were distorted, starting with the untruthful propaganda concerning the historical parties, the general strike from Timișoara, *The Proclamation of Timișoara* and the „Hooligan Manifestations” and miners’ actions of June 13th to 15th 1990. The few publications who tried to cope with the mass disinformation and manipulation led to an unequal fight for a very long time.

Communication, the main factor in building any type of society, particularly the mass media communication, with its multiple current possibilities, should be approached with maximum attention, maturity and responsibility.

Gino **RADO**

The Echo of the Romanian Revolution of 1989 and the Reaction of the Countries around the World

The Romanian Revolution of December 1989 is an important page in the national history. After more than 20 years, the Revolution continues to be subject to numerous debates and controversies. The mystery surrounding this subject hasn't been cast away yet. The associations set up to keep the memory of the Revolution of 1989 alive are making ample efforts to find out the truth and to identify and refer to justice all those who are responsible for the dead and the wounded from December 1989. For example, the activity conducted by Teodor Mărieș, President of „21 Decembrie 1989” Association, with the head office in Bucharest, is well known. He dedicated all his efforts to solve the Cases of Revolution which are still pending on different court dockets and to identify and refer to justice all those culpable of having committed genocide against the Romanian people who, in 1989, believed in victory and freedom! The slogan „Freedom is all we want!” was chanted by each and every Romanian. At first just a shy dream, it soon became an ardent goal which ultimately became true. It is well known the fact that Mr. Teodor Mărieș is still struggling to find all those who are guilty with the crimes of the Revolution. On countless occasions, he claimed that finding out the truth on the Revolution is deliberately slowed down. He paid a special attention to the Cases of the Revolution and by means of all his actions (including the well-known hunger strike) he proved to the revolutionaries that he cares about the fate of the Romanian Revolution, that he wants the truth to be found out once for all. He proved courage and solidarity with the victims of the repression from 1989.

Teodor Mărieș fights for the truth; he represents the revolutionaries since he was an active participant in the anti-communist actions during the Revolution. Due to his continuous effort, the ECHR (the European Convention on Human Rights) ordered the Public Prosecutor's Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice to communicate to the „21 Decembrie 1989” Association all Cases of Revolution which are still under investigation. The Court explained in a formal written resolution that the notion related to the detailed information of the parties concerned is in fact an obligation; consequently, the communication of any information included without limitation to copies after the documents on files.

According to the ECHR, the crimes of the revolution cannot be written off as the investigations have been deliberately slowed down and the Romanian authorities have not shown an active interest in investigating the

facts. As a consequence the name of Teodor Mărieș is connected to the actual facts revealed solely for finding out the truth.

However, a question keeps on coming over and over again: Who did open fire?

Today, some people consider that the Revolution was not a self-conscious action of all those who attended. Yet, conscious or unconscious, the people had the courage to stand before the repression forces, to chant anti-Ceaușescu slogans, such as „Down with Ceaușescu!”, „Down with the despot!”, „Freedom is all we want!”, at a moment when the Communist Party was implemented in all state structures. Thus they proved heroism and their outstanding courage deserves all our respect and appreciation. The unconsciousness is probably attributed to the group manipulations, but, it is more than certain that there were many, many people who did know exactly what they wanted. The people on the streets did know exactly the magnitude of the system they were about to fight.

The Revolution belongs to all of us, the Romanian people. The changes it brought about were felt by all social categories and classes: the fall of a dictatorial regime, the instauration of democracy which entailed rights and freedom (equality before the law, the right to vote, right to express an opinion), the political pluralism and last but not least, the capitalism (the right to private property). The victory of the Revolution and the freedom gained by the people for the people, brought back the smile on the faces of Romanians.

The Revolution has a special importance for Romania, and this aspect is highlighted by the countless public debates, the books and articles that are being published, as well as by the TV shows, the research works (diploma papers, master degrees, doctoral dissertations etc.), and the textbooks which all approach this subject.

The Revolution was also very important at the international level. During the first days after the fall of Ceaușescu, the Romanian press published numerous articles which presented the attitude and reaction of other countries in relation to what had happened in Romania. For example, the „Luptătorul bănățean” newspaper published several articles which presented the position of the Soviet Union, as well as the stand taken by other states regarding the cast out of Ceaușescu’s regime. From these articles it is clear that the world states were concerned about the fate of Romania and they paid a special attention to the new political situation in the country, offering to find reasonable solutions to reorganise the country and help the Romanian people.

I will try to present the reactions of several states regarding the situation from Romania at that moment.

USSR

Mihail Gorbaciov encouraged and supported the just fight of the Romanian people. Also a spokesman with the Soviet Union Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared, in relation to the events from Bucharest: „We have no doubts that the Romanian people will prove wisdom, and, despite the dramatic events, will act responsibly to create normal living conditions and to set up new governmental institutions”.

Bulgaria

It was delighted by the idea that Ceaușescu was removed, raising thus the problem of collaboration with Romania, and laying the basis of a sincere partnership (declared Petăr Mladenov)¹. Bulgaria officially acknowledged the National Salvation Front as the single representative and exponent of the will and interests of the Romanian people, declared the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Boiko Dimitrov².

France

The French Communist Party declared its solidarity with the Romanian people, who fought for freedom and democracy, and called the French people to participate in a solidarity campaign designed to provide humanitarian aids to Romanians. He condemned the former dictatorial regime from Romania, which is guilty of the death of thousands of people³. In France, at Paris, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Common Market decided to offer a substantial aid to Romania, and even to start a new partnership with Romania⁴. The President of the C.E.E Commission, Jacques Delors, announced, in a statement, that he wants to help Romania to modernize its economy, but firstly to satisfy the needs of its citizens. Also, he declared that the modernization of the economy assures the success of

¹ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no. 2, December 23, 1989, page 4.

² *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no. 6, December 27, 1989, p. 4.

³ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no. 5, December 26, 1989, p. 4.

⁴ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no. 2, December 23, 1989, p. 4.

both the political reforms in Romania and the shift from totalitarianism to political pluralism⁵.

Vatican

Pope John Paul II declared, in relation to the events of 1989 that “it is an extraordinary year”, expressing his satisfaction regarding the freedom gained by the Eastern Europe countries, but he condemned and regretted the violence to which the Romanian people was subjected.⁶

Portugal

The President of Portugal, Mário Soares, declared that „the entire public opinion is relieved when learning about the fall of Ceaușescu and his circle. Nobody will ever make even the slightest gesture in his favour. Ceaușescu will have the fatal destiny of dictators”. He also declared that „freedom, so often enchained, triumphs at Bucharest and in the entire country”.

Japan

The Japanese Communist Party saluted the Romanian people’s victory, who, by mass protests, provoked the fall of Ceaușescu’s regime. Also, it stated that the events from Romania proved the force of the people’s anger against a regime which had no support from the masses, whose politics contravened the democratic principles. These statements were made by means of a press release broadcasted at Tokyo, in the name of the President of the C.C Presidium, Tetzuzo Fuwa⁷.

The Japanese government condemned the brutal repression of the demonstrators in Romania. The actions of the dictatorial regime, through which the will of the Romanians, who wanted freedom and democracy, was kept down by force, meant a systematic breach of the fundamental rights of human beings⁸. The Japanese press appreciated the courage shown by the Romanians who, in spite of the fact that they had lived for many years under the oppression of Ceaușescu’s dictatorship, they kept alive their will for

⁵ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no. 9, December 30, 1989, p. 4.

⁶ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no. 5, December 26, 1989, p. 4.

⁷ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 2, December 23, 1989, p. 4.

⁸ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 3, December 24, 1989, p. 4.

reform and democratization. Ceaușescu's attempt to save his power was made through the sacrifice of a large number of human lives. The energy of the Romanian people deserves respect and Ceaușescu is guilty for the loss of so many innocent lives⁹.

China

A spokesman of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared: „China has never interfered in the Romanian domestic affairs and respects the will of the Romanian people”, referring to the setting up of the National Salvation Front¹⁰.

Poland

The Polish government, presided by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, expressed the feelings of profound regret in respect to the loss of human lives during the Revolution. Poland, through the Ministry Council, announced that it was willing to offer military support to Romania, particularly to the persons directly affected by the events occurred in December 1989¹¹.

German Democratic Republic

At Berlin, the Committee in charge of the preparation of the Extraordinary Congress of German Free Unions donated the sum of five million Deutsche Marks to the Committee of solidarity with the Romanian people, to offer support and to aid the Romanians in need¹². Under the patronage of Mayor Horst Jäger of the city din Gera from the German Democratic Republic, a citizen committee was set up to supports the inhabitants of Timișoara.¹³ The public opinion of the German Democratic Republic offered to grant material and moral support to Romania. The spokesman of the government led by Wolfgang Meyer declared that the German government acknowledges the National Salvation Front Council with which it will maintain a close contact¹⁴.

⁹ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean” no 5, December 26, 1989, p. 4.

¹⁰ *Telegrame externe (External Telegrams)*, în „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no. 6, December 27, 1989, p. 4.

¹¹ *Alături de poporul roman (Supporting the Romanian people)*, in Luptătorul Bănățean, no. 3, December 24, 1989, p. 4.

¹² *Telegrame externe (External Telegrams)*, in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no. 10, December 31, 1989, p. 4.

¹³ *Alături de poporul român*, în „Luptătorul Bănățean”, nr. 3, December 24, 1989, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 5, December 26, 1989, p. 4.

German Federal Republic

The Romanians exiled in the entire Federal Germany expressed their support and sympathy to Romania¹⁵. The President of the German Federal Republic, Richard von Weizsäcker, declared his satisfaction that 1989 marked the end of a complex period for the world evolution¹⁶.

Spain

Under the slogan “*Supporting the Romanian people*”, a campaign of solidarity with the population from Romania was organised in Madrid. This action was initiated by „Caritas”, a Spanish benefit organization¹⁷.

Denmark

All governments of the northern states officially recognized the new government of Romania. The Denmark Government made available for the Danish Red Cross and the “Popular Aid” organizations a fund of 11.000.000 kronas to help the population from Romania¹⁸.

Finland

The Finnish government expressed its hope that the situation in Romania was going to take a peaceful turn after the critical moments from December 1989, according to the statement given by the Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pertti Aasio. The Finnish Red Cross announced that it was ready to send medicines and other medical aids to Romania. The aiding fund for the Romanian victims of the communist repression was set up in Finland.

Czechoslovakia

The Czechoslovak Communist Party expressed its conviction that both the Romanians and the honest communists would manage to find a way out from the tragic situation of the country formerly ruled by the anti-popular dictatorial regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu, according to a statement given by the President of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Ladislav

¹⁵ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 4, December 25, 1989, p. 4.

¹⁶ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 5, December 26, 1989, p. 4.

¹⁷ *Telegrame externe (External Telegrams)*, în „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no. 10, December 31, 1989, p. 4.

¹⁸ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no. 9, December 30 1989, p. 4.

Adamec. The Czechoslovak communists supported the aspiration of the Romanian workers to renew the humanitarian and democratic bases of socialism¹⁹. As for the reactions of the high officials of the Czechoslovak government in relation to the fall of Ceaușescu, it is worth mentioning the reproduction of a message addressed by Slavomir Klaban, on behalf of the Coordination Committee of the Czechoslovak Social-Democracy: „The social-democracy from Czechoslovakia firmly condemns the barbarian repression initiated by the Stalinist regime of Romania. The Czechoslovak social-democracy salutes the fall of the dictator and sends its best to the Romanians who are now following the path towards the democratic society”²⁰.

Italy

The Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gianni de Michelis, declared: „By the fall of Ceaușescu’s regime, there has been removed the main cause of the bloody repression from Romania, and there has been prepared the ground for our brothers, the Romanians, to build a free and democratic future.... The solidarity of other states with a country that managed to gain its fundamental freedoms it is imperative. Italy will as such and will ask the occidental community to take upon the responsibility to this effect”. He also expressed his entire admiration for the Romanians who proved an outstanding courage, declaring at the same time his deepest regret for the numerous victims of the events of December 1989²¹.

Several other personalities of the Italian political circles (and we remind here the Minister of Foreign Affairs, his Excellency Gianni de Michelis, the National Secretary of the Christian Democratic Party, Mr. Arnaldo Forlani, and Mr. Achille Occhetto, General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party) expressed their satisfaction in relation to freedom regained by the Romanians, saying that their satisfaction was somehow shadowed by the blood shed by the Romanian people in their efforts to gain such freedom²².

¹⁹ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 2, December 23, 1989, p. 4.

²⁰ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 4, December 25, 1989, p. 4.

²¹ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 2, December 23, 1989, p. 4.

²² *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no. 3, December 24 1989, p. 4.

The United States of America

The President of the USA, George Bush, saluted the fall of Ceaușescu and announced that significant economic aids are considered to be granted to Romania if the country was to choose the democratic path for the future. Bush qualified the changes from Romania as „dramatic”. Previously, in a written statement, he asked the former government of Romania to refrain from brutally repressing the population and to put an end to the dictatorship of Ceaușescu. The spokesman of the White House, Marin Fitzwater, declared that the United States of America is supporting Romania and that „they share the joy of the Romanian people”. The White House was confident that Romania would undergo a peaceful transition and would make all efforts to adhere to the democratic principles. Moreover, the White House spoke about establishing normal relations with Romania and the grant of economic support, if Romania “was to advance on the path of democratic reforms”.

Holland

The Dutch government „acceded and engaged in supporting as much as possible, together with its partners, the complex process of changes assumed by Romania”, says a press release from Hague. In the same press release also mentioned that, by the fall of Ceaușescu and his regime, a bloody dictatorship came to an end. The Dutch government expressed, at the same time, „sympathy thoughts and feelings to those who suffered in Romania”. The Dutch Prime Minister, Ruud Lubbers, announced that, the Dutch government released 87 million Dutch guilders (44 million dollars) to assist the Eastern European countries in 1990. Until then, Poland and Hungary were the only states that benefited from the Dutch financial support, but as stipulated by the Dutch Prime Minister, the aid was going to be offered also to other Eastern European countries.

Yugoslavia

The Yugoslavian Red Cross announced that it was ready to offer support to the Romanian Red Cross, as a consequence of the dramatic events occurred on the Romania territory²³. The Unions’ Association from Yugoslavia expressed their solidarity with the outstanding courage of the Romanians, declaring, at the same time, their full support in relation to the process of democratic renewal of the Romanian society. The Yugoslavian working class expressed its compassion

²³ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 2, December 23, 1989, p. 4.

in respect to the fate of the Romanians and the innocent victims of the events of December 1989²⁴.

Greece

The communist party from Greece saluted the Revolution set off by the Romanians who had the strength to overthrow a dictatorial regime²⁵.

Great Britain

The leader of the Labourist Party from Great Britain, Neil Kinnock, declared that the fall of Ceaușescu was the most beautiful Christmas present for the Romanians, representing at the same time, triumph of freedom. He also stated: „However, nobody should ever forget the sacrifices of the Romanians, nor the terrible forces which took so many lives. For starters, everything that was in the tyrant’s hands should be immediately made available to the Romanian people.”²⁶. The British First Minister, Margaret Thatcher, eulogized the extraordinary courage of the Romanians, stating that the British people is overwhelmed with admiration and compassion in relation to the tragic events and the outstanding heroism proven by the Romanians²⁷.

Iceland

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson, expressed his satisfaction seeing that Romania decided to choose the path towards democracy²⁸.

Austria

In an official statement, the federal chancellor of Austria, Franz Vranitzky, congratulated the Romanian people, underlining that the gate of freedom was finally opened to welcome Romania. He stated that a brutal regime has collapsed, generating thus propitious conditions for a peaceful and democratic development. He also declared that December 22nd 1989 would be a historical day for the entire Europe since the last bastion of communism had fallen apart. The vice-chancellor Josef Riegler expressed his deepest regrets that

²⁴ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 9, December 30, 1989, p. 4.

²⁵ *Telegrame externe*, în „Luptătorul Bănățean”, nr. 8, December 29, 1989, p. 4.

²⁶ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 3, December 24, 1989, p. 4.

²⁷ *Telegrame externe (External Telegrams)*, in „Luptătorul Bănățean” no. 8, December 29, 1989, p. 4.

²⁸ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 4, December 25, 1989, p. 4.

the Romanian people had to pay the supreme price for gaining back its freedom. He asked all democratic forces to help reconstructing Romania²⁹.

Hungary

In relation to the latest developments in Romania, the interim President of the Hungarian Republic, Mátyás Szűrös, declared that Hungary saluted the events from Romania and the Hungarians were sympathetic with the Romanians. He underlined that Romania was the victim of a despotic dictatorship which caused tremendous distress and pain to the entire Romanian population.

Switzerland

The Swiss press circulated some information according to which Ceaușescu family had large amounts of money deposited in several bank accounts opened in Zürich but no exact numbers were given: either 400 million dollars or, according to some sources, 10 million dollars. It seemed that those funds were about to be blocked. The entire article was published under a rhetorical headline: *Could it be true?* As the title says, this information was not confirmed by the Swiss authorities.

Sweden

„The fall of Ceaușescu's regime is such wonderful news. The events from the last days proved how a popular movement can overthrow a regime, in spite of how brutal and harsh it may have been”, declared the Swedish Prime Minister, Ingvar Carlsson. All Swedish political parties saluted the fall of the Romanian dictator, according to the France-Presse³⁰. The Swedish government decided to grant 20 million kroner, representing the aid offered to Romania in medicines and food.

Norway

The Norway government acknowledged the Council of National Salvation Front as the only legitimate representative of Romania³¹.

²⁹ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 3, December 24, 1989, p. 4.

³⁰ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 3, December 24, 1989, p. 4.

³¹ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean”, no 4, December 25, 1989, p. 4.

Canada

Due to the fall of the dictatorial regime, Canada resumed the diplomatic relations with Romania. This announcement was made by the Canadian Ambassador in Bucharest.

Argentina

Argentina acknowledged the new government from Bucharest, expressing its support to the political transformations from Romania.

Columbia

The Columbian government declared that the country acknowledged the Council of National Salvation Front³².

Turkey

The Turkish government expressed its satisfaction in connection to the overthrow of Ceaușescu's regime. In an official statement, the spokesman of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that the Romanian Revolution was: „the happiest event in the history of the Romanian people”.

Tunisia

This country expressed its confidence that the Romanians would succeed in their efforts to liquidate the consequences of the regime they have cast out. In the statement given by the Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs it is specified that the people led a „peaceful and democratic” fight to chase away the communist remnants.

Uruguay

The Communist Party from Uruguay condemned the atrocities committed by Ceaușescu's regime, mentioning that socialism meant „democracy, freedom, observance of human rights and citizens' rights”³³.

Cuba

Fidel Castro, President of the State Council and Council of Ministers, authorized the immediate dispatch of an aid consisting of 22 tons of medicines, medical instruments and food for Romania.

³² *Telegrame externe (External Telegrams)*, in „Luptătorul Bănățean” no. 7, December 28, 1989, p. 4.

³³ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănățean” no. 3, December 24, 1989, p. 4.

Israel

The Israeli government was going to send material aids to Romania.

Iraq

The collective of Romanian socialists from the Sinjar-Irak Cement Factory expressed their admiration for the events in Romania, especially for the courage proven by the Romanians, stating that they are: „brave men who fought and died for justice”. They strongly stated that those heroes would never be forgotten and they would be recorded, in the Golden Book of the Romanian heroes. They also expressed their deepest sympathy and feelings for the heroes of the Romanian Revolution³⁴.

Almost all the countries in the world saluted the fall of the dictatorial regime from Romania and many stated offered humanitarian aids to Romania. Also, the Red Cross from those countries made all efforts and took all necessary steps to offer immediate help to our country. The instauration of a democratic regime in Romania opened new paths of collaboration with the world states, as well as new perspectives of internal re-organization for a proper and exhaustive development of the country. The joy of overcoming a despotic regime was shared by the entire world.

Cristina **TUDOR**

³⁴ *Ecouri la evenimentele din Romania*, (Echoes to the events from Romania) in „Luptătorul Bănăţean”, no. 4, December 25, 1989, p. 4.

**Opinions on
The Proclamation of Timișoara: a Document Dating Back
to Romanian Revolution of December 1989**

The context which led to the materialization of the “Proclamation of Timișoara” is closely related to the events of 1990, when the foundations of the so-called “original democracy” were laid. The governance of the National Salvation Front [*Frontul Salvării Naționale*] was highly contested and those who dared to take an active stand against it were subject to abuses, the mass-media was at the beck and call of the new government (no private TV companies were operating at that time), the opposition parties were constantly denigrated and minimized and all those who challenged Ion Iliescu, the “hero of the Revolution”, as the large majority of population called him, were publicly accused that they had not taken part to the Revolution or that they had not lived in the country during that last decades (“they had never eaten soy-based salami”). Furthermore, there was information that several officials from the new government had actively participated in repressing the revolution. The people had not shed their blood and tears in December 1989 just to allow the loyal servants of the socialist-communist regime take over the government (e.g. Mihai Chițac, V.A. Stănculescu). Nevertheless, the new regime, using the mass-media from Bucharest, strived to invalidate the fundamental role played by Timișoara in the onset of the Romanian Revolution (subversive formulas, such as “the revolution from December 22nd”, were frequently used), as if Ion Iliescu had been the one and only artisan of the Revolution.

Altogether, at that historical moment, the challenge of the new government in the name of the Romanian Revolution whose single representative was claimed to be the National Salvation Front, became of high importance. The “Proclamation of Timișoara” was signed on March 12th 1990, as a result of the rally organized in the centre of the city on March 11th 1990. The late writer, journalist and politician George Șerban, who was also an important member of the “Timișoara” Society, the initiator of this document, read the Proclamation from the Opera Balcony. At that moment, the Proclamation was the most important document of the entire nation with reference the events from December 1989. The purpose of the Romanian Revolution was emphasized even from very first article of the Proclamation: the banishment of the communist regime and not only of the dictatorial regime set up and maintained by the “eternal” Ceaușescu couple. A brief analysis of this document shows that it was a genuine anti-communist manifesto.

By its nature, the entire text of the Proclamation is open to criticism. For example, there are still voices which contest the fact that, on December 20th 1989, Timișoara became a free city “under the complete control of its population”. The point which caused endless and passionate debates was in fact the 8th point of the Proclamation which brought up the banishment of the former communist activists and Securitate officers from the Romanian political life. Indubitably, the provisions set out by this 8th point may be enforced solely by means of a lustration bill which bars all officials and collaborators of the communist regime set up in Romania on March 6th 1945, by the government led by Petru Groza (president of the Ploughmen’s Front), to occupy civil service or political positions¹. This point emerged from the population’s fervid urge not only to cast out, from any governmental positions, all those who have compromised themselves by fraternizing with the communist regime, but also to cultivate the roots of the genuine and solid democracy in a country where those who had held offices, activated and used different practices and methods pertaining to a totalitarian and authoritarian regime were no longer accepted. The project of the lustration bill which temporarily limited the eligibility of the former officials and representatives of the communist regime to hold certain public offices and dignities was adopted by the Romanian Senate on April 10th 2006 based on 69 favourable votes, 49 votes against the bill and 9 abstentions. The National Liberal Party (PNL) casted 27 favourable votes by its 27 parliamentarians while the Social Democratic Party (PSD) casted 27 votes against the bill and the Democratic Party (PD) supported the bill by 20 favourable votes. The bill benefited also from the support of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), by 7 favourable votes and the Conservatory Party (PC), by 11 favourable votes. The Greater Romania Party (PRM) refused to vote².

The Proclamation of Timișoara - preparation and dissemination of its ideas:

➤ A protest rally against the second raid of the miners in Bucharest took place on February 22nd 1990. George Șerban brought up the idea of preparing a Proclamation of Timișoara to the attention of the entire country, by means of which the objectives pursued by the Revolution of December 16th 1989 were brought to light again, more vividly.

¹ Institute for Investigating the Communist Crimes in Romania, Timișoara Society, *Ne împăcăm cu comunismul? Legea Lustrației în dezbatere publică [Are We Making Peace with Communism? The Lustration Bill Subject to Public Debate]*, 2007, p.1.

² Ibidem, pp.2-3.

- On February 27th 1990, George Șerban reiterated the proposal he put forward during the rally organized on February 22nd 1990 and which was agreed by the rally participants. The Proclamation had a fundamental mission: it was going to address the initial ideals, objectives and genuinely European aspirations of the Revolution of Timișoara to the Romanian public opinion. He suggested that the Proclamation's text should be prepared by a group of participants to the Revolution of Timișoara.
 - On February 27th 1990, during an extraordinary meeting convoked for 4:00 p.m., the members of the "Timișoara" Society analyzed and subsequently endorsed the text of the Proclamation put forward by G. Șerban. The "Timișoara" Society bound itself to support the release and promotion of the Proclamation, suggesting also the multiplication of the text and the translation thereof into English, French and German. The agenda of the future phases which the Proclamation had to undergo until its official release was also approved during the same meeting.
 - On March 1st 1990, the text of the Proclamation of Timișoara was examined and legitimated during the meeting of the "Europa" Society of the publicist students of Timișoara (an association set up in close relation to the "Forum Studentesc" publication).
 - On March 2nd 1990, the Proclamation of Timișoara was officially submitted to the Municipal Council of Timișoara. The Council requested a period of one week to make a decision on whether it adhered or not to that document.
 - On Sunday, March 8th 1990, at about 11:00 a.m., on the occasion of the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara (a highly important document designed to highlight the goals of the Revolution of Timișoara) the Unirii Square hosted the People's Assembly. On the same day, G. Șerban read the text of the Proclamation of Timișoara before the Executive Office of C.P.U.N. (Provisional National Unity Council). Following a short period of hesitation, the Council finally refused to adhere to the principles set out by the Proclamation because some of its members disagreed with the provisions set forth by point 8 of the document.
- On March 8th 1990, the "Tot Banatu-i fruncea" Association and the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Banat adhered to the Proclamation of Timișoara.
- On March 9th 1990, the Romanian – Hungarian Friendship Association, the Society of Young Journalists, the League for Defence of Human Rights and the Organization of Young Hungarians of Timișoara, also known as TIMESZ, also adhered to the Proclamation.

- On March 9th 1990, the Municipal Council of Timișoara acknowledged the Opera Square as the official place to organize the People's Assembly for the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, considering at the same time that the manifestation represented, by its very nature, a spiritual evocation of the Revolution of Timișoara.
- On March 10th 1990, the organising committee emphasized the fact that the Proclamation of Timișoara addressed no message in relation to the autonomy of Banat. On the contrary, "we vehemently disapprove this aberration. The rumours generated around this subject are malicious and their final goal is to discredit the People's Assembly". The same "IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR THE PEOPLE" wherefrom we have quoted the excerpt above, announced the convocation of the People's Assembly scheduled for Sunday, March 11th 1990 in the Opera Square.
- On March 10th 1990, the "Europe, a Common Home" symposium was organised in Czechoslovakia, at Komarno. Representatives of the youth from Czechoslovakia, Romania and Hungary joined the meetings. On that occasion, Florian Mihalcea, representing the "Timișoara" Society, read the text of the Proclamation of Timișoara to announce, at the international level, the option of the Romanian youth for democracy and Europeanism.
- On March 10th 1990, the text of the Proclamation of Timișoara, translated to English, French and German was broadcasted to the national and international press agencies. On the same day, the text was also aired by the Radio Free Europe.
- On March 11th 1990, the Opera Square hosted the People's Assembly where the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara took place. The Proclamation was read from the Opera Balcony by George Șerban. The Proclamation was enthusiastically applauded by more than 15.000 people gathered in the Opera Square, who also approved the text³.
- On March 11th 1990, the action involving the collection of signatures to support the Proclamation of Timișoara was started. Other 11 independent associations and several local branches of political parties adhered to the Proclamation.
- On March 15th 1990, a delegation led by Mr. Virgil Măgureanu, counsellor to the president, arrived in Timișoara to discuss with the leaders of the "Timișoara" Society. The visit aimed to obtain the consent of the "Timișoara" Society for Mr. Ion Iliescu (president of the C.P.U.N.

³ Timișoara Society (coordinator Florian Mihalcea, Lucian Vasile-Szabo, George Lână), *Proclamația de la Timișoara, 11 martie 1990 [Proclamation of Timișoara, March 11th 1990]*, 1994, Mirton Publishing House, Timișoara, pp.6-7.

(Provisional National Unity Council)) to come in the Martyr City and meet the population. The leaders of the Society refused to support that action, considering it to be a high risk operation due to the increasing tension among the people. However, the parties agreed that a dialogue with Mr. Ion Iliescu was to take place in Bucharest.

- On March 16th 1990, the “Special release for the country”, containing the full text of the Proclamation of Timișoara, was published.
- On March 18th 1990, a rally to support the Proclamation of Timișoara was organized in Cluj. The text of the Proclamation was read by the actor Călin Nemeș. The Martyr City was represented by Mr. Ioan Uibar, member of the “Europa” Society.
- On March 19th 1990, a delegation of the “Timișoara” Society, bringing together some of its most important members, i.e. George Șerban, Vasile Popovici, Daniel Vighi and Dorel Mihiț, met Mr. Iliescu and two of his counsellors (one counsellor being Mr. Virgil Măgureanu) during a meeting lasting three hours and fifteen minutes held at the Parliament building from Dealul Mitropoliei. The meeting approached the themes set forth by the Proclamation of Timișoara. Following that meeting, the delegation of the “Timișoara” Society was allowed to broadcast the entire text of the Proclamation of Timișoara on the Romanian National Free Television as a right of reply to the tendentious interpellation made by the News room of the Romanian National Free Television in the evening of March 11th 1990. Mr. Răzvan Theodorescu, president of the Romanian National Free Television, accepted to air the full text of the Proclamation, at prime time, provided that the delegation refrained from adding any comments to the text. The “Timișoara” Society agreed that condition.
- On March 20th 1990, after the News bulletin broadcasted by the Romanian National Free television, the videotape with the full text of the Proclamation of Timișoara was aired. The text was read by George Șerban. On March 25th 1990, rallies supporting the Proclamation of Timișoara were organized in Lugoj and Bucharest, where Stelian Tănase, Ion Rațiu, Dumitru Iuga also participated.
- On April 2nd 1990, the Police of Timișoara Municipality adhered to the Proclamation of Timișoara.
- On April 11th 1990, a rally was organized in the Opera Square of Timișoara. On that occasion, the organizers initiated the gathering of signatures on a Petition by means of which the C.P.U.N. (Provisional National Unity Council) was asked to adopt the 8th point of the Proclamation as an amendment to the election law. There was also announced the setting up of the National Alliance for the Victory of

Revolution, subsequently known as the National Alliance for the Proclamation of Timișoara, on April 28th – 29th 1990. A memorandum which started as follows: “We, the people of the Martyr City of Timișoara, worried about the preservation and enforcement of certain Ceaușescu-type repressive instruments, ..., to identifying the authors of the genocide of December 1989 ...”, was also transmitted to the Provisional National Unity Council.

➤ On April 16th 1990, a group of young people led by the painter Mihai Olteanu set out, from the Opera Square of Timișoara, in an organized march, to Bucharest, to disseminate the text of the Proclamation of Timișoara⁴ and the “Protest-Memorandum from April 11th 1990”

➤ On April 18th 1990, the “Civic Forum” was set up under the patronage of the “Timișoara” Society. In the meantime, the initiative group which left from Timișoara to Bucharest reached the city of Drobeta Turnu Severin.

➤ On April 19th 1990, a group of young people from Timișoara organized the second march to Bucharest, following the route: Timișoara – Deva – Sibiu – Brașov – Bucharest.

➤ The meeting to set up the National Alliance for the Proclamation of Timișoara, attended by the representatives of all organisations and association which adhered to the Proclamation took place on April 28th 1990 at “Capitol” cinema theatre from Timișoara. This was in fact the first attempt to set up an alliance of the civil society and a public opposition. Although the efforts failed, there has been built the basis of the future Civic Alliance.

➤ On May 9th 1990, a demonstration to support the Proclamation of Timișoara was organized in front of the Romanian Embassy in Paris⁵.

The Proclamation of Timișoara identifies the population of Timișoara as the architect of the Romanian Revolution “it was the population of Timișoara who, from December 16th to December 20th 1989, has engaged in and carried out alone a deadly battle against one of the strongest and toughest repressive systems in the world”. Unarmed, it had to face the Militia, the Securitate, the Army and the cohorts of communist activists. Another aspect emphasized by this document is the fact that on December 20th 1989, Timișoara became the first Romanian city controlled exclusively by its citizens. Starting from that day, the entire life of the city

⁴ Timișoara Society, *10 ani de la lansarea Proclamației de la Timișoara [10 Years since the Official Release of the Proclamation of Timișoara]*, 2000, p.21.

⁵ Ibidem, p.22.

was led, from the Opera Balcony, by the Romanian Democratic Front, the single exponent of the Revolution of Timișoara, at that moment. The Proclamation of Timișoara emerged as a vehement reaction to a series of events which took place in Romania after January 28th 1990 and which contradicted the objectives of the Revolution set off in Timișoara⁶.

We cannot speak about the Proclamation of Timișoara without making any reference to the “Timișoara” Society and “Timișoara” newspaper, both set up in 1990⁷. Founded on January 19th 1990, the “Timișoara” Society’s main objective was to support the establishment of a newspaper which was to operate independently, free of any political influences. That newspaper was named “Timișoara”. 64 persons attended the meeting which endorsed the founding of “Timișoara” newspaper⁸.

Coming back to the Proclamation, we may say that some of its ideas, particularly the 8th point as well as the idea of the administrative decentralisation⁹ are still subject to sharp debates. Over the years, the Proclamation had to pay for its 8th point because it has often been identified with the political lustration and its pro-European character being frequently disregarded. However, we cannot say that the Proclamation was a direct proposal for the Romania’s integration to the European Union¹⁰ because it was too soon to plan this very important event.

Although Vasile Popovici held the office of president of the “Timișoara” Society during the period when the Proclamation was prepared, the initiative of preparing the Proclamation was taken by George Șerban, who also laid down the main ideas and refined the final text¹¹. He took upon

⁶ Idem, *Proclamația de la Timișoara, 11 martie [Proclamation of Timișoara, March 11th 1989]*, pp.8-9.

⁷ Idem, *10 ani de la lansarea Proclamației de la Timișoara [10 Years since the Official Release of the Proclamation of Timișoara]*, p.1.

⁸ See the Protocol signed on January 19th 1990 on the occasion of setting up the „Timișoara” Society in Timișoara-10 years from the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, 2000, pp.69-70.

⁹ Daniel Vighi, *Mareșalul Antonescu și pasul de dans spre Europa [Marshal Antonescu and the Toe Dancing to Europe]*, in “Timișoara” Society-10 years from the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, 2000, p.4.

¹⁰ Harald Zimmermann, *Proclamația pentru Europa [Proclamation for Europe]*, in “Timișoara” Society-10 years from the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, 2000, p.5.

¹¹ Lucian-Vasile Szabo, *Spiritul Timișoara și Proclamației [The Spirit of Timișoara, The Gist of Proclamation]*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, p.6.

himself the civic responsibility for that document¹². By the Proclamation of Timișoara, George Șerban succeeded to draw up a unique document which was in fact the “sacred writing” of the Revolution which had overcome the terror. At the same time, the 8th point outlined the free will and intention of the large majority of people who pleaded for the banishment of the former communist activists and Securitate officers¹³ from all public offices.

There have been voices which claimed that although the Proclamation made no history, it was actually a logical and natural continuance of the anticommunist revolution¹⁴. The Proclamation embodied both the slogans chanted during the Romanian Revolution and the goals and ideas which the demonstrators would have wanted them fulfilled once with the victory of the Revolution. The Proclamation could be perceived both as a utopian action and an unequivocal patriotic attitude¹⁵. The Proclamation was the vital text which demanded the final change of Romania, thrilling those who came into the power in December 1989¹⁶. The Proclamation was launched after a rally organized in the Opera Square of Timișoara¹⁷. The Commission led by Vladimir Tismăneanu considered the Proclamation of Timișoara to be the fundamental writ of the Romanian Revolution. Both the Proclamation of Timișoara and the anticommunist manifestation which took place in the Universitatii Square of Bucharest in April-June 1990 are two decisive and historical moments which followed the anticommunist Revolution¹⁸.

The critics of this document consider that due to the fact that it was released after the Revolution, it cannot embody the ideals pursued by the Revolution and consequently, the Proclamation is just another electoral

¹² Petru David, „Timișoara” after 10 years since its foundation, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, 2000, p.60.

¹³ Mircea Pora, *Cuvânt despre „Proclamație” [Foreword on “Proclamation”]*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, p.55.

¹⁴ Adrian Cioroianu, *Zece ani din istoria noastră [Ten Years from Our History]*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, p.56.

¹⁵ Viorel Marineasa, *Un pic reformulată, Proclamația [The Proclamation, Slightly Rephrased]*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, p.7.

¹⁶ George Lână, *Examen de capacitate pentru români [A Proficiency Exam for the Romanians]*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, p.7.

¹⁷ Iosif Costinaș, *Splendida duminică ploioasă [The Fabulous Rainy Sunday]*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, p. 65.

¹⁸ Vladimir Tismăneanu, Dorin Dobrințu, Cristian Vasile, *Raport Final [The Final Report]*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007, p. 777.

instrument. For example, Claudiu Iordache* refuses to accept the “Proclamation of Timișoara” released on March 1990 as the essential document of the Romanian Revolution. In his opinion, the true documents of the Revolution are the Proclamation of the Romanian Democratic Front from Timișoara and the Proclamation of the Council of the National Salvation Front, read by Ion Iliescu and broadcasted by the National Romanian Television on December 22nd 1989. The criticism is also supported by Lorin Fortuna. Ion Iliescu explains that “the Romanian Revolution has basically convicted and punished the communism” and consequently no other measures are needed to condemn again the communism. In Iliescu’s opinion, it is a real insult to the Revolution to claim that “the real Charta of the Romania Revolution of December 1989 was in fact the Proclamation of Timișoara as of March 11th 1990” and, at the same time, to deliberately ignore the official statement to the country released by the Council of the National Salvation Front on December 22nd 1989, which is actually the real political programme of the Revolution, or the Proclamation of December 21st 1989.

After an attentive, careful reading of the Proclamation of Timișoara, one can obviously see that the main goal of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989 was the radical banishment of the former communist structures. This is the reason why the Proclamation took shape as a genuine revolutionary programme whose intention was to explain and clarify the means and the goals of the revolutionary forces¹⁹. The Proclamation is a document which sets forth the community’s options at that moment in time²⁰. The 8th point of the Proclamation struck a hard blow against the former communist activists and Securitate officers who were still present in the Romanian political environment and who are probably the main cause of the tensions and suspicions which were stirring the spirits²¹. The 8th point has been welcomed by the citizens, who were hoping for the return to the genuine democratic values and who were strongly refusing any cosmeticised form of the communism. The names of “the fantastic four: George Șerban,

* Former founding member and president of the “Timișoara” Society.

¹⁹ Petru David, *Atestatul Revoluției Române din decembrie 1989 [The Testimonial of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989]*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, 2000, p.59.

²⁰ Ioan Crăciun, *Două certitudini [Two Realities]*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, p.7.

²¹ Ana Blandiana, *Rezumatul acestui deceniu [A Summary of This Decade]*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, 2000, p.45.

Daniel Vighi*, Basil Popovici și Doru Mihiț* are also linked to the Proclamation of Timișoara. The 8th point could also be regarded as a reliable platform-programme to setting up a party whose main mission would be focussed on constantly giving hard times to the still “active” communist believers²². Countless signatures, emphasizing the people’s full adherence to the 8th point were gathered in the Universitatii Square. Millions of Romanians, from Moldova to Oltenia, have patiently waited in endless rows to sign those open lists which promised the changes they were hoping for. The people considered the Proclamation of Timișoara not only an anticommunist manifesto but also a genuine political platform pursuing the European development of our country²³, and whose main goal was to set up a new political system able to proudly represent the Romanians²⁴. The Proclamation was heard in Munich, from the microphone of the Radio Free Europe, in Czechoslovakia, at a public meeting of the youth from Central Europe, in Poland and in the Baltic States. George Șerban, Doru Mihiț, Daniel Vighi and Vasile Popovici left to Bucharest to promote the

* Romanian novelist, essayist and journalist, an active participant in the protest manifestations from Timișoara which set off the anticommunist revolution, founding member of the “Timișoara” Society.

* At the beginning of the 90’s, Dorel Mihiț, founding member of the Society and executive manager of the “Timișoara” newspaper, immediately after its launch on the mass-media market, has been excluded from the Society by reason of an alleged collaboration with the Securitate. At present, the information provided by CNSAS (The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives) proved the contrary; none of the cases studied by the CNSAS revealed his name, irrespective of the situation: citizen under the Securitate surveillance or informer. Therefore, the accusations filed against him proved to be completely false. Unfortunately, it is only now, after so many years, when the mistake was somehow rectified. Florian Mihalcea, the president of the “Timișoara” Society apologized publicly, on behalf of the Society, for the mistake made years ago. Shortly after the clearance of his name, Dorel Mihiț left to Germany. His “rehabilitation” is overdue and cannot simply erase what happened at a moment when the goals and particularly, the justice had to prevail. It seems that *George Șerban suggested the exclusion of Dorel Mihiț. That decision was made based on the answers given by the workers who had been supervised by Dorel Mihiț: “he was a tougher boss”; “we knew he was one of them, a communist”, Florian Mihalcea.*

²² Oscar Berger, *Peste 10 ani [10 Years Later]*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, 2000, p.2.

²³ Roxana Iordache, *Istoria nu se scrie cu dacă [The History is Never Written in “If” Tone]*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, 2000, p.45.

²⁴ Dumitru Ganț, *Proclamația de la Timișoara, un act politic de o importanță deosebită pentru destinul României [The Proclamation of Timișoara, A Political Document of Utmost Importance for the Destiny of Romania]*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, p.51.

Proclamation within the entire country by means of the National Television Station. Mihai Olteanu has also left to Bucharest, by foot, crossing the Oltenia region. Olimpiu Vasiliu organized a “Caravan of the Proclamation” which crossed the entire country²⁵. Therefore, the Proclamation of Timișoara was and is still perceived as a first programmatic document of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989, a document which somehow succeeded to lay out the very first steps to democracy²⁶. However, the biggest regret related to the Proclamation of Timișoara is the fact that its supporters reduced the entire manifesto to the 8th point, which was indeed the Proclamation’s core, while its critics focussed chiefly on the 11th point, which, in their opinion referred to the “local autonomy”, although the Proclamation’s text stipulated solely the economic and administrative decentralization²⁷. Nonetheless, the Proclamation of Timișoara emphasizes the Revolution of December 1989, a benchmark for the history of Romania, a moment when the people succeeded to overcome the communist regime.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROCLAMATION

After reading the Proclamation of Timișoara from March 11th 1990, everyone may follow a clear path and, at the same time, may accurately define his/her position, by choosing to either adhere to the Proclamation or to support the superficial improvement of communism. The Proclamation has given hopes to all Romanians who really wanted to live in a democratic country, with no communist remnants (the communism being the regime which has been cast out during the bloody Revolution of December 1989).

In the following part of this study, we will attempt to give a brief summary of the ideas set out by every point of the Proclamation:

The 1st point of the Proclamation demanded “the return to the genuine values of European democracy and civilization”. The Romanians should always be aware of the fact that the Revolution of Timișoara was a profoundly anticommunist popular movement, consequently, the first point lays down the slogans chanted in 1989, emphasizing thus the obvious anticommunist character of the Romanian Revolution. Although the Proclamation spoke about Romania and Europe, it did not directly put

²⁵ Florian Mihalcea, *Privindu-te în luciul semnelor tipografice [Introspection Through the Printed Words]*, 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, p.3.

²⁶ See the *România Liberă* newspaper printed on March 13th 2001, column: „Proclamation of Timișoara” after 11 years.

²⁷ George Șerban, *Argument*, in “Timișoara” Society-10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, 2000, pp.27-28.

forward the adherence of our country to Europe because that moment was far from being the right moment ... Romania had to learn again how to live freely. The Proclamation demanded the irrevocable dissociation from the communism and implicitly, a decisive change of Romania. The Proclamation was drafted in the city which started the battle against the rigorous “totalitarian and unsuccessful” communist system which had been well rooted in Romania over the time. To sum up, this point represents the solidarity of the Romanian Revolution with the fight for freedom started by all other states which were also members of the Eastern bloc.

The points 2 and 3 reiterate the fact that the participants to the Revolution were of different ages and came from all social classes. This fact may suggest the participation of the entire population driven by the ardent urge to cast out the communist oppression in exchange of the supreme sacrifice: its own life. The second point of the Proclamation highlights the anti-Marxist character of the Romanian Revolution, because it clearly stipulates that all social categories joined the Revolution of Banat, avoiding thus “the split of the social classes and categories”.

The 4th point attempts to restore an older tradition of this Romanian region. The idea involving the revival of this tradition was brought up by Mrs. Doina Pașca-Harsanyi. The peaceful cohabitation of all nationalities from Banat created a favourable image of the United Romanian Countries, at the international level, during the inter-war period. The solidarity of all nationalities living in Banat against a divisive system led to the victory of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989. The final part of this point emphasizes the tolerant character and the “mutual respect” of the Banat’s inhabitants, arguing that these traits represented the very basis for the integration of Romanian to the European democratic structures. Nevertheless, this point may be regarded as a stimulus or as an impulse for all those who are still encouraging the chauvinistic nationalism, irrespective of nationality, to come to Timișoara – the city which has always promoted the tolerance and respect.

The 5th point underlines the idea of the political pluralism and organisation of free elections. It is common knowledge that the political parties allow the existence of the genuine democracy. This point also forbids the existence of any left- or right-wing extremist parties in Romania because the Romanian Communist Party has proven, in its 44 years of domination, to be a fervid supporter of repression, banning any forms of social dialogue and political opinions and culminating with the most atrocious crime: the genocide. The metaphoric name of “red fascism” is used to depict the national-communism principles. Due to its cruelty and the

permanent limitation of the citizens' individual rights and freedoms, the Communist Party will no longer be tolerated "neither in principle nor de facto, irrespective of the names it might attempt to take to rouse again".

The 6th point inspires the Romanians with the fervent wish to detach from the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Although it avers that the Romanians' conscience is still struggling with different preconceptions which have been built "during the six decades of communist education", it does not blame these persons. At the same time, this point highlights the danger of the restoration of the totalitarian communist regime if the future generations fail to carefully and exhaustively study this awful period. In other words, this point argues for the depoliticisation of history and asks for the "urgent draft of a concise and accurate history of the interval from 1944 to 1950 and the mass promotion and propagation thereof", avoiding thus the risk of malicious manipulations. This last demand can be regarded as a strong advice to learn the real history of Romanians, paying a special attention to the period when the communist regime began to literally seize the entire country, in spite of the strong opposition of the historical parties who had taken a vehement stand against the surrender of Romania to the USSR and the communist system. Unfortunately, the opponents to the communist system ended up in prisons and some of them had even paid the supreme tribute for their firm positions. We could read this point as a praise and commemoration of all those who had the courage to challenge and defy the Sovietisation of Romania.

The 7th point brings up the reason which caused the break out of the Revolution of Timișoara: the fight against the communist regime, and underlines the reproach that those who had served the communist regime managed somehow to govern the country. In other words, the idea highlighted by this point was to free the state structures from the communist remnants in the name of those who had given their life for us ... *all those tributes should never be forgotten or deemed useless*. However, this point is inexactly phrased because it attributes the term "anti-Ceaușescu dissidents" to those who wanted nothing else than a change at the level of the Romanian Communist Party, a "rotation of the cadres", to be more exactly. Therefore, the proper word to describe the persons whose goal was not focussed on casting out the system would be "opponents".

The 8th point, which is by far the most controversial point of the Proclamation, is in fact a more elaborate continuation of the 7th point: "As a consequence of the previous point, we propose that the electoral law forbids, for the first three consecutive legislatures, the right to candidate, on any list, of the former communist activists and of the former secret service officers.

Their presence in the country's political life is the main source of the tensions and suspicions that split the Romanian society today. Until the stabilization of the situation and the establishment of national reconciliation, their absence from public life is absolutely necessary. Additionally, we ask that a special paragraph be incorporated to the law incorporate, a paragraph able to prohibit the former communist activists to seek candidacy for the country's presidency. The President of Romania should be one of the symbols of our separation from communism. Having been a communist party member is not considered a fault. We all know to what extent having a red membership was a condition in people's life, from professional achievement to receiving a house, and what serious consequences its loss could have. But activists were people who abandoned their professions to serve the Communist Party and to enjoy the special privileges offered by the party. A man who made such choice presents no moral guarantees as a President. We also suggest reducing the prerogatives of this function, as it is the case in many civilized countries of the world. Thus, personalities from cultural and scientific life but without a particular political experience might also run for the office of the President of Romania. In this context, we also propose that the first legislature be only of two years, time required to strengthen democratic institutions and to clarify the ideological position of each of the many parties that emerged. Only then we will be able to make an educated choice in an informed manner and to declare one's hand".

Since this point was and still is subject to countless debates, it should not be analyzed again. However, we should insist on the fact that it cannot be read as a vengeance against those who had accepted the communist regime, but as an attempt to determine those persons to retrospect on the past of the communist Romania and to comprehend that the system they had promoted was in fact an anti-democratic and anti-human system. Therefore, the remnants of the communist regime ought to leave, even for a relatively brief period of time, the structures of the new state, a state which was deemed to be a genuine democratic state, particularly for those who had fought and died during the Revolution of 1989.

The points 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 are focused on the reasons that led to the offset of the Revolution of Timișoara, in December 1989, emphasizing that, at that point in time, the people wanted the democratization and Europeanization of Romania and not bigger salaries or material benefits. It should be noted that no clear demands on Romania's integration to the

European Union were made. The demands were centred on the alignment of our country with standards applicable to the European civilized countries without copying the "Western capitalist systems". These aspects must be fulfilled both at the political and economic levels. As for the 9th point, we mention that it brings up the fact that the Romanian Revolution was in fact set off for the citizens of this country to gain their freedom and rights they have been naturally endowed by the Divinity.

The 10th point refers to a purely economy-based idea, addressing thus the issue of privatization, without pointing exactly to path the Romanian economy should follow. This point demanded the replacement of state property with the private ownership.

The 11th point focused on an older desideratum of Timișoara: the enforcement of the "economic and administrative decentralization" and the use of free market economy in Timis County. The idea of decentralization was not designed to isolate the Banat region from the rest of the country, but probably to suggest that the budget should be allocated depending on contributions and not based on political influence. Therefore, this point brought to light essential proposals for the economic recovery of Romania.

The country's economic and administrative decentralization is presented as a first step to revive the economic infrastructure, putting also forward the frame of a genuine privatization. In response, the inhabitants of Timișoara were accused of having propagated the idea of federalization, self-government and even separation from the rest of the country. An inventory of the assets held by the people who had enjoyed the privileges provided by the former government and who had been subject to massive corruption, was also vehemently required. However, the justice was blind and deaf and many of those people are today the owners of major private investments, with favourable chances to become the future economic barons of Romania. The Proclamation gave voice to the appeal made by the inhabitants of Timișoara to the Romanians living in exile to return home, as the Romanians' emigration was and still is a national disaster. The Proclamation also proposed for consideration the grant of fixed number of shares in the plant or industrial facility to every worker employed thereto.

The 12th point refers to the diaspora, asking that all those who have left Romania due to persecutions enforced by the communist regime to return home to help reviving the country from the democratic and ethic perspectives.

The 13th point demanded that December 16th be proclaimed the national day of Romania, acknowledging thus the sacrifice made by the Romanians, their courage to fight against communism and last but not least, the onset of the Revolutionwhich led to the fall of the communist regime. The 13th point vehemently rejected the idea that December 22nd be declared the national day of Romania as this will always bring into question the "dictator's issue". According to this point, the day of 16th of December should not be minimized to the detriment of 21st and 22nd of December. The point also eulogizes all other Romanian martyr cities: Bucharest, Sibiu, Braşov, Targu Mures, Arad, Resita, Lugoj etc.

The end of the Proclamation of Timișoara dated March 11th 1990, and particularly its last paragraph highlights several aspects. First of all, the preparation of the Proclamation by the active participants who chose to sacrifice their lives during the events of December 16th to 22nd 1989, reveals their point of view of all those who had fought and died during the Romanian Revolution which had had its very first spark in Timișoara, leaving however an open ending for a new challenge..... an UNFINISHED REVOLUTION. It is imperative that that repressive system which had taken the lives of so, so many people and which seemed to have been apparently defeated in December 1989, be finally and irreversibly knocked down. The ideals of the Revolution were not consistent with the realities of the early 90's. Clearly, the communist regime had been very well implemented in all structures of the Romanian state and its annihilation was still facing major obstacles.

The entire content of the Proclamation points out, without any doubts that the Revolution of December 1989 was made by the Romanians only, and not by the "activists and Securitate officers" or by "foreign intelligence agencies". The Romanian Revolution was not a coup d'état, but a spontaneous manifestation of the population, a "genuine revolution". The Proclamation is a true act of democracy, a moral example for all of us, the Romanians. Despite of all aspects and truths it emphasized, the Proclamation has never been implemented. The 8th point opened up the battle against the neo-communists. Eventually, it came as a logical requirement because, following the supreme sacrifice of the Romanians, in December 1989, it was more than normal that the people who cooperated with that repressive system, be overthrown from the government of the state. Consequently, the 8th point of the Proclamation was expressly conceived to remove the former communist activists and the Securitate officers from Romanian's political scene.

Unfortunately, this point can only be implemented through a bill of lustration which prohibited the assignment of dignities or political offices to those who had been part of either the government structures or the repressive apparatus of the communist regime which was set up in Romania, on March 6th 1945, by the government of Petru Groza (President of the Ploughmen Front).

To sum up, the Proclamation of Timișoara is an outstanding document which made a first attempt to clarify the purpose and the mission of the Revolution of Timișoara, and, to be more precisely, it is the document which highlighted the fall of the communist regime and not solely the fall of Ceaușescu's regime as a result of the massive participation of all social classes and categories. The Proclamation was drafted to bring to the attention of the Romanian public opinion the "original ideals" of Timișoara's Revolution. The author of the Proclamation is the late George Serban, former journalist and writer who later on became a deputy of Timis County, representing the Christian Democratic National Peasants' Party (PNȚCD). In this document, he presented the population of Timișoara as the initiator of the Romanian Revolution, the architect who, from 16th to 20th of December 1989, carried on, by itself, a bitter war with one of the strongest and toughest repressive systems in the world.

We made a brief analysis of every point of the Proclamation to acknowledge its current applicability, paying a special attention to the 8th point which somehow managed to generate serious controversies around it. Therefore, the Proclamation of Timișoara from March 11th 1990, has been prepared in the context of existence, on the Romanian political scene, of several persons known as having actively participated in the suppression of the Revolution and who were striving to minimize and cover up the major role played by the Romanians in the fall of the communist regime. Under no circumstances can the Proclamation's democratic and civic character be disputed.

The Proclamation is not a law; it was an unattainable effort that underlined the patriotism needed by this country to overcome the communist system, which, unfortunately, was still experienced at the highest governmental levels. Freedom was a goal for all Romanians, a desideratum which was not subject to any conditions and for whom the people were willing to make even the supreme sacrifice. The 20th of December 1989, a day when Timișoara became free, after a fierce battle. The Proclamation emphasizes the leading role played by the Romanian Democratic Forum, "a genuine exponent of the Revolution of Timișoara,

at that point". On 20th of December 1989, the army took the people's side.

The Proclamation avers clearly and without any doubts that the Revolution of Timișoara was a revolution against the communism and not against Ceaușescu. The inhabitants of Timișoara demanded the abolition of the "totalitarian social system" and the establishment of the true democracy.

Notwithstanding the criticisms that "welcomed" the Proclamation, its historical value as profoundly anticommunist document can never be challenged, nor can someone say that the Proclamation failed to act as a benchmark of the Romanian Revolution. It was drafted by the active participants of this great event in the history of Romanians and, furthermore, its content attempted to explain the role and purpose of the onset of events of December 1989, in Timișoara. The Proclamation must remain viable and applicable. For now, it represents a sum of ideas, an archetype. The former party activists **and** the Securitate officers should have the common sense and decency **to** temporarily step back from the political scene of the country. Until then, the revolution **will** never be completed.

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1. Berger Oscar, *Peste 10 ani (10 Years Later)*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, 2000, p.2.
2. Blandiana Ana, *Rezumatul acestui deceniu (A Summary of This Decade)*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, 2000, p 45.
3. Cioroianu Adrian, *Zece ani din istoria noastră (Ten Years from Our History)*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, 2000, p.56.
4. Costinaș Iosif, *Splendida duminică ploioasă (The Fabulous Rainy Sunday)* in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, 2000, p 65.
5. Crăciun Ioan, *Două certitudini (Two Realities)*, in the “Timișoara” Society - 10 years since the official release of the Proclamation of Timișoara, 2000, p.7.
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Cristina **TUDOR**
Cornel **SERACIN**

Women and Revolution

Kovács (Fan) Odette is one of the inhabitants of Timișoara who did not hesitate to get out on the streets to protest, a fighter who has put her life in the line of fire. During the manifestations of Timișoara from December 19th 1989, she was wounded near Elba, on the "ELECTROBANAT" bridge. She was young and survived.

KO : - I was born on 10th of February 1968 and I live in Timișoara. I worked as a locksmith at the "Progresul" Cooperative and, on the December 19th 1989, I was on vacation. As I've seen everything that happened then, I felt the urge to join in, to participate too, in those events.

L.K. : - Have you been to Maria Square?

K.O. : - Yes. I was in Maria Square on that Sunday, when the morning service was supposed to be held, but we could not get there, because there were so many soldiers and we were not allowed to get near that place. Many people gathered there and ... they were not protesting, but they were unhappy as that they did not know exactly why we were not allowed to attend the morning service at the church. There was a pretty large cordon of soldiers who did not give us permission to get near that place ... Well, although I was baptized as an orthodox Christian, I really enjoy to attend the services at the Reformed Church ...

L.K. : - What happened on the 18th of December?

KO : - As I told you, I was on vacation. While I was doing my morning shopping, I reached Traian Square because there were many stores there, at that time. I saw that almost all stores had been vandalized and I remember that someone had told me that some manifestations were to be held on the 19th. The people began to speak their minds and they were outraged by what was happening in the city. So, on that day I was out and later on I went home. On the 19th of December, again, while I was doing my morning shopping, I ran into a friend who told: "You know that today, at two o'clock, some demonstrations will be held at "Electrobanat" Factory? If you want, let's go there together, to see what happens!". I said, "Well, let's go!". Not for a moment have we thought that fire would be opened on us that all hell would break loose.

L.K. : - Have you not seen the military ?

K.O. : - Oh, yes , there were many. They were everywhere, in the town, downtown...

L.K. : - Were they ready to intervene?

K.O. : - They were, yes. And I've seen them downtown, and I've also seen some guys from the Patriot Squads armed with rifles and I remember that I've asked myself: "they're ready now, what on earth are they going to do?". I thought they were there also because the stores had been vandalized and there were rumours that some had stolen all goods from the stores and they were probably in charge of guarding those stores...I had no clue on what had really happened...

L.K. : - Where did you see the vandalized shops?

KO : - I've seen them in Traian Square and also downtown, right next to the Cathedral. All stores were literally smashed down ... So, yes, I had seen the stores vandalized in Traian Square, I had seen them from the tram station. So..we went, at about few minutes past one o'clock we went to the «Electrobanat» Factory, at the rear gate. And, as we saw the crowd gathered in the courtyard of the factory, we remained on the bridge. We didn't get any closer although it has never crossed our mind that something was going to happen, something terrible... And, as we were standing on the bridge, we saw a TAB passing by, at great speed, moving towards... Since no other military unit was located there, except that one on the Baritiu street, I was thinking that the TAB went there. And after a while, I didn't know the time, when the TAB turned back, the crowd booed. The crowd booed the TAB which passed by. Well, to resume, a TAB was also stationed there, at «Electrobanat» Factory, on the bridge. And it was stationed there, having a machine gun ready to fire...

L.K. : - Ready to fire on the crowd ?

KO : - ... to fire on the crowd and also on the crowd who wanted to leave the factory. And everything happened during that demonstration. And me and my friend, as we were standing on the bridge ... so, a tear bomb was thrown in the crowd from that TAB which was coming back from the Baritiu street. And it was then that the crowd got even angrier than before. The people picked up stones and threw them in tank and then, at that moment, being in that crowd, I suddenly felt sick without realizing that I actually got shot. And I felt sick, feeling that I was going to faint. I leaned against the bridge balustrade.

L.K. : - What was the bridge?

K.O. : - I was on that bridge from the Iosefin Square. Just behind the market.

L.K. : - Did you get there along with the crowd, as they were marching?

K.O. : - No, no. There were some people already gathered there, waiting to see what was about to happen at two o'clock. Perhaps, they all wanted to join those who left the factory. And I felt that...

L.K. : - But haven't you heard the shots?

KO : - No, no, we haven't heard anything, probably because of the crowd, the noise... We didn't hear anything, we didn't know... Here, where I was shot, I wasn't bleeding then. So I did not realize. I was wearing a quite thick sweater. And I felt really sick, but I didn't know why. And then, when I leaned back, my friend said: "Oh my God, you're bleeding!! Oh Lord, you've been shot!!"

L.K. : - Was it that obvious?

KO : - Oh, yes. I had a big gunshot wound in my back. And then, the crowd...

L.K. : - Where were you hurt?

KO : - In the shoulder, the shoulder blade and the bullet turned and went out through my back . And then the crowd shouted: "Huooo ! Murderers! You're killing us!" And then, the crowd from the factory, as those, who were on the bridge, were scattered, shouting that a woman had been shot, opened the gates and went out. And then, a man from the factory took me in his arms and carried me inside the factory, to the medical unit. And there I was given first aid and, almost instantly.....

L.K. : - Were you conscious?

KO : - I had been conscious until I was brought in ... so, they took me first at the County Hospital, but, since no medical equipments to support the lungs were available there, they took me "Victor Babes" Hospital. And there I was immediately sent to the operating theatre.

L.K.: - Who performed the surgical intervention?

K.O : - Doctor Hudişteanu.

L.K. : - How long have you been hospitalized?

K.O. : From 19th of December to 10th of February. On the 10th of February I asked to be discharged. From what I've been told, as I don't really know these kinds of things, it was a machine gun that shot me. So they said. As a matter of fact, some people from the factory came to the hospital and told me that if I had been shot with dum dum bullets, I would have instantly died. And they said it was a machine gun. And, as the bullets shoulder blade, along with four ribs, a part of my lung had to be removed. And I also had hematomas, a quite large one. The doctors also found some cardiac complications too...

L.K. : - How are you feeling today?

KO : - As a matter of fact, I'm coming now from my physician who gave me a referral for hospital admission because I'm feeling... I do not know, I'm getting worse, I have breathing problems, and I also contacted a disease due to blood transfusion, I got hepatitis C. ... You know how it is... Because

of the haste, the ER staff didn't have enough time to test the blood. Later on they told me that, at that moment, hardly did they guarantee my survival but...

L.K. : - Why? Was the lung perforated?

K.O. : - Yes. A part of my lung was removed then. Four ribs had been hit and my shoulder blade had been literally squashed. They took out a handful of shrapnel, you know, as they spread in my body. And I also had a large hematoma in the lung.

LK : - Have you been abroad to treat yourself and to recover?

K.O. : - No. I asked though, but no. They said there were no funds available and, in fact, nobody paid attention to such kinds of things.

LK : - Did you get any allowance, have you ever been compensated?

K.O.: - Yes. I was compensated and I'm still benefiting from an allowance.

LK : - What is your opinion now, after 20 years? What do you think it really happened then? I know that after the 18th of December 1989, you have never been able to be in touch with what was happening, but what happened then, in the hospital? Were you able to see or hear anything? Were there any incidents or people to ask you how and why were you on the streets that day?

KO : - So, when I was brought to the County Hospital to be hospitalized and every time when I remember, I tell you, I get very angry with the doctor who treated me then because he spoke to me very, very rudely. I don't remember exactly what his name was or what doctor was on duty on the 19th of December, but I would be very, very happy if I could have an opportunity to talk one more time to that gentleman...

L.K : - On the 19th of December?

K.O : - Yes.

L.K.: - What time did you get there?

KO : - At two o'clock, or half past two, anyway, right after that incident. He spoke to me rudely and I really don't think I deserved that, because, he was supposed to treat me as a patient and to consider me a human being, not to call me names as he did. He said we were "hooligans" and he treated me badly... He was an older doctor. He asked me "What were you doing there?"... He was very rude in everything he did...his words were not supposed to be like that... Not for the world have I expected that from a doctor who had no right to judge me... Luckily, I didn't remain there. After my arrival to "Victor Babes" Hospital, and to be more exactly, after my discharge from there (as during all that period I was in pain and under perfusions), I understood that all patients who had been brought to the County Hospital with gunshot wounds had been shot dead. All I can say

now is that I was very well treated at "Victor Babes" Hospital. My attending doctor and Dr. Anghel, were very nice to me and gave me all the treatment I needed and, consequently, they did a really great job taking great care of us, all of us. I was not alone in my hospital ward. There was also a girl, a woman, I don't remember her family name, but her first name was Moni. I know that patients with gunshot wounds were also brought in the wards from the first storey of the hospital. To sum up, I can say that I was very well cared for at "Victor Babes" Hospital. I remember that even this hospital was subject to some awful incidents. There were some shootings from the nearby forest, all aiming at the hospital, so there had been incidents there as well. They opened fire on the hospital, and bullets entered through the window. The images are still vivid in my memory. My mother was there with me that day, I was still ... I had a drainage tube set, you know, and perfusions, and they disconnected me and hid me under the bed me, because, as the fire was opened on the hospital, several bullets entered the room through the window. And then, my mother took me and put me on a mattress and then shoved me under the bed. To be safe! I don't remember exactly the date. However, it was after the 20th of December. So, I'm telling you: in my opinion, the crowd was really fed up with everything that had happened until then. The people got tired of the injustices they suffered and that dreadful fear, as everybody was afraid to say a single word of dissatisfaction with the life you'd been living, and in my opinion, this is why the crowd got out on the streets. We were all tired of being deprived of the freedom to express ourselves, to live as the people in other countries did. We wanted to be free, we wanted to be able to express our discontent, we wanted to live a better or a more decent life.

L.K. : - Have you ever been summoned to the trial?

K.O. : - Yes, I was. At Bucharest, only in Bucharest. I was once in Timișoara, when the trial was first held in Timișoara but, since the counsellor of defence failed to appear before the court, the trial was cancelled. And I've been twice in Bucharest.

L.K.: - Do you have trust in justice, today?

K.O. : - No. When I think back, on the 19th of December, I do not believe that the Army opened fire on us. I was there, on the bridge and I saw that there were no shootings from the TAB, or from that person who was then on the top of the second TAB which...

L.K. : - Those guys, were they moving ? What were they doing at that time? Were they just standing there, ready to intervene?

KO : - The soldier who was on the bridge, at the time, was positioned towards the factory. So, from the bridge, he was directed to shoot into the

factory. But I don't think that that soldier opened fire. Everyone I talked to said that the fire had been opened from the roof of the "Electrobanat" Factory's cafeteria. A man was there and he fired.

As we recently drew up a statistic report on the consequences of the bloody massacre from Timișoara in December 1989, starting from December 16th to December 26th 1989, and as emphasized not only by the medical records kept by the Military Prosecuting Authority but also by the records available at the Documentation, Research and Public Information Centre of the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of December 1989, we found out that, from all people who had been shot in Timișoara, 52 were women: young women coming of age or who have passed the age of adulthood and women of middle age. The following women survived:*

1. *Clipa Silvia - 50 years 'old, chest contusion by impact, on the 16th of December 1989, she was hit in Maria Square;*
2. *Nagy Rozalia - 20 years 'old, gunshot wound in the leg, on the 17th of December 1989; she was shot while walking on Calea Girocului;*
3. *Opeltz Maria - gunshot wound inflicted on the 17th of December 1989 while protesting on Calea Lipovei;*
4. *Pojar Gabriela – 19 years 'old, gunshot wound in the leg inflicted on the 17th of December 1989, while protesting on Ialomita Street;*
5. *Diaconu Veronica - gunshot wound inflicted on the 17th of December 1989, unknown circumstances;*
6. *Păleanu Lena Maria – 59 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted in the leg on the 17th of December 1989, while she was standing in the Opera Square ;*
7. *Pârvan Ioana – 38 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted in the leg on the 17th of December 1989, while she was standing in the Opera Square;*

* According to the Indictment prepared by the Military Prosecuting Authority on November 4th 1997 – the case brought to the attention of the magistrate Col. Dan Voinea – chief of the Section of Military Prosecutors – comprises a list of 296 aggrieved parties (injured people), from whom 54 were women, shot in Timișoara from December 16th to December 22nd 1989. However, another list kept by the Military Prosecuting Authority shows that, from December 16th to December 22nd 1989, in Timișoara, 355 injured people were registered, meaning that the number of the injured women was definitely higher than the official number.

8. Luca Georgeta – 33 years 'old, intraocular injuries by shrapnel penetration; she was wounded on the 17th of December 1989 while she was protesting in Calea Girocului ;
9. Untilă Corina Daniela – 18 years 'old, wounded in the abdomen and thorax, on Sunday , the 17th of December 1989, while manifesting at the Neptune Baths - Decebal Bridge;
10. Radu Margareta – 54 years 'old, full thickness tear of right thigh, shot on the 17th of December 1989, while she was standing at the gate of the building where she was living in, opposite to the "Park" Cinema;
11. Hauder Elza - 49 years 'old, chest and right arm transfixiant wound and traumatic shock , shot on the 17th of December 1989 from the military unit on Calea Lipovei, she while standing next to the convenience store;
12. Toda Angelica - 20 years 'old , saleswoman, full thickness tear of her left leg shank, shot in the left leg in the evening of the 17th of December 1989, at the intersection of Resita and Sagului Avenue, in front of the electrical devices store - 1 Mai Square;
13. Toma Angelica - 20 years 'old, clerk, gunshot wound inflicted in her lower limb on the 17th of December 1989, while manifesting in the Opera Square;
14. Tako Titina – 36 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted in the lower limb while she was marching down the Revolutiei Boulevard;
15. Doboşan Danca - 18 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted in her upper limb on the 17th of December 1989, while crossing the Republicii Boulevard;
16. Gyenics Simioana – 36 years 'old, gunshot wound with the retention of a foreign body in her left thigh, injured on the 17th of December 1989, at intersection of Calea Girocului and Lydia Avenue;
17. Mariana Mişcov – 37 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted in the leg on the night of the 17th of December 1989, while she was in near the stairwell of her apartment building – Calea Girocului;
18. Căndea Angelica Aurelia - gunshot wound inflicted on the 17th of December 1989, in Calea Girocului;
19. Draghici Erika – 22 years 'old, gunshot wound in her thigh, shot while she was protesting in Calea Aradului;
20. Mariana Farcău - wounded in her right arm, on the 17th of December 1989;
21. Cimpoeru Maria – gunshot wound inflicted on the 17th of December 1989, while she was crossing the Decebal Bridge - Traian Square;
22. Facaşciuc Viorica – gunshot wound inflicted on the 17th of December 1989, while she was crossing the Decebal Bridge;

23. *Pistriceanu Adriana -18 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted on her lower limb on the 17th of December 1989, while she was protesting in the Libertatii Square;*
24. *Lazăr Lidia - 20 years 'old, gunshot wound in her abdomen, inflicted on the 17th of December 1989, while she was protesting in the Cathedral area;*
25. *Vințan Paraschiva – 17 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted in her lower limb on the 17th of December 1989, while she was in the Opera Square;*
26. *Lengyel Daniela – 17 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted in her leg on the 17th of December 1989, while she was protesting in the Decebal Bridge area;*
27. *Gherasim Doina - 25 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted in abdomen on the 17th of December 1989, while she was protesting in the area between the Decebal Bridge and the Traian Square;*
28. *Nedelea Paulina – 24 years' old, gunshot wound inflicted in her leg on the 17th of December, while she was in the area between the Students' Campus and Calea Girocului;*
29. *Madoși Ana- 36 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted in her upper limb on Sunday the 17th of December 1989, while she was in the area between the Opera Square, the Cathedral and the "Politehnica" University;*
30. *Birca Milana - 51 years 'old, gunshot wounds at the level of both legs, inflicted on the 17th of December 1989, while passing near the Cathedral, on her way to the Libertatii Square;*
31. *Panduru Domnica - 25 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted on the 17th of December 1989, while she was protesting in front of the Cathedral;*
32. *Poja Ecaterina - 20 years' old, gunshot wound inflicted in her leg on the 17th of December 1989, while she was protesting in Calea Lipovei;*
33. *Potrochir Lucica – 31 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted on the 17th of December 1989, while she was walking down the Calea Lipovei Boulevard;*
34. *Sava Elena - 35 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted in her leg on the 17th of December 1989, while she was heading out to Traian Square;*
35. *Lazar Lidia – 20 years 'old, gunshot wound in the abdomen inflicted on the 17th of December 1989, while she was protesting in front of the Cathedral;*
36. *Dumitreanu Carmen Dana – also wounded on the 17th of December 1989, at the Cathedral;*

37. Berghiu Rozalia – 61 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted in her leg on the 17th of December 1989, near her house on the Calea Lipovei Boulevard;
38. Criste Monica – 26 years 'old, housewife, gunshot wound in the chest inflicted on the 17th of December 1989, in front of her house, in Calea Lipovei Boulevard;
39. Bugulecea Angelica - 27 years 'old, gunshot wound in her abdomen inflicted on the 17th of December 1989, while she was leaving the store she was working at, in Calea Lipovei Boulevard;
40. Ilie Clara – 66 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted in her leg on the 17th of December 1989, while she was walking down the Calea Girocului Boulevard;
41. Mitreșan Elena – 35 years' old, she sustained a cut at the face level on the 17th of December 1989, unknown circumstances;
42. Rusu Alexandra – 21 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted at the level of her upper limb, on the 18th of December 1989, unknown circumstances;
43. Huțanu Crenguța - 22 years 'old, traumatic head injuries, depressive shock, injured on the 18th of December 1989, while she was standing on the Cathedral stairs, among the first line of demonstrators; a tank turned its barrel towards the protesters and opened fire on the crowd, she was saved by other demonstrators and brought for safety, in the lobby of the Cathedral;
44. Metea Liana - 20 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted in her leg on the 19th of December 1989, at the intersection of the Decebal Boulevard and the Tineretii Boulevard;
45. Biliuță Florica – 23 years 'old - older gunshot wound in the left thigh, injured on the 19th of December 1989, while protesting on Calea Buziașului Boulevard; she was hospitalized after the 22nd of December 1989 (until that date, she refused to go the hospital because she was too scared of what was happening there);
46. Aciubotăriță Mariana - cranial- cerebral wound, she was shot in her home on Borzesti Street, by unknown persons' she has been hospitalized from December 23rd 1989 to February 15th 1990 at the County Hospital;
47. Crișan Doina - 43 years 'old, gunshot wound inflicted at the level of her upper limb on the 17th of December 1989, while she was on the her way back home;
48. Mazilu Mihalea – 22 years 'old, contusion and left frontal fracture;
49. Magyar Rozalia – 45 years 'old, eye injury; she has joined the protests from December 16th to December 23rd 1989; she was wounded on the 23rd of December 1989, while she was on duty as a nurse at the

ambulance unit within the Paediatrics Clinic of the Children's Hospital. She was injured at level of the face and eyes, by the broken window shards caused by a bullet;

50. *Marin Otilia – 20 years' old, transfixiant antero-posterior injury and fracture of the right arm; she was injured on the 23rd of December 1989, while working as a nurse at the Children's Hospital No. 3;*

51. *Adriana Palcău – 34 years 'old, abdominal gunshot wound inflicted on the 24th of December 1989, while she in her apartment located on the 1989 Revolution Boulevard of Timișoara, after she had joined the protests organized in front of the County Party Committee between the 16th and 22nd of December 1989;*

52. *Utan Stela - gunshot wound in her abdomen, injured by unknown persons, on the 25th of December 1989.*

Liza KRATOCHWILL

1989- The End and The Beginning: Comunism Neo-Comunism and Post-Comunism

From December 10th to December 11th 2009, the Civic Academy Foundation / the Memorial of the Victims of Communism and Resistance, in partnership with the “Memorial of Revolution of Timișoara” Association, the “Timișoara” Society, the French Cultural Centre from Timișoara and the Polish Institute, has organized, in Timișoara, the international conference referred to as: *1989, The End and The Beginning: Communism, Neo-Communism, Post-Communism*. The event was a part of the series of manifestations planned by the Civic Academy Foundation / the Memorial of the Victims of Communism and Resistance, in 2009, under the aegis of the 20 years since the fall of communism, and gathered several hundreds of persons at all 4 sections fostered by the “Adam Müller Gunttenbrunn” Hall from Timișoara.

The event was attended by some of the most important personalities from Romania, and we can mention here the names of Ana Blandiana, Lucia Hossu-Longin, Radu Filipescu, Romulus Rusan, Petre Mihai Băcanu, as well from abroad: Anneli Ute Gabanyi (Germany), Thierry Wolton (France), Stéphane Courtois (France), Petre Cărdu (Serbia), Wojciech Zajączkowski (Polish Ambassador in Romania), Gullaine Lang-Cheymol (France), Bela Borsi Kálmán (Hungary), Libuše Valentova (Czech Republic), Nicolae Dabija (Republic of Moldavia) and Petruška Šuštrová (Czech Republic).

The program of the symposium began at the premises of the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of 1989 in Timișoara, where the guests could visit the showrooms that harbour the four exhibition stands, *i.e.* *The Romanian Revolution in Images, The Children and The Revolution (an exhibition depicting the anticommunist and anti-Soviet rebellion from June 1953, in the former GDR), The Shout of Freedom*, as well as the exhibition rendering the moments of the Cold War. The visit continued with the Martyrs' Chapel, the hall of monuments the “George Șerban” and “Iosif Costinaș” commemorative rooms. Our guests were also invited to attend the launch of our books: *Procesul de la Timișoara (Trial of Timișoara)* – the 3rd volume and *Jurnaliști, eroi, teroriști. Revoluția de la Timișoara în presa locală (Journalists, Heroes, Terrorists. The Revolution of Timișoara Depicted by the Local Press)*, authored by Lucian-Vasile Szabo, based on the documents kept in our archive of publications.

Even from the beginning of the debates, Ana Blandiana, assigned as moderator of the debates from the first session, wanted to express her

gratitude to the organizers, the collaborators and, at the same time, to all participants, „the remarkable historians, experts, opinion leaders, all who accepted to come to Timișoara in the middle of the winter. The purpose of this meeting, as it has materialized, was that to compare the various reflections of the year 1989 from the perspective of the former communist countries” and to emphasize the manner in which every nation “left its natural and psychological mark on its innermost history”, because, as we all know, 1989 was different for each and every such country.



Visiting the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of 1989 in Timișoara

The symposium was opened by His Eminence Nicolae, the Bishop of Banat, who recalled the fervour and thrills felt 20 years ago, during the bloody confrontations of December 1989. The mayor, Mr. George Ciuhandu, wanted to comment on the events that took place in Timișoara on December 1st 2009, in Victoria Square. The symposium continued with the discourses delivered by Mr. Theophilus Botlung, representing the Association of the Former Political Prisoners in Timis and Mr. Silviu Sarafoleanu, representing the Association of the Former Deportees in Bărăgan – Timișoara.

Radu Filipescu, former dissident, gave a very relaxed speech, talking about the experience of confrontation with the communism, an experience which must be analyzed with the necessary objectivity, with humour and with a dose of irony. After his visit to the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of December 1989 in Timișoara and to the monuments built in Timișoara, Radu Filipescu is convinced that these monuments do have a new meaning or significance and they do transmit a message compared with the Monument from the Revolutiei Square in Bucharest, for which no alternative has been found, although inhabitants of Bucharest have

frequently expressed their dissatisfaction. In his opinion, nobody can claim that the dissidence from Romania was less represented here than in other communist countries; all it can be said is that the Romanian repressive apparatus was tougher and stronger here.



*Snapshot from the symposium. From left to right:
Traian Orban, Daniel Vighi, Ana Blandiana and Teodor Stanca*

„Twenty years later: what have we lost, what have we won?“, Petruška Šuštrová wondered starting from the Charta '77 and spinning yarns about the events occurred until the Velvet Revolution of the Czech Republic. Nicolae Dabija spoke also about the horrors of the communist system „since 1989, before 1989“, and particularly about the morbid injustice, the persecutions and the outstanding violence to which the Romanians from the neighbouring country had to endure.

In a free and simple speech, as he intended, with no references to bibliography, Ion Caramitru made a sad and bitter remark: as the time goes by, there are fewer and fewer people interested in the topics related to the Revolution: "We are the victims of our own unconscious, adventures, ideals and hopes, because, even at this symposium, the public attendance has dropped dramatically (...). I see no way out of the chaos we all have entered."

The second session of the symposium, moderated by Romulus Rusan, began with the opening ceremony of the photo exhibition referred to as *Supporting Romania*, presented by Jaroslaw Godun (head of the Polish Cultural Institute in Bucharest), in an impeccable Romanian. The exhibit

“Supporting Romania” has been organized by the National Memorial Institute of Warsaw in partnership with the Polish Institute in Bucharest.

Not by far did the exhibition intend to emphasize the aid offered by Poland (medicines, medical supplies and food). Its sole purpose was to attempt to perceive those days through the eyes of the participants in the expedition which started from Poznań on Friday, December 29th 1989. The five protagonists - Robert Kaminski, Józef Kowalewski, Przemysław Walewski, Maurycy Kłopocki and Jan Kołodziejcki - intended not only to provide the transportation of the aids to their final destination, but also to catch on film and to immortalize in self-suggestive images the face of Romania at the cross of two important years: 1989 / 1990.

The exhibition consisting of 38 boards and 7 banners, grouped the images on thematic criteria and their description was provided in three languages: Romanian, Polish and English.

László Tőkés highlighted the feeling of solidarity and brotherhood he felt in December 1989 regarding the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Romanian Revolution of 1989 – „rarely had it happened during our common history to be on the same side in respect to our just fights” – and he continued „we must search our common path in Europe, to build a just Europe.” With indignation, László Tőkés pointed out that a street was named called “Josip Broz Tito” in Liubliana, a monument was built in the memory of Teodor Jivcov in Sofia and the former Chief of Slovenian Secret Police received an award in Liubliana, the same as in our country, someone came with the “bright” idea to build a monument in the memory of our dictator at Scornicești and more recently, to dedicate a monument to Gen. Ștefan Gușe, in Târgu Mureș.

Another reason of indignation for László Tőkés was the fact that there were numerous attempts to damage his public image on the reason that he would have pleaded for the separation of Transylvania from Romania. Those attempts and speculations did nothing else than to stain the genuine values of the Revolution. The Euro-parliamentary considers that all representatives from Brussels must make their best efforts to fight against communism, the very same communism which still exists in Tibet, China, Cuba and North Korea, the very dark regime which has already made over 100 million victims: „Until the communism remains just a dark shadow of the past which we have finally defeated, we remain allies in this just cause, within the spirit of the Proclamation of Timișoara.”

The wall of silence, lie and bad-faith, that barrier of fear and violence is still persisting under different ways and shapes, being somehow carried on by the loyal successors of the communist legacy. This topic was

approached by several speakers: Wojciech Zajączkowski (*The Downfall of Communism in Poland*) and Petre Mihai Băcanu (*We Have Also Broken down a Wall*).

Even from the very beginning, the Romanian journalist admitted that in Jilava, the place where he was 20 years ago, under many yards below ground, he was completely torn away from the outside world, as he had to serve a sentence for having attempted to break the wall of tyranny from Romania, revealing the hunger, the censure and other demons which had deformed our country. The independent press has been annihilated since 1945, when the indoctrination has been settled: the writing became a forgery, the words were censored, the wooden language was raised to the highest peaks, and, getting a typing machine was a real adventure if no clearance had been given by the party officials. During those days, Doina Cornea and Ana Blandiana were the symbols of honour and dignity and served as models for many people: „if two women managed to break down the wall of this communist camp”, then it was about time for the men to do more.

A complex thesis was delivered by Thierry Wolton, who referred, in his comparative analysis, to the *Post-communism in China and Russia*. The French Revolution „was made in the name of Truth, Reason and Justice. In spite of the marvellous beauty of all these realities, unfortunately, the history will later on prove that they led to totalitarianism. France was one of the first countries, if not, even the first one, which acknowledged the Soviet regime and the first occidental country that established diplomatic relations in the communist China, which is a good thing from the perspective of the political realism. Nevertheless, behind these relations and political acknowledgements, a peculiar fascination for the communist regime always existed among the French political elite, a fascination which somehow pertains to the legacy of the Napoleonic Jacobinism and Caesarism”.

The first day of the meeting was ended with the screening of a film produced by Lucia Hossu-Longin, *An Inconvenient Witness to the Events of December 1989*, about Iosif Costinaş, journalist in Timișoara.

Concluding that no attempts focused on finding out the truth were made after December 22nd 1989, Doru Mărieş answered the uncomfortable questions of the participants. For his merits he received a medal from the Memorial of Revolution Association. The medal was handed by Traian Orban, who underlined that he did not agree with this protest manner, namely the „hunger strike led to extreme, with whom Doru Mărieş managed to coagulate, in the name of this idea, a large part of the civilian society”.

Decorated with the distinction „Royal House Cross”, Florian Mihalcea read the decree passed by His Majesty Mihai I of Romania.

The third session of the symposium has been moderated by Florian Mihalcea, president of the “Timișoara” Society, who, after opening the session, gave the floor to one of the most qualified experts in the history of communism, the French Stéphane Courtois, whose value is recognized also in Romania, particularly due to his visits to the well-known summer school from Sighet. Even since 1980, he distinguished himself by his paper *Le PCF dans la guerre*, a study supervised by Annie Kriegel, with whom he founded, in 1982, the *Communisme* magazine, a publication that gathered outstanding experts in the French communism. As a consequence of the downfall of the communist regimes from the Eastern European countries, the access to the Komintern archives was instantly interpreted by Stéphane Courtois as a new configuration that announced the birth of a real communism history. After numerous contributions and works on the different faces of the French and the international communism, Stéphane Courtois participated, as the main coordinator and the personality who wrote the introductory presentation, in the project referred to as the *Black Book of Communism*, a 850 pages book published in 1997. Undoubtedly, we can say that this book succeeded to partly change the perception of the occidental world on what had actually happened in the countries of the communist camp, because, neither the people in the East had knowledge on what was happening in the West, nor the occidentals knew much about the easterners. The book aroused and still arouses numerous controversies, particularly when comparing the Nazism with the Communism, as well as when determining the number of victims of those two totalitarian regimes. In response, Stéphane Courtois insists, in his works and speeches, on what he calls „the lost honour of the French left wing”. One of these works is *The Blind Spot of European Memory / August 23th 1939: The Soviet-Nazi Alliance*, recently published by the International Centre of Studies on Communism, within the Civic Academy Foundation, translated by Denisa Oprea.

During the conference, the author clearly pointed out the historical event from which he began his debate: "On August 23rd 1939, the Nazi Germany and the USSR announced the conclusion of a nonaggression pact. Although the Bolshevik Russia maintained long privileged relations with Germany of the 20s', that fact was a surprise for most of the observers, because the ideological opposition between the Nazism and the Soviet communism seemed irreducible. The alliance between those two powerful totalitarian dictators, Hitler and Stalin was to have adverse consequences,

visible even today in the heart of the reunited Europe." Courtois referred also to Chapter *Origins of the Soviet- Nazi alliance*, emphasizing that the danger had been danger looming over Europe long before the conclusion of the "Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact": "The relations between the Bolshevik and German leaders began in a special and peculiar way: in April 1917 to hasten the collapse of the Russian army, the German intelligence services decided to facilitate the return of a several tens of revolutionaries, including Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, alias Lenin, to Russia. The result is well-known: the onset of the Bolshevik government on November 7th 1917, then the leonine treaty from Brest-Litovsk in March 1918 by means of which Lenin gave away to Germany 800,000 square kilometres and a quarter of the tsarist empire; soon afterwards, the civil war began and the climax was reached once the Bolshevik governance was finally settled." We can say that hardly had First World War ended when the conditions to outbreak the second war had already been planned!

As a genuine historian and bursting with exemplary dignity and honour, Stéphane Courtois follows, step by step, the coquetry between the Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, a diplomatic demureness whose consequences have fully hit Romania, Poland, Finland and the Baltic Countries. The duplicity of both executioners, Stalin and Hitler, is broadly shown under the light of the historical documents (some of them being made public solely after the downfall of the Soviet Union).

Unlike many of his intellectual compatriots, Courtois does not forget the French communists and consequently, he reveals amazing facts, such as the collaboration between the French Communist Party and the Nazi who entered Paris on June 14th 1940: „on June 19th the «L'Humanite» publishes, clandestinely, the official German communicate and advises the French workers to fraternize with the German soldiers.”

On June 26th, the communist officials are welcomed at the German Embassy by Otto Abetz, the personal representative of the Fuehrer in Paris. The dawns of a political agreement emerged. Such political arrangement was also evoked by Jacques Duclos in a report to Moscow, dated June 30th, where he mentioned: „the conclusion of a friendship pact (by France) with the USSR, designed to amend the German-Soviet pact and to constitute an important factor for the European pacification”.

The conclusion of this volume, also published in Timișoara, was a common sense conclusion: „Therefore, as long as the criminal dimension of the alliance between Stalin and Hitler is not clearly determined and recognized – particularly by Russia–, the scars it left on the European body will not be healed, and the European unification will be deprived of a solid basis: the

truth concerning the crimes committed against peace and humanity, the single element able to reunite the spirits and the hearts”.

„How can the events of 1989 be described? Should we use the domino or the puzzle principle?” the French historian wanders, when closing his well documented intervention.

Anneli Ute Gabanyi focused on the *Aspects of the Post-former-neo-communist Revolutions and Evolutions*.

Immediately after 1985, Marcus Wolf, the chief of the foreign intelligence service of the German Democratic Republic, travelled in the country, claiming that changes are about to come and asking the people whether they were ready for such changes.

The researcher talked about the movements which emerged in parallel with the Stasi, approaching also the similarities between the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic, the problem of violence and the “Sinatra” program started by Gorbaciov in 1988. In August 1989, in the German Democratic Republic, the commander of the Soviet troops (there were over half of millions of Soviet soldiers there) said that: „if any problems occur here, we won't interfere”.

There has been also approached the aspect of the pan-European picnic from Sopron and the symbolic cut of the fence; the turbulences from Dresden, which had not been necessarily regarded as Soviet abuses; the properly planned marches coordinated by the Stasi forces, where the people knew that no interventions were going to be made. There has been also emphasized the fact that when crisis situations occurred, the highly important officials were never to be found on phone, and the major decisions had been taken by ordinary people. With reference to the dissidence, Anneli Ute Gabanyi acknowledged that no obvious form of anti-regime opposition emerged in GDR, until 1989, when the phenomenon of running away in the German Democratic Republic increased: at the same time, she evoked the numerous demonstrations that had taken place and which could not have been stopped without a civil war, because of the large number of participants thereto.

In the German Democratic Republic, a very laic country, the fight against the church was even stronger than in other communist countries, because of the education in the spirit of hate that was practiced there.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dynamics changed; if until that moment, the people shouted „We are the people!”, a new level was reached: the people proceeded with the recovery of documents which, unfortunately, had been massively destroyed or stolen and burnt. The people became more

interested in identifying the spies. Thus they discovered several agents who had willingly accepted to become nothing but snitches.

Nevertheless, the people living in the German Democratic Republic had „a big brother”, the German Federal Republic, so the economic facilitations from the Eastern Germany were significant, the currency was stronger, the exchange rate between those two currencies was equal; the single difference consisted in the fact that the people from the former communist part of the country had more money because they simply had nothing to buy. In her opinion, the situation in the former German Democratic Republic is catastrophic due to the massive immigration of the doctors and professors and the depopulation of the villages and small towns.

It is also remarkable the fact that the Western Germans pay an additional fee for the economic reconstruction of the former German Democratic Republic. Therefore, the amount collected on a yearly basis is 10 times higher than the total debt for which „the Romanians starved to death and trembled”, to pay it back (11,8 billion dollars); although other countries had higher debts, „Romania was granted no delays”.

Referring to our country, Anneli Ute Gabanyi considers that the dictator could not leave, because Romania was the single country in the world where Ceaușescu had also been appointed as the Chief of National Defence even since 1972. With reference to the terrorists, she supports a rather controversial theory: „The terrorists had to be invented” to support an anonymous call for help, on December 23rd 1989, to support the necessary steps taken at the level of the Security Council from the United Nations, steps and demands that could be successful solely in the eventuality of a terrorist attack from outside the borders.

Daniel Vighi spoke more on how the Proclamation of Timișoara gave a political coherence to the events of 1989, a proclamation which was planned as a synthesis of the ideas of all those who had marched on the streets during the Revolution. Hardly had anyone thought or even imagine the annoyance and controversies brought about by the famous 8th point of the Proclamation, the point which brought up the principles of lustration. Almost instantaneously, Daniel Vighi reviewed all the 13 points of the Proclamation, trying to explain the intentions set down by those who had prepared the document; even if they had little knowledge on economics, they did our best in putting forward relevant ways to reform the health sector (the 9th point), the privatization sector (the 10th point) and the decentralization field (the 11th point).

Béla Borsi Kálmán, historian and university professor, former diplomat in our country and in Paris, spoke in Romanian about the era of

transition (the period from 1990 to 1995) which found him in Bucharest. He also made a social-political analysis of the *Manner of changing the system* implemented in Hungary.

Béla Borsi Kálmán reminded the auditors a famous phrase used by József Antal, the Prime Minister of Hungary after 1989: „Why haven't you deign to make a Revolution?“, because, in Hungary, the shift was made so slowly that the Hungarians think that they do not know anything about this change of system and that they have been fooled. In his opinion, Hungary is currently undergoing a state of frustration because all lists connected to this subject remained unclear and, moreover, the country faced major difficulties in overcoming the obstacles of integration to both the national system and the European system.

The Hungarian historian drawn up an exhaustive monograph of our city and Banat: *5 generații și ceea ce urmează înainte* (5 generations and everything that follows from now on). In his vision, „the history of the Hungarians is in fact a series of illusions. The first illusion was that the Hungarian elite claimed that it was able to build, in the Central Europe, more specifically, in the former kingdom of Hungary, a nation-state according to the French model, by means of the old feudal structures. However, that illusion did not take into consideration the fact that the natural Hungarian aspiration had no additional chance or a merit compared to other national minorities who had lived in the Habsburg Empire whose Eastern part was in fact the Hungarian Kingdom“. Then, for almost 150 years, Hungary was occupied by the Turks; consequently, the Hungarian steppe turned into a genuine desert: some Hungarians had been exterminated while others had been exiled and thus, the ethnic component of the Hungarian Kingdom changed dramatically.

„The second big slip occurred from 1848 to 1849, when the Hungarian elite failed to find a federative solution. Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, the Upper Hungary (Slovakia) should have built a Switzerland-type state.“ Kálmán underlined the fact that, according to a census dating back in 1851, 8% of the inhabitants of Timișoara declared themselves Hungarians, while a census from 1910, showed that 54% of the people here declared themselves as Hungarian nationals. The large number of Hungarians is not due to the increase of population, but to the fact that this social model of the Hungarian noble elite, this lifestyle had something appealing which determined a large part of the inhabitants of the city to declare themselves as Hungarian nationals. At the same time, Kálmán confesses that this noble typology is still present in the civil society of Timișoara, which „is part of Romania“, being also convinced that the Revolution could not have

emerged in Craiova, or Iasi, or Bucharest or in any other city from Romania. To support the credibility of his thesis, Kálmán brings the argument that after according to recent censuses in Timișoara, the number of Hungarian nationals is about the same as the number emphasized in the census from 1851, *i.e.* 7-8%.

Libuše Valentova, head of the Romanian Department of the University of Prague, is feeling excellent in Timișoara, because, as she said, she is in Central Europe, the *Mittleuropa*. Evoking some memories from the Caroline University of Prague, she approached the events of November 1989.

Even from the beginning of the year, the Czech society was split between those political activists who were still exerting their power, while the movement, which emerged in the '70s, became stronger and stronger. In fact, after the repression of the „Spring of Prague”, in 1968, a more courageous but small elite took shape. It included the people from the Charta '77, the Committee of the Defence of those unjustly monitored by the secret police and a few members who attended the literary societies. There were also people who were conceding the communist regime to live easily, the ones who were seen as the grey area. The students began to organize themselves, building the Socialist Union of the Young People and trying to promote the innovative ideas from Perestroika; others promoted and caused the radicalization of movements from the '89, making a program platform; 800 students, gathering students from the Faculty of Mathematics and Pedagogy, organized a legal manifestation on the occasion of the celebration of 50 years from the anti-Nazi march on November 17th 1939. Although the program of the manifestation said nothing regarding the protests, the young people arrived in the Wenceslas Square, changing thus the character of the manifestation, chanting powerful slogans such as „We are empty handed!”. The Secret Police propagated fabricated news about the death of a student, and the students attending the Theatre, Philology and other faculties declared strike.

On November 19th, within the premises of a small theatre and upon the initiative of Václav Havel, the Civic Forum was set up and the well known term: “the Velvet Revolution”, invented by the same Václav Havel, became to be widely used by the people. Since the mass manifestations started, the Prime Minister was forced to say that he no force was about to be used. The conclusions drawn by Libuše Valentova are valid for our society too: „there's no ending for this transition era”, people, and the teacher, in particular, are living in tremendous poverty, and what is more awful and disappointing is in fact the diminishment of the importance of

being a teacher. An opinion poll shows that, if in 1991, the Czechs assigned the top position to freedom, 86% of them declaring that they were happy, in 1998, only 26% of the Czechs were regularly watching the events in the country and had different aspirations: safety, equal chances and social care, in other words, the people wanted to lead a normal life.

Petre Cârdu considers that he could write 3 books on what had happened in Yugoslavia. He tried to associate those events with a poem whose final line was: „all witnesses are guilty for what one can now see”. For *Yugoslavia - 1989: the beginning of the end*, it was a step towards something different. It is only now, after so many years, when Petre Cârdu was granted a free pass permit to visit all member states of the European Union, once with the abolition of visas for his country, in November, 2009. This permit was granted in record time of 2 days, moment in which he felt what freedom really meant, because even „freedom of being crazy or freedom of being sick” is part of human rights. To have the freedom to write poems is a different form of freedom, a form which is different from staying in line at different Embassies to obtain a visa.

The symposium ended with free discussions and the screening of the documentary *We do not die!*, produced by Gabriel Burza (the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of 1989 in Timișoara).

Simona MOCIOALCĂ

„Days of Romanian Culture in Munich“ 2009

In Munich, the end of September and the beginning of October stands for the *Oktoberfest*, an emblematic festival for the Bavarian culture which became famous in the whole world and which attracted, year by year, millions of visitors. However, during this fabulous period of the year, Munich stood out not only from the perspective of its marvellous festival of the Bavarian culture. From September 25th to October 14th, Munich fostered the „**Days of Romanian Culture**“, an event organized under a motto which advised to a meditation: *20 years later...*

20 years later or *After 20 years...* A suggestive title which takes us on an imaginary journey back in time, in the France of the 17th century, to meet Alexandre Dumas' musketeers. This time, *20 years later* finds us here, in the Europe of the 21st century. Our full attention is focused on Germany and its former Berlin Wall and Romania, the last and the toughest bastion of communism in Europe. A bastion which has been finally defeated during the Revolution of December 1989 in exchange for the supreme sacrifice: a sea of blood. In this case, the weapon used in this fierce battle was not the musket but a modern, state-of-the art arm: the rifle and the gun, both being heavily used by the Army, the Militia and the Securitate. And to sophisticate this grotesque blood soup, everything was seasoned with tanks, helicopters, hunting planes, machine guns and anti-aircraft missiles. The salt and pepper was given by the fists, the bats, the rocks, and, at best, the Molotov cocktails empirically prepared by the revolutionaries.

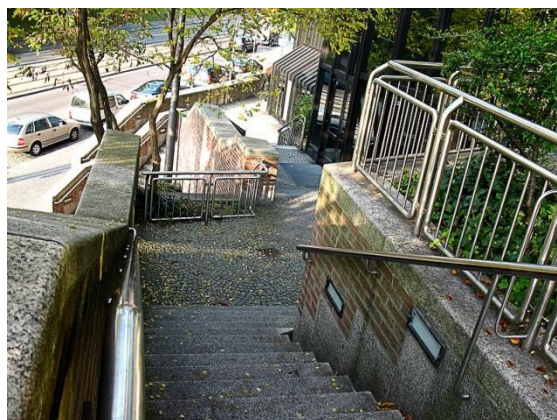
The official opening of this *Remember 1989* took place on September 24th at Residenz Palace, the former residence of the Bavarian dukes and kings, between 1385 and 1918. Presently, the Residenz Palace is a museum and at the same time, a place where noteworthy events are organized on an annual basis. The opening ceremony of the „**Days of Romanian Culture**“ was attended by the State Secretary and Chief of the Bavarian State Chancellery, Siegfried Schneider, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cristian Diaconescu, the State Secretary in charge of the Relations with the Romanians Abroad within the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Eugen Tomac, the Romania's Ambassador in Germany, Lazăr Comănescu, and the Senator Viorel Badea. The organizers of this remarkable event were the Association for Promotion of Romanian Culture and Traditions in partnership with the Romanian General Consulate in Munich and numerous Romanian and German partners, *i.e.* the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Romanian Cultural Institute of Bucharest, the „Titu Maiorescu“ Romanian Cultural Institute from Berlin, the State

Chancellery of Bavaria, the Triarte film & event – Munich, the Münchener Musikseminar and the national Institute for the Memory of Romanian Exile. The agenda of this year's edition of the „Days of Romanian Culture” managed to gather the numerous flanks of culture: the theatre, the music: jazz, chamber music, folklore and chorus, as well as the film. The debates on the theme of the Romanian Revolution of 1989 were also an important part of this event. For over three hours, the guests approached a rather controversial topic: Was there a genuine revolution or something else? The debates which soon stirred the attention of all guests, and allow me to point out the names of our honourable guests: Anneli Ute Gabanyi, political analyst, Prof. Ion Calafeteanu, PhD., Dinu Zamfirescu, Charman of the National Institute for Romanian Exile Memory, and the actor Ion Caramitru, a fervent participant in and witness of the events of December 1989, have been moderated by PhD. Serban Orescu. The itinerant exhibition of the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of 1989 in Timișoara was opened even from the first day of these series of events, on September 25th at 6.00 p.m., under the following title: *20 Years Later – Photographs during the Romanian Revolution of 1989*. Last, but not least, we must indicate the location where our exhibition was opened to public and all other events took place: it is Gasteig, established in 1985 as the centre of the cultural life in Munich, located on the right bank of Isar River.



Gasteig on the high bank of the Isar River

I confess that the translation of this name is rather difficult for me. And this happens because the name of the centre was formed following the typical German style of abbreviation and syllable elimination, a style which is also typical for Bavaria. So, *Gasteig* is a combination deriving from merging the words *gacher Steig*, in free translation, *sloping way*, referring directly to the way leading from Ludwigsbrücke (Ludwig's Bridge) to St. Nikolai Church.



Der „Gache Steig“ („the Sloping Way“)

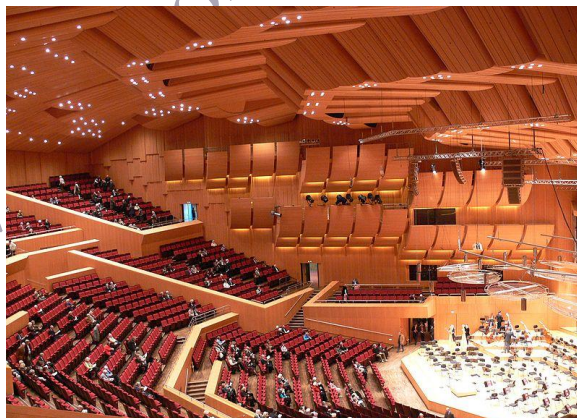
In the opening ceremony of the fifth edition of the „Days of Romanian Culture“, the Romanian General Consul in Munich, Mrs. Brândușa Predescu, underlined, referring to the exhibition presented by the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of 1989 in Timișoara that „what we have here, in Munich, is not only an opportunity to show this exhibition, but, at the same time, an obligation to do this. Why am I saying this? Well, this Revolution, this rebellion of the inhabitants of Timișoara would have never been possible if people had had no access to the information broadcasted by the Western mass-media. The people did gain information and one of the most important means of information they had available came from this very place, from Munich. This radio station has permanently brought accurate information to the Romanians, to all those who were listening to it, or, more exactly, to all those who had the courage to listen to it. From here people found out that the Europe was trembling, that some people have already freed themselves from communism.”

The conclusion drawn by the Romanian General Consul, Mrs. Brândușa Predescu was addressing the young generation in Germany and could be extrapolated, of course, to the Romanian generation too: „The younger generations should know and fully understand this part of the Western-German history and Western-German journalism. They should be interested in the history of their country, the history of the West Germany.”

As an acknowledgement of both the utmost importance of the „Radio Free Europe” and the courage of those who broadcasted the hottest news from Europe, because, we have to admit that, prior to the Romanians’ courage to open and listen to „Radio Free Europe”, we must speak about the courage of the editors working at the Radio Free Europe. And, among the most important guests at the „Days of Romanian Culture” in Munch, we should mention Mr. Mircea Carp who, for 44 year, has devoted all his efforts, being the voice who encouraged the people, night by night, from the microphone of the “Voice of America” and later on, from the “Radio Free Europe”.

Coming back to the exhibition organized by the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of 1989 in Timișoara, its curator was Martin Rill, manager of the Central Museum of Danubian Swabians (Donauschwäbisches Museum) from Ulm. The introductory lecture, in German, was delivered by Prof. Vasile Docea, representing the Faculty of Political Sciences, Philosophy and Sciences of Communication within the West University of Timișoara. He was also one of our collaborators, whom I introduced in the last issue of our Journal.

The Memorial Museum of the Revolution of 1989 in Timișoara was proudly represented by its president, Mr. Traian Orban who shared his thoughts concerning the event: „The opening of the exhibition took place in Gasteig, a special cultural centre of utmost importance for the inhabitants of Munich, having many exhibit halls, conference and show rooms, the same place which also fosters the concert halls of the local Philharmonics”.



Gasteig – The Philharmonics Hall

Here, in this building frequently visited by the by the inhabitants of Munich and particularly by the young people, in the central hall of the 1st floor, the itinerant exhibition of the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of 1989 in Timișoara was opened to public.

Prior to the official opening hour and immediately after the final arrangement of our exhibits, the exhibition has already been visited by 100 visitors in about one hour and a half. Close to the stand of the exhibition organized by the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of 1989 in Timișoara in partnership with Timis County Council, the head of the Central Museum of the Danubian Swabians from Ulm, Mr. Martin Rill, has displayed other boards with exceptional photos he received from the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of 1989 in Timișoara. This second exhibition was also displayed in other cultural centres from Bavaria as well as in Ulm.

I gave a brief account of the collaboration I had with the German land Thüringen and which materialized with an exchange of exhibitions. The exhibition *Der Schrei nach Freiheit / The Shout of Freedom*, which depicted the first anti-Soviet and anticommunist rebellion of June 17th 1953 in Germany, brutally stopped by the Soviet troops, was displayed in many Romanian cities. Furthermore, our exhibition has also been put on view in several important cities of Germany.

I would like here to express my deepest gratitude to the Romanian General Consulate in Munich and particularly to the Romanian Consul, Mrs. Brândușa Predescu, for the support that have been offered to us and, at the same time, to the Romanian Cultural Institute from Bucharest which financed our travel to Germany as well as all other necessary costs to that effect. I must also add that the Romanian Cultural Institute from Bucharest has financed the opening of our itinerant exhibition in Berlin and Vienna and, at the same time, we must acknowledge that this exhaustive action designed to inform the wide public on the Revolution of December 1989 would have never been possible without this financial support.“

Adina **HORNEA ABRUDA**

Revolution in Hamburg! Romanian and Depicted in Images



In November, the exhibition of the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of 1989 in Timișoara arrived in Hamburg, on the invitation of the **Society for Promotion of Education, Intercultural Exchange and Durable Development**, also known by the acronym **BINE e.V.** The acronym was not randomly chosen since it makes direct reference to the Romanian word (*BINE stands for OK*). And this is owed to the fact that one of the members of the Society's managing board is in fact Claudia Poschmann, a

Romanian closely connected to Timișoara and the Revolution by a special (al)chemical bond (let's not forget she is a chemist engineer!), who thus managed to satisfy one of her innermost duties: to give the inhabitants of the city of Hamburg the opportunity to attend the opening of the exhibition *The Romanian Revolution in Images*. Besides Claudia Poschmann, we ought to mention the names of other remarkable personalities who supported our efforts: Dr. Friderike Seithel, expert in the study of culture, Ulrike Herzog, musician and ethnologist, Michael Poschmann, musician and member of the *JFK band (Just for Kicks)* and, „the last but not the least”, Tavi Iepan, who for the inhabitants of Timișoara was the symbol of the *Progresiv TM band, Cargo band* and more recently, the *Locatarii band*.

Recently founded, more precisely in 2007, **BINE e.V.** aspires to the promotion of the harmony and conciliation between all nations, the intercultural exchanges between Germany, and particularly, the East-European countries, by organizing exhibitions, concerts, lectures, seminars, theatrical performances, academic projects and the enumeration can go on. 2009, a year of commemoration of the events which have completely changed the entire “face” of Europe, was celebrated by **BINE e.V.** which dedicated it a series of manifestations that enriched every day of November 2009. The motto and the “motor” of these events was: „1989-2009: On the occasion of the twentieth year from the Fall of the Berlin Wall and from the Revolution, our full attention is focused, during this year, on the theme of the events of 1989, in Germany and the Eastern Europe. The exhibitions, the lectures, the cinematographic and music manifestations as well as the

interdisciplinary meetings between the scholars and the time witnesses from the East and the West hereby invite you to an individual reflection on the recent German and East European history, in the fall of 2009. We would like to stir up the dialogue of cultures and generations by understanding the past to building a future”.

In this generous context, the opening of the itinerant exhibition of the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of 1989 in Timișoara took place on November 17th, during the second half of the period assigned to this sequence of events, at *On-Off-Art Projects* Gallery, in the presence of the honorific consul of Romania, Mr. Hans Werner Czerwinski, and the representative of Senate’s Cultural Section, Mrs. Juana Bienenfeld.



• Snapshot during the opening ceremony:
From left to right: Mr. Erich Clef-Prahm, host of the exhibition,
and Mrs. Juana Bienenfeld, representative of Senate’s Cultural Section

The opening ceremony was preceded by the screening of the documentary *We Won’t Die!* produced by Gabriel Burza (the Memorial Museum of the Revolution of 1989 in Timișoara), joining thus other two documentaries dedicated to the recent history of Romania,: *Ioane, cum e la construcții?* (*How’s in Constructions, John?*), a documentary produced by Sabina Pop in 1983 and which is focused on the ideals of a category of workers somehow isolated back then and unfortunately, isolated even now, and the documentary produced in 2005 by Florin Iepan, a director from Timișoara, *Das*

Experiment 770 – Gebären auf Befehl / Born on Demand – The Decree-Children (I am also one of those children!). Besides the Romanian films, there have been screened other films from Germany, Poland, Hungary Bulgaria and the former USSR. These documentary films “emerged during the last decade of the Cold War and which featured the feeling of imminent and profound changes that are to come. These films are somehow the messengers of the hope for political, economic and, last but not least, cultural opening. Each film has opened borders, either by its form or contents, and claimed, through its brave articulation, the necessity of changes”.



From left to right: Claudia Poschmann, Dr. Friderike Seithel, Tavi Iepan and Michael Poschmann

The film *We Won't Die!* succeeded to give the key needed by the public to easily open the “gate” to the events from December 1989, particularly that some visitors confessed that besides the scene of Ceaușescu spouses’ execution, which travelled around the world with the speed of light, they did not know much about the Revolution of Romania.

Before ending my essay, I would like to confess that the hard work and enthusiasm shown when arranging the hall and assembling the exhibition made me think twice about the people’s respect for everything that has and is still done! Everything was thoroughly planned, from the painting in white of the pillars used to display the picture boards up to identifying the best solution to “hang up” these boards.

Michael Poschmann even thought to buy a Romanian flag from eBay, a flag whom he blanked out just like the one used in the Revolution. The flag was

then placed near a large poster which emphasized the concert of the *Pro Musica* Band, in 1990 in Timișoara and which became the emblematic song of the Revolution.

Although Michael Poschmann has started to visit Romania since the summer of 1989, he has never managed to stay here as long as he planned. The terror that ruled in the country and which affected not only the Romanians but also the foreigners who dared to come here, determined him to leave Romania as soon as possible.



Michael Poschmann preparing the blanked out flag

However, he returned after 1990, and started to frequently visit Romania. There is a strong bond between him and our country, a bond which became even stronger due to his wife, Claudia, and also due to the warm friendship with Tavi Iepan and other remarkable musicians from Timișoara. And, since I mentioned Tavi Iepan, I would like to add that although he had left the country for more than 20 years, none of the 2500 bridges and pontoons from Hamburg (according to Wikipedia!) could make him forget to cross the „bridge” to Romania, always eluding the distances, either by his presence here or by... music. This is why, even since 2004, the *Locatarii* Band recorded the song *The Heroes' Cemetery*, using his lyrics and music, „in the memory of those who fell in December '89, and to honour their families, the wounded and those who were pure within back then and now”.

Adina **HORNEA ABRUDA**