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ROMANIA UNDER COMMUNISM

PARADOX AND DEGENERATION

Dennis Deletant



Romania under Communism

Communism has cast a long shadow over Romania. The passage of little over a quarter of a century since the overthrow in December 1989 of Romania's last Communist leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu, offers a symbolic standpoint from which to penetrate that shadow and to throw light upon the entire period of Communist rule in the country. An appropriate point of departure is the observation that Romania's trajectory as a Communist state within the Soviet bloc was unlike that of any other. That trajectory has its origins in the social structures, attitudes and policies in the pre-Communist period. The course of that trajectory is the subject of this inquiry.

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July 2017

Biographies of key figures

Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu play a dominant role in this study and are naturally omnipresent in its pages

Gheorghe Apostol (Tudor Vladimirescu, Galați, 16 May, 1913; Bucharest, 21 August 2010) is believed to have joined the Communist Party in 1934. In 1937, he was sentenced to three years' jail for membership of the outlawed party and held in Târgu-Jiu prison until his escape in August 1944. He was made head of the Communist trade unions association after 1944 and appointed a member of the Politburo. In 1954, he was named First Secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party with the approval of Gheorghiu-Dej for a year after the fallout from Stalin's death, and then first vice prime minister when Gheorghiu-Dej resumed his leadership of the party. His close association with Gheorghiu-Dej led him to consider himself the latter's successor but his ambition was thwarted by Ion Gheorghe Maurer who engineered the appointment of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Apostol's resentment was translated into periodic critical memoranda addressed to the latter. Following an attack on him by Constantin Dăscălescu at the RCP's Tenth Congress in 1969, Apostol was removed from the Politburo. Between 1977 and 1988, he served successively as Romanian ambassador to Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. He was the principal author of the "Letter of the Six" broadcast by the international media in March 1989. For further details of Apostol see chapter ten.

Alexandru Bârlădeanu (Comrat, Bessarabia, 25 January 1911; Bucharest, 13 November 1997). Bârlădeanu completed his secondary schooling at Iași and in 1932 was taken on as a lecturer in political economics at the University of Iași. He appears to have been active in the National Peasant Party at this time since Corneliu Coposu, its youth leader, recalls that Bârlădeanu was presented to him during a visit he made to the town (C. Coposu, *Dialoguri*, p.67). Bârlădeanu admitted to being a Communist from his student days and having flirted with the NPP, but he left the latter after its handling of the Grivița strikes in 1933. The Soviet annexation of Bessarabia caught him there on holiday at his mother's house and he remained in the province. He worked at an economics institute in Chișinău until the outbreak of war in 1941, when he was evacuated to Kazakhstan. Poor eyesight saved him from conscription and he was sent down a coal mine in Karaganda for

several months before persuading a local Party boss to assign him to a secondary school in the town teaching mathematics. In 1943, he was sent to Moscow for doctoral studies and returned to Romania in 1946. Bârlădeanu's unusually long stay in the Soviet Union led to rumours that he was in fact a Russian and a member of the Soviet Communist Party, but he denied these, claiming that he joined the Romanian Communist Party in 1946 (Lavinia Betea, *Maurer și lumea de ieri*, pp.289–90).

Emil Bodnăraș (Colomea, 10 February 1904; Bucharest, 24 January 1976). There are many question marks over Bodnăraș's real loyalties. According to his party file he was born in Colomea (now in the Ukraine) on 10 February 1904 of Ukrainian-German parentage. (I am grateful to Claudiu Secașiu for this information). Bodnăraș studied law at Iași University where, according to his official obituary, he first came into contact with Marxist groups. He then joined the officers' academy in Timișoara where he completed his training in 1927 (*Anale de istorie*, vol.22, 1976, no.1, p.189). His obituary says nothing about the following seven years until his arrest and his sentencing in 1934 to ten years hard labour. The gap has been filled from other sources. In 1927, he was posted to Craiova with the rank of lieutenant and later transferred to a barracks at Sadagura in northern Romania only thirty kilometres from the river Dniester and the border with the Soviet Union. From there he defected to the Soviet Union on the night of 16–17 February 1932 (Stelian Tănase, *Clienții lui Tanti Varvara*, Bucharest: Humanitas, 2005, p.175. Two questions arise at this point. Why should Bodnăraș, with his Ukrainian background, be posted so close to the Soviet frontier? Was he, perhaps, recruited by Romanian military intelligence and his defection planned? Information from the KGB archives suggests answers to these questions. It claims that it was as the military intelligence officer of the 12th artillery regiment based in Sadagura that Bodnăraș was sent into the Soviet Union. He was turned, however, by the Soviets and was trained as an agent at school in the town of Astrakhan (G. Iavorschi, "Pentru cine a lucrat 'inginerul Ceaușu'?", *Magazin Istoric*, vol.28, no.9 (September 1994), p.18). Bodnăraș admitted as much in a meeting of the Politburo held on 13–14 March 1961: "Towards the end of 1933 [Vyacheslav] Menzhinsky was still alive [and] he headed the special agency where I worked [...] my contact was one of the deputy heads of this service". Menzhinsky was the head of the OGPU (Soviet Security Service) from 1926 until his death in May 1934, when he was succeeded by his first deputy, Genrikh Yagoda, who may have been the deputy to whom Bodnăraș was referring. Bodnăraș fondly reminisced about his treatment by the Soviets:

The Soviet secret services were particularly considerate towards me and took care to brief me, giving me access to books and papers so that I didn't get cut off from events in Romania. I also received the daily *Universul*. When the strike at the Grivița yards took place (February 1933), the Soviets brought me from my lodgings to their headquarters where I spent several days following the information that they received from their secret services who were noting what was happening.

‘Stenogram of the RWP Politburo meeting of 13–14 March 1961’ —my thanks to Marius Oprea for passing onto me a copy of this document. The stenogram is cited in Tănase with the reference Arhiva CC al PCR [Archive of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party], Biroul Politic, MTG, 12–14 March, 1961 (S.Tănase, *Clienții lui Tanti Varvara*, p.185). This archive is held in the National Central Historical Archives (ANIC) in Bucharest. A number of Romanian intelligence officers who served during and immediately after the Second World War have stated that Bodnăraș’s fluent knowledge of German allowed him to be used on various espionage missions by the NKVD in Poland and the Baltic republics before being sent to Bulgaria in 1934. At the end of July, en route through Romania, he was recognized in the Gara de Nord station in Bucharest and arrested. He was tried for desertion, for stealing documents, and for crimes against the country’s security by a military tribunal in Iași two months later and found guilty. His sentence was confirmed on 19 February 1935: 10 years’ imprisonment (S.Tănase, *Clienții lui Tanti Varvara*, p.184). Other questions arise. Why was he sent by his Soviet masters to Bulgaria by train through Romania, with all the risks of recognition that the journey entailed, when he could have travelled direct by boat from Odessa to Burgas? Was he sent deliberately by train in the hope that he would be caught by the Romanians as a Soviet spy and imprisoned with the Romanian Communists whom he could infiltrate on behalf of the NKVD? Was he, in fact, a double agent? His mission from the Soviets may well have been to evaluate Gheorghiu-Dej because the latter, unlike other leading figures in the RCP, had not studied in the Soviet Union. Serghei Nikonov, the Soviet-trained head of the SSI (the Romanian Intelligence Service) from 1946 to 1951, expressed the conviction in a conversation in 1988 with Titu Simon, a former officer in Romanian military intelligence, that Bodnăraș had been recruited in the 1920s by an officer in the SSI named Florin Becescu (cover name Georgescu) to penetrate the NKVD and that this was the purpose of his mission to the Soviet Union. In 1947, information was passed to Bodnăraș by the Soviets that Georgescu had worked as a double agent, for both the Romanians and the Soviets, and Bodnăraș gave orders for his liquidation, before Nikonov could investigate the charges. The reason for Bodnăraș’s haste, Nikonov believed, was to prevent the emergence of any details of his recruitment by Becescu (T. Simon, *Pacea: Quo Vadis*, Bucharest: Odeon, 1992, pp.77–78). Simon’s account of Bodnăraș’s hand in Becescu’s death is corroborated by Traian Borcescu, head of the counter-intelligence section of the SSI between 1941 and 1944. Becescu joined the Communist Party after 23 August 1944 and was appointed head of counter-intelligence in the SSI (he had held this post until 1941). However, he released information about Ana Pauker’s private life as a young woman and lost the confidence of Bodnăraș. It was for this indiscretion that Bodnăraș, according to Borcescu, ordered Becescu’s removal. While travelling to attend a meeting in Sinaia on the orders of Bodnăraș, Becescu’s car was ambushed and he was shot dead by Communist agents (author’s interview with Traian Borcescu, 8 March 1995). Bodnăraș served his sentence for desertion at Doftana, Aiud, Galați and Brașov, according to the official obituary. He was also held at Caransebeș jail, for

he was seen there by a fellow inmate Mircea Oprea, in 1942 (letter to the author from M. Oprea, 29 August 1994). In Doftana Bodnăraş formed a close friendship with Gheorghiu-Dej and became a member of the Communist Party. He was released from prison on 7 November 1942 at the suggestion of the SSI (the Romanian Intelligence Service) and settled in the town of Brăila near the mouth of the Danube. It was here that, in return for payments made to Rânzescu, the local inspector of police who was a friend of SSI head Eugen Cristescu, he was able to wander freely around the town and its outskirts and consequently to pick up instructions dropped by Soviet planes on the outskirts of town. Using the cover of a commercial representative for a small company based in Brăila and the name of 'engineer Ceauşu', Bodnăraş travelled freely, albeit under the surveillance of the *Siguranţa* (security service), and he was a frequent visitor to Bucharest. There Bodnăraş collected information from an agent named Kendler, a timber merchant who on instructions from Bodnăraş, paid a sum of 30,000 lei monthly in 1943 to Colonel Enache Borcescu, a member of the Romanian General Staff, for information about Romanian and German troop movements. Kendler's regular meeting place with Borcescu was a Greco-Catholic church in Bucharest (author's interview with Traian Borcescu, 8 March 1995). Bodnăraş was also a frequent visitor to Târgu-Jiu where, by suborning Colonel Şerban Lioveanu, the commandant of the internment camp, he was able to consult Gheorghiu-Dej on several occasions. Drawing on secret Communist Party funds, Bodnăraş bought weapons from German soldiers based in Romania in order to arm Communist detachments which he formed in Bucharest in the early summer of 1944. This activity did not escape the attention of the Gestapo who requested his arrest but Colonel Traian Borcescu, the head of counter-intelligence in the SSI refused, in the belief that Bodnăraş "could be of use in Romania's exit from the war" (interview with T. Borcescu; see also G. Iavorschi, "Pentru cine a lucrat 'inginerul Ceauşu'?" p.19). Bodnăraş gave his own account of his actions between the time of his release from prison in early November 1942 (he dates this to 2 November) and the removal of Foriş from the Party leadership on 4 April 1944 in discussions with Valter Roman, Gheorghe Zaharia and Ada Grigorian on 18 and 20 January 1960 (see Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania, Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948-1965*, London: Hurst and Co., 1999, appendix 1, pp.297–308). After the establishment of the Groza government in March 1945, Bodnăraş was appointed secretary-general to the prime minister and in the following month he was given control of the intelligence service, the SSI. As a faithful servant of Moscow, he played a key role in consolidating Communist rule and eliminating potential opposition to it. This brought Borcescu onto Bodnăraş's radar. He was arrested on 26 March 1945 at the latter's home after accepting an invitation from Bodnăraş to lunch there. Bodnăraş proposed to Borcescu that he work with the Soviets, represented at the meal by Colonel Timofteiv, the NKVD adviser in Bucharest. When he refused, he was given blacked-out glasses and taken by car to an airfield and flown to Moscow where he was interrogated about his wartime activity by Viktor Abamukov, Beria's deputy. After two weeks, he was returned to Bucharest and taken into custody on Bodnăraş's

orders and held, first in Jilava prison and then in Malmaison, where he was interrogated on several occasions by Bodnăraş. He was released on 23 December 1945 but rearrested on 26 May 1949, tried for his role under the Antonescu regime, and sentenced to hard labour for life. In January 1963, his sentence was reduced to 25 years and he was amnestied on 13 April 1964 (author's interview with Traian Borcescu, 8 March 1995). Bodnăraş became a member of the Central Committee in 1945, a position he retained until his death in 1976, and a member of the Politburo (1948–1965), Minister of the Armed Forces (1947–1956), and Vice President of the Council of Ministers (1954–1965). According to Khrushchev's memoirs it was Bodnăraş who, as Minister of War, first raised the question of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania during Khrushchev's visit to Romania in August 1955. Khrushchev was convinced that the matter had already been discussed by the Romanian Party leadership and Gheorghiu-Dej chose Bodnăraş to broach the subject because of his impeccable credentials. These were his past services to the Soviet Union, the confidence and respect which Khrushchev acknowledged he enjoyed amongst the Soviet leaders; and his senior position—he was one of the three deputy prime ministers. Khrushchev records that Bodnăraş justified the subject by pointing out that there was little threat to Soviet security interests because Romania was hemmed in by other socialist countries and that there was “nobody across the Black Sea from us except the Turks”. The international situation in 1955 did not permit the Soviet leader to act on the suggestion straightaway but the idea of withdrawal had been planted in his mind and he used it three years later at a time he regarded as more appropriate. Bodnăraş was appointed a vice premier and remained close to Gheorghiu-Dej until the latter's death in 1965. Upon his elevation to the Party leadership that year, Ceauşescu offered Bodnăraş the position of vice president of the state council in return for his total obedience. Bodnăraş honoured the agreement, leading a largely withdrawn life—he was divorced—until his death in 1976. In conformity with his will, his body was not buried near Gheorghiu-Dej's in the Heroes' Monument in Bucharest but in the churchyard in Iaslovăţ in northern Moldavia.

Traian Borcescu (22 November 1899, Cireşanu, Prahova county, 22 November 1899; Bucharest, 1997?) was head of Romanian counter-intelligence from 1942 until the 23 August *coup* of 1944. He was arrested on 26 March 1945 at the home of Emil Bodnăraş, who after 23 August 1944 effectively became head of the Romanian security service. Bodnăraş, had invited him to lunch there. After turning down a proposal from the latter that he work with the Soviets, represented at the meal by Colonel Timofteiv, the NKVD adviser in Bucharest, he was given blacked-out glasses and taken by car to an airfield and flown to Moscow where he was interrogated about his wartime activity by Viktor Abamukov, Beria's deputy. After two weeks he was returned to Bucharest and taken into custody on Bodnăraş's orders and held, first in Jilava prison and then in Malmaison, where he was interrogated on several occasions by Bodnăraş. He was released on 23 December 1945 but rearrested on 26 May 1949, tried for his role under the Antonescu regime, and sentenced to hard labour for life. In January 1963 his sentence was

reduced to 25 years and he was amnestied on 13 April 1964 (author's interview with Traian Borcescu, 8 March 1995).

Petre Borilă, pseudonym of Iordan Dragan Rusev (Silistra, 13 February 1906; Bucharest, 2 January 1973). He joined the outlawed Communist Party in 1934 and served in the International brigades during the Spanish Civil War. During the Second World War, he worked alongside Georgi Dimitrov and Dmitri Manuilsky in the Comintern and joined the so-called Moscow group of the Communist Party of Romania formed by Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, Leonte Răutu and Valter Roman. As a member of the Politburo (1952–1965), he was deeply involved in the purges carried out by Gheorghiu-Dej (see Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p.257).

Constantin (Dinu) Brătianu (Ștefănești, Argeș, 13 January 1866; Sighet prison, 23 August, 1953?). Second son of Ion C. Brătianu (1821–1891), appointed leader of the National Liberal Party in 1934. Constantin (Dinu) Brătianu was arrested by the Communist authorities during the night of 5/6 May 1950 and imprisoned at Sighet without trial. The date of his death is unclear, one source giving 20 August 1950, another 23 August 1953 (see Florian Tănăsescu, Nicolae Tănăsescu, *Constantin (Bebe) I.C. Brătianu – Istoria P.N.L. la interogatoriu*, Bucharest: Editura Paralela 45, 2005, p.179.)

Elena Ceaușescu (Petrești, Dâmbovița, 7 January 1919; Târgoviște, 25 December 1989). She joined the Communist Party as a textile factory worker in 1939 and married Nicolae Ceaușescu in December 1947. After being awarded a degree in chemical engineering from Bucharest Polytechnic in 1957, she was given a doctorate from the Institute of Chemistry in Iași in 1967 although there is anecdotal evidence that her thesis was written by a university professor since she had only a rudimentary knowledge of the discipline. Director General of Central Institute of Chemistry in Bucharest between 1972 and 1980, she enjoyed a rapid political rise, becoming a member of the party central committee in 1973 and a member of the politburo in January 1977. She was the key architect in the promotion of the Ceaușescu personality cult in the wake of her husband's 'election' to the new post of President of the Republic in March 1974. Its extension to Elena—the second most important figure in the Party and state after her appointment as First Deputy Prime Minister in March 1980—absorbed more and more of the *Securitate*'s resources. Disbursements were made from special hard currency accounts to pay foreign publishers to publish hagiographies of Nicolae and the ghostwritten studies on chemistry attributed to his wife, "the scholar of world-renown". Bucharest sources allege that the occasion for one *Securitate* agent's defection in Vienna in January 1989 was his assignment to pay a Western publisher the reputed sum of \$30,000 for publication of one of Elena's 'studies'. Furtherance of the cult was assumed by Elena who, from 1985, took especial interest in it and regularly browbeat the successive Central Committee propaganda secretaries to ensure that public meetings were festooned with photographs of the happy couple. She became

increasingly protective of her husband as his diabetes seemed to be accelerating both his ageing and his irascibility, and it was for this reason that she frustrated the attempts of Major General Emil Macri, the head of the Economic Directorate, to discuss with the President the true state of the country's disastrous economic plight.

Nicu Ceaușescu (Bucharest, 1 September 1951; Vienna, 26 September, 1996). Son of Nicolae and Elena, he studied physics at Bucharest University and in 1982 was 'elected' to the Party Central Committee in 1982 whilst first secretary of the Communist Youth Movement. In 1987, he was appointed head of the local Party organization in the Transylvanian town of Sibiu. His notorious drinking bouts and alleged maltreatment of young women led him to flee the town on the arrest of his parents but he was caught and charged in 1990 with "instigation of aggravated murder" relating to the deaths of some 100 persons during the revolution in Sibiu. Found guilty and sentenced to twenty years in prison, the charge was modified in November 1992 to illegal possession of firearms and his sentence was reduced to five years. He was released on medical grounds suffering from hepatitis and cirrhosis of the liver, and died in Vienna.

Iosif Chișinevski (Roitman) (Chișinău, Bessarabia, 1905; Bucharest, 1963) Chișinevski is believed to have studied at the Communist Party academy in Moscow during the late 1920s. He was arrested in 1941 as the head of a Communist cell and sent to Caransebeș jail. He was spared deportation to Transnistria because only Jews with sentences under 10 years were sent to the province while those with heavier sentences, like Chișinevski, Simion Zeiger and Radu Mănescu, remained in Caransebeș until their release on 23 August 1944. The RCP's principal ideologue and a close associate of Gheorghiu-Dej between 1944 until 1957 when his criticism of the latter led to his exclusion from the politburo and the end of his political career (see Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p.259).

Miron Constantinescu (Chișinău, 13 December 1917; Bucharest, 18 July 1974) was a significant figure in the history of Romanian Communism, in particular in the first decade following the imposition of the Romanian People's Republic. He joined the Communist movement out of conviction as a student at Bucharest University where he attended the sociology seminar of Dimitrie Gusti. Arrested in 1941 for clandestine activity, he was sentenced in February 1941 to ten years' hard labour. The *coup* of 23 August led to his release two days later and shortly afterwards he was appointed Director of the Party newspaper *Scântea* and became a member of the Politburo, a position he held until 1957 when he was expelled together with Chișinevski for having criticized Gheorghiu-Dej and the *Securitate* following Khrushchev's secret speech of February 1956. Constantinescu's conflict with Gheorghiu-Dej, and his marginalization in 1957 gave him the opportunity to focus upon his intellectual gifts by working at a number of academic institutions in Bucharest. Gheorghiu-Dej's death and Nicolae Ceaușescu's aim to

legitimize his own leadership by delegitimizing that of his predecessor paved the way for Constantinescu's rehabilitation.

Corneliu Coposu (Bobota Sălaj, 20 May 1914; Bucharest, 11 November 1995). A devout member of the Romanian Greek-Catholic (Uniate) church, he joined the Romanian National Party as a young man and after studying law at the University of Cluj (1930–1934), took up work as a lawyer. He became private secretary to Iuliu Maniu, the leader of the RNP and of its successor, the National Peasant Party. Coposu moved to Bucharest in summer 1940, after Northern Transylvania was ceded to Hungary. During the Second World War, Coposu played an important role in maintaining the NPP's clandestine links with the British by encrypting many of the telegrams sent by Maniu to the British Special Operations Executive. In August 1944, after King Michael's *coup* against the Ion Antonescu regime, Coposu became deputy secretary of the NPP and, after the reunion of Northern Transylvania, the party's delegate to the leadership of provisional administrative bodies. He was also active in organizing the party as the main opposition to the Communist Party and the Petru Groza government before the 1946 general election. As such he rapidly became a target of the Communist authorities and was arrested on 14 July 1947, together with the entire leadership of the NPP after several of its leading members attempted to flee the country in a private plane. He was imprisoned without trial for nine years. Charges were eventually brought against him in 1956 when he was sentenced to life imprisonment for "betrayal of the working class" and "crimes against social reforms". In April 1964, he was freed after fifteen years of imprisonment in a succession of jails and two years of forced residence in the village of Rubla in Brăila County. After his release, Coposu worked as an unskilled worker on various construction sites (given his status as a former prisoner, he was denied employment in any other field), and was subjected to *Securitate* surveillance and regular interrogation. His wife Arlette was also prosecuted in 1950 and jailed on a spurious charge of espionage. She died in 1965, shortly after her release from prison. On 22 December 1989, (on the day of Ceaușescu's flight from Bucharest), Coposu and Ion Rațiu proclaimed the reconstitution of the NPP under the name Christian-Democratic National Peasants' Party. Together with the National Liberal Party, the NPP represented the opposition to the neo-Communist National Salvation Front. But they proved to be shadows of their former selves. For over forty years the activities of these historic parties had been suspended. The severity of the Communist regime meant that it had been impossible to carry on even an underground existence or to enrol members of the new generation into these parties. Young Romanians did join the NPP, largely because of Coposu's reputation as a valiant symbol to Communist oppression. But the NPP, like the NLP, found that they no longer possessed the social and economic bases which had sustained them between the two world wars. The NPP's task in reconstituting itself was particularly difficult. The Communists had dealt ruthlessly with the party, which was widely felt to have won the general election held in 1946. Coposu took the initiative in reviving the NPP in late December 1989. The fact that he had spent seventeen years in jail, followed by

another twenty-five years of tight restrictions upon his movements and activities, gave him prestige amongst those Romanian voters which none of the other political leaders could claim. His links with Maniu, who was widely respected for his high ethical standards and for having played a key role in uniting Transylvania with Romania, lent stature to Coposu, whose dignity, simplicity of manner and clarity of expression proved appealing to younger people searching for a moral lead in confused political times. But Coposu was one of the few assets the party possessed in the task of reconstruction. Its links with the countryside, its main reservoir of support until 1947, had been severed. After 1990, the NPP found that little advantage was to be gained from stressing its involvement in politics before 1947. The recovery of the NPP was blocked by the fact that large elements of the population seemed to have an interest in the perpetuation of a modified version of Communist Romanian society. Opinion polls after 1990 showed that Romanian citizens possessed a strongly egalitarian outlook. More than 70% of the population believed that income levels should be almost equal. The low level of support which the NPP had in the countryside showed how collectivization had turned many peasants away from the private ownership of land advocated by the NPP. Coposu was a moderating influence within the party. He denounced the anti-Semitic sentiments expressed in the Party newspaper *Dreptatea* in the early months of 1990. He tried to make a distinction between Communism and Communists, realizing that the electoral slogan of the NPP "Down with the Communists" was a clear threat to the millions of Romanians who had joined the party out of convenience rather than conviction. It was thanks to Coposu that the NPP, unlike the NLP, was not worn down by internal rivalries, although with his passing it did not escape this fate. Coposu was one of the few senior politicians untainted by the endemic corruption of the post-Communist years. Without him, Romanian political life lost its symbol of rectitude, probity and consistency.

Ștefan Foriș (Tărlungeni, Brașov, 9 May 1892; Bucharest, 1946). After completing a degree in physics and mathematics at Budapest University, he returned to Brașov in September 1919 and joined the Hungarian language socialist newspaper *Munkas* (Worker) as an editor. He joined the Communist party in 1921 and in the following year moved to Bucharest where, after the proscription of the party, he worked underground as an agitator. In 1926, he became secretary of *Ajutorul Roșu* (Red Aid), the Romanian section of the Comintern-controlled International Organization for Aiding the Fighters of the Revolution, known by its Russian initials MOPR (*Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia pomoshchi bortsam revoliutsii*). The MOPR provided food and legal aid to activists in prison. In 1927, Foriș was co-opted as a member of the Central Committee and took part in the fourth party congress in the following year. He was arrested in July 1928 but a rapid deterioration in his health led to his release and he was able to make his way to Moscow. At the end of 1930 he returned to Romania and was arrested once again on 26 August 1931. Freed in 1935, he was appointed in 1938 to the secretariat of the Central Committee, and in February 1940 he was summoned by the Comintern to Moscow from where he returned in December as general secretary of the party. He was

arrested by the Communist *Siguranța* on 9 June 1945 and beaten to death with an iron bar in summer 1946 (N.I. Florea, ‘Ștefan Foriș’, *Analele de Istorie*, vol.18 (1972), no.3, pp.150–53). The report of the Party commission, charged by Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1967 with investigating the circumstances of Foriș’s death, concluded that “Foriș’s execution was carried out by [*Siguranța* chief] Gheorghe Pintilie, aided by his chauffeur Dumitru Necin [also known as Dimitrie Mitea], through blows administered with an iron bar”. The body was thrown into a specially prepared pit in the grounds of the building in which he was murdered [Communist Party HQ on Aleea Alexandru] (Stenogram of Gheorghe Pintilie’s deposition before the commission in Deletant, *Communist Terror*, pp.316–317; see also ‘Statement by Gheorghe Pintilie, former Head of the *Securitate*, dated 15 May 1967 and Presented to the Party Commission Charged with Investigating the Death of Ștefan Foriș’, (*ibid.*, pp.314–18), and A.G. Savu, “Ștefan Foriș. Schiță pentru o viitoare biografie”, *Magazin Istoric*, no.7, 1968, pp.53–58). This issue of the review was withdrawn from circulation by the authorities shortly after its appearance because of this article on Foriș. (I am grateful to Marian Ștefan for providing me with a copy.)

Teohari Georgescu (Bucharest, 31 January 1908; Bucharest, 31 December 1976). After four years of elementary school he became a printer’s apprentice and in 1923 entered the printing plant of *Cartea Românească*. In 1928, he joined the printers’ union and helped to organize a strike. His role in the strike brought him to the attention of the *Siguranța* who placed him under surveillance. In the following year, he joined the Communist Party. In November 1933, he was arrested for distributing Communist manifestoes and detained for several months before being released on grounds of “insufficient proof”. He was rearrested in June 1934 for Communist activity but released on bail. He was arrested once again in Ploiești in January 1935 for failing to appear at his trial, and held for several months before being released until the trial date was fixed. His trial was postponed on more than ten occasions between 1937 and 1940 when he was finally sentenced to two months imprisonment. From 1937 to 1938 he worked as a printer for the daily *Adevărul* and the National Printing Office. In August 1940 on orders from Georgi Dimitrov, secretary of the Comintern, he was sent to Moscow to receive instruction from the NKVD on how to code messages and to use a special technique of writing them on glass. He was arrested in April 1941 as part of the Bucharest Party cell led by Iosif Chișinevschi (Roitman) and sentenced in May to ten years in jail. The first part of his sentence was executed at Caransebeș jail. In April 1942, he was moved to Văcărești prison to work in the printing press and returned to Caransebeș at the end of August where he stayed until his release at the end of August 1944. He served as Minister of Internal Affairs from 6 March 1945 until 28 May 1952 when he was accused at the Communist Party plenary meeting alongside Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca of “rightist deviation” and purged from the politburo. He was arrested and held until April 1956. He was appointed by Gheorghiu-Dej director of the *13 December* (formerly *Cartea Românească*)

printing press, the same press at which he had obtained his first job in 1923. He was rehabilitated in April 1968.

Ion Iliescu (Oltenița, 3 March, 1930). A member of the Communist Youth Movement at the age of nineteen, he was among a group of Romanian students who studied fluid mechanics at the energy institute of Moscow State University. In 1960, he was appointed to the Central Committee of the Party, and in 1965 chief of the section for Agitation and Propaganda. In the presentation of his 'July theses' of 1971, Ceaușescu criticized Iliescu, then culture secretary of the CC, and the latter was removed from his position and sent to Timișoara as secretary for propaganda for Timiș County. This was followed by promotion as first secretary of the party in Iași before his appointment in 1982 as head of the State Committee for Water. In 1984, he was moved to direct the Scientific Publishing House (*Editura Științifică*) in Bucharest, in which capacity the outbreak of the 1989 Revolution found him. Acknowledged as head of the National Salvation Front on 22 December, he led this provisional government until May 1990 when he was elected President of Romania. In 1992, he won a second four-year term but was defeated in the 1996 election by Emil Constantinescu. In December 2000, he was elected for a third time as President.

Vasile Luca (Cătălina, Covasna, 8 June 1898; Aiud prison, 23 July 1963) was the Romanianized name of Laszlo Luca, a Hungarian born in the commune of Catalina in the county of Covasna in Transylvania on 8 June 1898. He lost his parents at the age of seven and was placed in an orphanage in Sibiu. When he was thirteen he became apprentice to a local padlock maker. In 1915, he secured a job in the railway yards in Brașov but at the end of the year was called up into the Austro-Hungarian army and sent to the front. In 1919, as a conscript in the Romanian army, he took part in the campaign against Bela Kun's Soviet Republic. He resumed his railway job at the end of the year when he also joined the trade union movement. In 1924, he became regional secretary of the Communist Party in Brașov. Arrested in the same year for membership of an illegal organization, he spent three years in jail. In 1928, he was elected to the Party Central Committee. As a result of the internal struggles within the Party he was sent to do basic Party work in Moldavia. In 1933, he was arrested for organizing trade union activity, tried and imprisoned for five years. After his release from jail he was co-opted into the Party Central Committee and delegated to present a report to the Comintern about the Party's activity. On 4 April 1940, he was caught while trying to cross the frontier into the Soviet Union and detained in Cernăuți in northern Bukovina. He was released from custody following the Soviet occupation of the province at the end of June ('Documentarul referitor la procesul privind pe Vasile Luca', *Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale* (*The National Central Historical Archives*, henceforth abbreviated to ANIC), *Arhiva Comitetului Executiv al CC al PCR* (*Archive of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party*), No.264/19, 18.02.1972. I am grateful to Marius Oprea for locating

this document.) By virtue of his presence on Soviet territory, Luca was offered the right to claim Soviet citizenship which he exercised. He spent the following four years in Moscow, working for the Romanian section of Radio Moscow and for the Comintern-backed Romanian radio station *România liberă* (Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*, p.353; see also G. Buzatu, “Cominterniștii români se pregătesc”, *Magazin Istoric*, vol.28, no.2 (February 1994), pp.41–42).

Iuliu Maniu (Șimleu Silvaniei, 8 January, 1873; Sighet prison, 5 February, 1953). Maniu attended elementary school in Blaj and secondary school in Zalău, and went on to study in Vienna and Budapest where he took a degree in law. On his return to Transylvania he became a professor of law at the Greek-Catholic seminary in Blaj and legal adviser to the metropolitan bishop. He joined the Romanian National Party of Transylvania whose programme focused on the establishment of Transylvanian autonomy and the assertion of Romanian rights commensurate with the Romanian demographic majority in the province. In 1909, he was elected a deputy in the Hungarian parliament where he was a powerful advocate of Romanian aspirations. After being called up into the Austro-Hungarian army in 1915 he emerged from military academy with the rank of second lieutenant and was despatched, first to the Russian front, and then to Italy. As a member of the National Committee of the Romanian National Party he was one of the principal figures that organized the Grand National Assembly of 1 December 1918 which proclaimed the union of Transylvania with Romania. Maniu elected President of the Directory Council which administered Transylvania from 2 December 1918 until 4 April 1920 when the government of the province was handed over to Bucharest. On 9 August 1919, Maniu was elected President of the National Party—as it was known after the Union—and in October 1926, on its merger with the Peasant Party, he became President of the National Peasant Party. In November 1928, he led the party to victory in the general election and served as Prime Minister until June 1930 when Prince Carol returned to Romania. Maniu had supported the return of the prince on condition that he renounced Lupescu, but Carol’s unwillingness to do so prompted him to resign on 7 June. His place was taken by Gheorghe Mironescu who annulled the act excluding Carol from the throne and then resigned himself. After a period of confusion Maniu was recalled on 13 June after Carol gave an undertaking to be crowned with his wife Helen in September. On learning of Lupescu’s return to Romania Maniu submitted his resignation once more on 6 October 1930. In October 1932, Carol turned to Maniu at the height of a grave economic crisis to head the National Peasant Party government following the resignation of Alexandru Vaida-Voievod. Maniu once again set the conditions of June 1930 for his acceptance, namely Carol’s re-marriage to Queen Helen. He also demanded that the King rule in the spirit of the 1923 constitution and dismiss his influential clique of advisers, the ‘camarilla’. Although Carol agreed to the conditions it soon became clear that he had no intention of abiding by them. The result was that Maniu broke off personal relations with the King and resigned in January 1933. At the same time, he stood down as President of the National Peasant Party and ostensibly withdrew from politics. However, the increasingly

dictatorial stance of the King led the NPP to call upon Maniu in November 1937 as the champion of constitutional government and he returned to lead the party. His desire to thwart Carol's moves to install a royal dictatorship led him to sign an electoral pact with Corneliu Codreanu, head of the Iron Guard, in the same month, which had the desired effect of defeating the Tătărescu government. However, Carol dissolved the newly elected parliament and instituted a government of his own choice under Octavian Goga. With Carol's suspension of the constitution in February 1938 Maniu's fear of the institution of a royal dictatorship was confirmed. On 30 March, a decree dissolving all political parties was issued and a strict regime of political censorship applied. Maniu's protests to Carol went unheeded and he thus began what was to be a six-year period as head of the democratic opposition in Romania. His attempts to reconcile his pro-Allied sympathies with his contempt for totalitarian rule and mistrust of the Soviet Union gave the British, with whom he was in contact throughout the war, the impression of vacillation and indecision. His refusal to participate in the government appointed by King Michael on 23 August 1944 proved in retrospect to be a major tactical error for the National Peasant Party was more easily relegated to the sidelines as the Soviet Union imposed its will with increasing force on Romania. The suppression of the democratic process required the elimination of the 'historical' parties. The arrest of senior figures in the National Peasant Party while trying to flee the country on 14 July 1947 provided the Communist-led government with a pretext for arresting Maniu and his deputy Ion Mihalache on 25 July, on the grounds of plotting to overthrow the state. They and several other prominent members of the National Party were tried, found guilty and given life sentences on 11 November. After four years in Galați prison (14 November 1947–14 August 1951) Maniu was transferred to Sighet jail where he died on 5 February 1953 (Andrea Dobeș, Ilie Lazăr, Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2006, p.176.)

Ion Gheorghe Maurer (Bucharest, 23 September 1902; Bucharest, 8 February, 2000). His mother was Romanian while his father was from Alsace and was employed as French tutor to Prince Carol (later King Carol II). After studying law at Bucharest University, he practised at the bar. He developed Marxist sympathies and appeared for the defence of Ana Pauker, Alexandru Drăghici and Alexandru Moghioroș at their trial in Craiova in 1936. According to his own testimony, he joined the Party "somewhat before 1936"; see Lavinia Betea, *Maurer și lumea de ieri* (Arad: Fundația Culturală Ion Slavici, 1995), p.13. Sidelined by Pauker after 1944, he re-emerged on the political scene as Foreign Minister in 1957 and served as Prime Minister between 1961 and 29 March 1974 when he withdrew from political life. He played a key role in the appointment of Ceaușescu as Gheorghiu-Dej's successor.

Michael I, King of Romania (25 October, 1921, Foișor Castle, Romania, the son of Carol II of Romania (then Crown Prince of Romania) and Princess Elena of Greece). When Carol eloped with his mistress Elena 'Magda' Lupescu and renounced 'temporarily' his rights to the throne in December 1925, Michael

succeeded to the throne upon King Ferdinand's death in July 1927. Michael was king of Romania from 20 July 1927 to 8 June 1930 and again from 6 September 1940 to 30 December 1947. He was forced to abdicate in 1947 by the government controlled by the Communist Party of Romania. As a great-great-grandson of Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom through both of his parents he is a third cousin of: Queen Margrethe II of Denmark, King Harald V of Norway, King Juan Carlos I of Spain, King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden and Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom.

Ana Pauker (Codăești, 13 December 1893; Bucharest, 3 June 1960). Born Ana Rabinsohn into a middle-class family. Her father was a *haham*, a Jewish butcher and teacher of Hebrew at the local school. At the turn of the century, the Rabinsohns moved to Bucharest. Details of Ana's youth and education are sketchy and largely anecdotal, and the first mention of any professional activity concerns her employment as a teacher of Hebrew at the *Brotherhood of Zion* primary school in Bucharest. Shortly afterwards, in September 1915, she joined the socialist movement. According to an autobiographical pamphlet published in 1951, Ana helped to distribute literature produced by the Romanian Social Democratic Party. She was more forthcoming about her activity during this period to Corneliu Coposu, the private secretary of National Peasant Party leader Iuliu Maniu, whom she encountered at Cluj prison in the mid-1930s. There, she revealed that after leaving her post as a schoolteacher, she found a position as a secretarial assistant at the newspaper *Dimineața* where she had responsibility for the library. It was while working here that in 1921 she met the son of one of the major shareholders of the newspaper, Marcel Pauker, who was three years her junior and had just returned from Paris where he had taken a doctorate in law (C. Coposu, *Dialoguri*, p.63). The two took part in the foundation congress of the RCP in May 1921, but the arrest of its leading members prompted them to flee to Zurich where they were married on 1 June. Marcel enrolled as a student of engineering at *L'École Polytechnique Federale* while Ana began a course in medicine. A few months after the wedding, Ana returned to Bucharest to give birth to her first child, a daughter called Tania, who died of dysentery before she was one year old. At the second RCP congress, held at Ploiești in October 1922, both Marcel and Ana were elected to the Central Committee of the Party. After the proscription of the party and the suppression of its newspaper *Socialismul* in April 1924, Ana was given the task of publishing underground propaganda, thereby becoming a target of the *Siguranța*, the security police. She was arrested with four female colleagues and held in Văcărești prison. At Ana's instigation the four went on hunger strike and were beaten, after which they, and Ana, were released until the date of their trial, fixed for July 1925 (M. Mircu, *Dosar Ana Pauker*, p.43). The defendants absconded and Ana Pauker was sentenced *in absentia* to ten years' imprisonment. The Paukers managed to flee abroad in 1926, staying in Berlin, Paris and Prague, and in the same year Ana gave birth to a son, Vlad, in Vienna. From there they went to Moscow where Ana attended the Comintern training school in order to become an instructor. In Moscow Ana produced a second daughter, named Tatiana, in 1928. Her husband

returned to Romania clandestinely in the spring of 1929, only to be arrested on 4 May, but he was to benefit from an amnesty of which he took advantage to work underground for two years before returning to Moscow. In December 1932, he was again sent by the Comintern to Romania, this time to organize Communist activity in Transylvania, and in the following year he was recalled to the Soviet capital. Ana, too, was given a mission by the Comintern. She was attached, in turn, to the Czechoslovak, German and French Communist Parties (from 1931 to 1932) as an instructor, with the cover name of Marina. It was in Paris that she had an affair with Albert Fried (Clément), a fellow instructor for the French Communist Party, as a result of which she gave birth to a daughter, Maria, in Moscow in December 1932. Marcel was similarly wayward in his affections at this time. He had an affair in Bessarabia with an RCP activist, Rosa Elbert, who bore a son named Iacov in 1931 (author's interview with Tatiana Brătescu, 30 July 1994). In March 1934, she was sent back by the Comintern to Romania in the company of other comrades in an attempt to revive clandestine activity which had been severely curtailed following the Grivița strike. She was eventually arrested in Bucharest in the early hours of 13 July 1935. Her trial, and that of eighteen other Communists who included Alexandru Moghioroș, his future wife Stela (Esther Radoshovetsky), Alexandru Drăghici and Liuba Chișinevski Roitman, was scheduled to be held in the capital but street demonstrations in support of the defendants led the authorities to move it to Craiova. Proceedings opened on 5 June 1936 and were attended by several foreign press correspondents and observers. Among the twenty-four lawyers for the defence were Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu and Ion Gheorghe Maurer, as well as personalities from the Bucharest bar. Ana Pauker was found guilty of being a leading member of an outlawed organization and sentenced on 7 July to ten years imprisonment. She spent five years in the prisons of Dumbrăveni, Râmnicu-Sărat and Caransebeș before being exchanged on 3 May 1941 for Ion Codreanu, a sixty-two-year old Romanian from Bessarabia who had been arrested for "anti-Soviet agitation" in the previous July following the Soviet annexation of the province. While Ana was in prison, her husband was arrested in Moscow in 1937 together with other senior members of the RCP for "Trotskyist" sympathies: Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Ecaterina Arbore, Pavel Tcacenko, Elek Köblös and David Fabian. All became victims of Stalin's purges and were executed without trial in 1937. For Pauker's career after her return to Romania in September 1944, and her purge by Gheorghiu-Dej in summer 1952 see Chapters Five and Six.

Constantin Pârvulescu (Olănești, Vâlcea, 10 November 1895; Bucharest, 11 July 1992). A railway mechanic by training, he found his way to Ukraine during the civil war in Russia and is credited with being a founding member of the Communist Party in Romania. Between 1921 and 1926 he appears to have attended the Party school in Moscow and worked as a mechanic in the Soviet capital. Between 1929 and 1931 he was secretary of the outlawed Romanian party in Chișinău in Bessarabia. Arrested in 1934, he escaped to the Soviet Union where he remained until the outbreak of the Second World War. Having returned to Romania he was

one of the leaders of the underground party and between April and September 1944 was designated its general secretary. A member of the Politburo from 1948 to 1960, he was removed from this position because of his association with the discredited Chişinevski and Constantinescu. At the Twelfth Party Congress in 1979, he protested, as a veteran Communist—he was eighty-four—at not being allowed to speak and when permission was granted he took the unprecedented step of criticising Ceauşescu for subordinating the country's interests to those of his own. A period of political isolation followed until he re-emerged into the public arena as one of the signatories of the "Letter of the Six" in March 1989.

Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu (Bacău, 4 November 1900; Bucharest, 17 April 1954). See Chapters Five And Six.

Titel Petrescu (Craiova, 5 February, 1888; Bucharest, 2 September, 1957). Leader of the Social Democratic Party, Petrescu's fate was emblematic of that of opposition leaders. He was arrested on 6 May 1948, held in the security police headquarters in Bucharest, sent to Jilava prison and finally tried *in camera* in January 1952 for crimes against the state. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and served three years in Sighet jail before being transferred to the Calea Rahovei headquarters of the *Securitate* in Bucharest in December 1954 where he was told by the Minister of the Interior, Alexandru Drăghici, that a number of his colleagues in the former SDP would be released from prison if he signed a letter giving his support to the regime for publication in the Party daily *Scînteia*. He refused and in August 1955 was sent to Râmnicu Sărat jail where he learned from fellow prisoners of the death in prison of numerous socialists. He agreed to sign a text on 13 September on condition that all leading SDP members were released and he himself was freed but kept under virtual house arrest. The letter appeared in *Scînteia* on 18 December 1955 but only a small number of SDP colleagues were released (see *Cartea Albă a Securităţii*, Bucharest: SRI, 1994, vol.II, doc. 237, pp. 527–29). Petrescu complained to Petru Groza, the President of the Grand National Assembly, after which further releases were announced.

Grigore Ion Răceanu (Cojocna, Cluj, 1 October 1906; Bucharest, September 1996). An engine driver at Cluj, he joined the railwaymen's union, becoming one of the leaders of the Cluj railway strikes of 1929 and 1933. His trade union activities led him to be sent as a delegate to the World Conference of Trade Unions held in Paris in 1929. On his return from Paris, during which he travelled on carriage buffers, he was arrested by the Romanian authorities for several weeks. In 1936, he joined the Communist Party of Romania. In 1938 he moved to Braşov and worked in the aircraft factory IAR (*Industria Aeronautică Română*). He played a major role in the organization of a mass demonstration in Braşov on 1 September 1940 against the Vienna Award of 30 August, as a result of which he was arrested and jailed. In February 1942, he moved to Bucharest and worked directly with Foriş, living clandestinely in a one-bedroom apartment close to the police headquarters in Bucharest. He soon fell out with Foriş over the latter's continued support for the

Comintern line over the issue of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina (see Chapter One), for the annexation of both territories by the Soviet Union in June 1940, and over Foriș's reluctance to sanction organized Communist resistance to the Antonescu regime. In autumn 1942, Foriș ordered Răceanu to put his objections to the party line in a memorandum in autumn 1942, and on the basis of this Răceanu was expelled from the party. He was readmitted in 1945 and appointed director of a tobacco factory in Cluj where he remained until 1949 when he moved to Bucharest. In the period 1951–1953, he was head of the accounting office of the Ministry of Food Production until he was removed after the party verification process. Chișinevski informed Grigore's wife that her husband had been declared "a class enemy", "an enemy of the Comintern" and of "comrade Stalin"—Chișinevski cited Răceanu's memorandum of 1942. After a few years without employment, Răceanu returned to work for the railway in Bucharest. Grigore was unemployed from 1960 to 1963 when he began work at the printing press at the Central Press Office *Casa Scânteii*. He remained there until 1968, the year in which he was rehabilitated and readmitted to the party following the plenary meeting of 22–25 April. He retired in the same year. In October 1988, he was contacted by Gheorghe Apostol through Mircea (Apostol, having served as Romanian ambassador in Argentina at the end of the 1970s frequently dropped into the Foreign Ministry for a coffee and on this occasion sought out Mircea). Apostol worked with Grigore on "The Letter of the Six". Grigore was arrested in March 1989, interrogated at Rahova prison and then sent to his birthplace at Cojocna where he remained under house arrest until the downfall of Ceaușescu. Although he responded to the appeal of the National Salvation Front for assistance and presented himself in Bucharest at its headquarters, he was overlooked and ignored. He passed away in September 1996. (I owe these and other biographical details about Grigore, his wife Ileana and his stepson Mircea, to the latter who has shared his authoritative experience as a Romanian diplomat between 1959 and 1989 with me. I record here my thanks for his generosity of spirit).

Mircea Răceanu (Văcărești jail, Bucharest, 17 October 1935). Mircea Răceanu was born Mircea Bernat. His mother, Ileana Pop (Ilonka Papp), had worked in a sweet factory in Arad, and joined the Communist Party at an early age. His father, Andrei Bernat, was a carpenter from Târgu-Mureș. Both were arrested in 1935 for clandestine activity on behalf of the outlawed Communist Party in Romania and sentenced to prison terms. Upon her release, Mircea's mother took him to Moscow in 1938, shortly after King Carol declared a royal dictatorship in February 1938. He spent two years at a boarding school at the *Interdom*, a special boarding school for foreigners located in the city of Ivanovo situated some 300 km north-east of the Soviet capital. Andrei Bernat was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment and after the outbreak of hostilities between Romania and the Soviet Union in June 1941, was moved to a jail in Râbnîța in Transnistria. On the instructions of the Comintern Ileana returned to Romania in 1942 and worked clandestinely as an administrative secretary for the Communist Party. Andrei was murdered by retreating German troops in Râbnîța on 18/19 March 1944. In September 1944,

Ileana went to Moscow and brought Mircea back to Bucharest. She married Grigore Răceanu who helped to raise Mircea as his own son. Mircea Răceanu continued his education in Bucharest, studying at the ‘Ion Luca Caragiale’ high school and in 1954 was sent to Moscow to study at the State Institute of International Relations. He graduated in 1960, after having spent six months of that year on practical assignment at the Romanian embassy in Washington DC, and joined the Romanian Foreign Ministry. Between 1969 and 1978 he served at the Romanian embassy in Washington DC, rising to become Counsellor. It was during his period at the embassy that his trial documents allege that he was recruited, in 1975, by the CIA. After a two-day trial Mircea was sentenced to death by a military tribunal on 21 July for “treachery through the transmission of secret documents” to the CIA (ACNSAS, Mircea Răceanu, *Rechizitoriu*, P 011564, vol.5). The severity of the sentence may have been explained by Răceanu’s background as the son of parents who had been veteran Party activists from the time of its prohibition in the inter-war years, and that Ceaușescu regarded Mircea’s action as a personal betrayal. His appeal was rejected on 28 August. Only the intervention of President George H. Bush, formerly Director of the CIA (1976–77) in a personal letter to Ceaușescu delivered to him by the US chargé in Bucharest at the beginning of September 1989, led the dictator to commute Răceanu’s sentence on 19 September to twenty years’ imprisonment. (Mircea Răceanu, *Infern* ’89, pp.378–79, 545). He was released from jail on 23 December 1989. His disillusionment with the neo-Communist character of the ruling National Salvation Front led him to give vocal support to the anti-Communist demonstrators who had gathered in Bucharest’s University Square during the election campaign of May 1990. After Răceanu had addressed the protesters, Silviu Brucan, a leading member of the NSF, went to the US embassy to “resolve the Răceanu case” (*ibid.*, p.289). He told the US chargé, Larry Napper, that Răceanu was an obstacle to relations between Romania and the United States because of his activity with the CIA and suggested that Răceanu leave the country. On the following day, Napper invited Răceanu to his residence and informed him of Brucan’s proposal, suggesting that Răceanu might like to leave Romania with his family for the United States. Răceanu flatly refused, stating that he had not risked his life in order to leave his homeland but in order to see an open and democratic society established there. However, after two attempts to run him down by car in Bucharest, he decided to leave (*ibid.*, p.291). He flew out of the country on 20 May with his wife and two children. On 16 January 1991, Răceanu was received by CIA director William Webster, to whom he expressed his thanks for the support from the US government in escaping the consequences of his death sentence (details communicated to this author by Mircea Răceanu to whom I express my thanks); see also ANIC, Comitetul Central al PCR, Secția Cadre, dosar R648).

Nicolae Rădescu (Călimănești, 30 March, 1874; New York, 16 May, 1953) won the Order of Michael the Brave, the highest Romanian military decoration, during the First World War. From April 1926 to July 1928 he served as Romanian military attaché in London. Upon his return to Romania, he became a member of the military household of the royal palace. In 1930 he was discharged from the

army on the grounds of age. In November 1941, he was interned on Antonescu's orders for writing a defiant letter to Baron Killinger, Hitler's envoy, in reply to disparaging remarks made by the Baron about Romania. On 15 October 1944, he was appointed Chief of General Staff and held this position until the beginning of December. On 6 December, he was appointed Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior. Under pressure from the Soviet emissary to Romania, Andrei Vishinski, Rădescu offered his resignation on 28 February 1945 to King Michael who reluctantly accepted it. Rădescu was taken under British protection and lived in the legation building for nine weeks (6 March–7 May 1945) until an agreement was reached between the British and Soviet governments assuring the former that Rădescu would not be harmed on returning home. On 11 November, he received orders from the Ministry of the Interior to stay at home, from which he did not move until the spring of 1946 when the police provided him with a car, a driver and a detective. An incident on 13 May 1946 persuaded him to leave Romania as soon as possible. That day, while attending a function at the Athenaeum in Bucharest, he was attacked by a group of men armed with clubs, and he and his detective were injured. His escape was arranged by his secretary, Barbu Niculescu. On 15 June, Rădescu, together with his secretary and four other persons, including a Romanian airman, took off from Cotroceni airfield and flew to Cyprus. He settled in New York in 1947 where he helped to found the anti-Communist Romanian National Committee under the patronage of King Michael. Its work was financed by several million dollars secreted out of Romania between 1945 and 1946. In February 1950, Rădescu requested that this money be publicly accountable but other committee members disagreed and he resigned. He died in New York on 16 May 1953. The Committee, whose chairmanship was taken over by Constantin Vișoianu, remained active until 1975.

Valter Roman, pseudonym of Ernest Neuländer (Oradea, 9 October 1913; Bucharest, 11 November 1983). A Hungarian-speaking Romanian Communist activist who served in the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War and was considered by some fellow Communists to be an NKVD officer (author's interview with Eduard Mezincescu, 7 April 1993). Mezincescu told this author that Roman was exfiltrated from southern France after the Spanish Civil War by the Soviet embassy in Paris, taken to Le Havre and given passage to Leningrad on a Soviet vessel. The other Romanian Communist combatants made their way to Marseilles from where they eventually found their way back to their homeland. Roman held the position of Head of the Political Directorate of the Romanian army (1947–1951). While working during the Second World War for the Comintern radio station *România liberă* in Moscow, Roman got to know Imre Nagy, the Hungarian Prime Minister, during the Hungarian uprising of autumn 1956, and for this reason he was chosen by the KGB to participate in the interrogation of Nagy in Bucharest after the latter's kidnap from Budapest in November. Between 1954 and 1983 he was director of *Editura Politică*, the principal political publishing house in Romania.

Abbreviations

AMAE	Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe (Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest).
AMAN	Arhiva Ministerului Apărării Naționale (Archive of the Ministry of National Defence, Pitești)
AMSSR	Autonomous Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic
ANIC	Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (The Central Historical National Archives, (formerly the State Archives) Bucharest)
APC	Armoured Personnel Carrier
ASRI	Archive of the Romanian Information Service [the Romanian Security Service]
BRCE	Romanian Bank for Foreign Trade
CIA	The Central Intelligence Agency
CIE	Centrul de Informații Externe [Romanian Foreign Intelligence Service, October 1978–December 1989]
CMEA/ Comecon	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CNSAS	Consiliul National pentru Studierea Arhivelor fostei Securități (National Council for the Study of the Archives of the former Securitate).
Comintern	Communist International
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DGC	Canal Directorate
DGIE	Direcția Generală de Informații Externe [Romanian Foreign Intelligence Service, 1963–72, March 1978–October 1978]
DGSP	Direcția Generală a Securității Poporului [Romanian Security Service, 1948–51]
DGSS	Direcția Generală a Securității Statului [Romanian Security Service, 1951–56]
DIE	Direcția de Informații Externe [Romanian Foreign Intelligence Service, 1972–March 1978]
DS	Departamentul Securității [Romanian Security Service, 1956–78]
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service

FDSN	Frontul Democrat al Salvării Naționale
FO	Foreign Office
GATT	General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
GRU	Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union
HAR	Hungarian Autonomous Region
HDF	Hungarian Democratic Forum
IAR	Romanian Aeronautic Industry (<i>Industria Aeronautică Română</i>)
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
KGB	Soviet Security Service, 1954–91
MGB	Soviet Security Service, 1946–54
MI5	British Security Service
MI6	British Intelligence Service
MOPR	International Organization for Aiding the Fighters of the Revolution (<i>Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia pomoshchi bortsam revoliutsii</i>)
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NDB	National Democratic Bloc
NDF	National Democratic Front
NKGB	People's Commissariat of State Security, 1943–6 [Soviet Security Service]
NKVD	People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, 1934–43 [Ministry of Internal Affairs]
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSF	National Salvation Front
OGPU	Soviet Security service
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PDSR	Partidul Social Democrat din România
RGANI	Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (<i>Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii</i>)
RCP	Romanian Communist Party
SDP	Social Democratic Party
<i>Siguranța</i>	Romanian secret police
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
SLOMR	Free Trade Union of the Working People of Romania
<i>Smersh</i>	Soviet military counter-intelligence
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SRI	Serviciul Român de Informații [Romanian Security Service, 1990–]
SSI	Serviciul Special de Informații [Romanian Intelligence Service, 1940–1944, 1945–1951]
TNA	The National Archives, Kew, London
VPK	Military Industrial Commission



Introduction

It is tempting to approach Communism solely in terms of its repressive nature and its gross denial of human rights. Indeed, the manner in which the political experiment, represented by the ideology and practised by its Soviet masters, was imposed upon the countries of Central Europe exemplified its coercive character, and is discussed in this study. Communism was not elected to power. But once established, its agent, the Communist Party, skilfully employed strategies to maintain itself in power. An examination of those strategies is essential for an understanding of the longevity of Communism in the Soviet Union and its satellite states.

For that reason, a cogent study of Communism must be multifaceted and interdisciplinary. It should consider the cost-benefit analysis that citizens made in choosing to tolerate the regime—in Romania's case—to demonstrate support for it and Ceaușescu. When considering Romania's experience in the aftermath of the Second World War, the words of the British socialist Richard Crossman come to mind. Writing in 1949, he argued that

no one who has not wrestled with Communism as a political philosophy, and Communists as political opponents can really understand the values of Western Democracy. The Devil once lived in Heaven, and those who have not met him are unlikely to recognize an angel when they see one.¹

Life went on under dictatorship, even if it was largely mapped out for the individual by the regime. How did the citizen negotiate the challenges placed in his or her path by the state? To what degree was the moral compass of the person deflected? What role were intellectuals called upon to play in 'validating' the regime? Why did utopia descend into dystopia under Ceaușescu? What was the ideological inspiration for his policy of "village systematization"? In what forms was the personality cult manifested? These are some of the questions addressed in this analysis.

Several laudable studies have appeared on aspects of Communist rule under Ceaușescu, notably by Adam Burakowski, Mary Ellen Fischer and J.F. Brown.² Vladimir Tismăneanu has given us an admirable analysis of the history of the Romanian Communist Party (*Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of*

2 Introduction

Romanian Communism (Los Angeles, 2003)) which places a focus on the struggle for dominance in the party. Gheorghiu-Dej, has received less attention.³ Yet Gheorghiu-Dej made the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu possible. It is the aim of this book to chart that development and to focus on the descent of Ceaușescu into “the demonic obsessiveness of a man possessed and blinded by a crazed sense of himself and his mission”.⁴

While drawing upon these aforementioned studies, I have also relied upon my own extensive research into primary sources on these topics which has resulted in the publication of three monographs: *Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Communist Romania, 1965–89* (London, New York: Hurst and M.E. Sharpe, 1995); *Romania under Communist Rule* (Bucharest: Civic Alliance Press, 1997); and *Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948–1965* (London, New York: Hurst and St Martin's Press, 1999). In the intervening years, however, a considerable number of secondary works have appeared in Romanian, consultation of which permits a more nuanced analysis of Communist rule.

My involvement in Romanian studies began in the mid-1960s with language and literature and has, by natural progression, come to extend to history and culture as a whole. Detailed study over many years has interacted with experience. My research draws not only upon primary sources but also on my contacts with dissidents, especially poets and critics, who emerged in the later stages of the Ceaușescu regime. Not surprisingly, I became *persona non grata* to the regime in late 1988. After the Revolution of 1989, this moral identification with the society—in the broadest sense—opened to me doors which were closed to most indigenous as well as ‘Western’ inquirers.

My research into the security apparatus and its connections with the political leadership reflect these experiences. The three volumes mentioned above are based not only upon the state archives but also on the oral evidence of leading political and security figures, and of their victims. These volumes form part of a corpus of published and unpublished research which provides the ‘building blocks’ of this study. Hitherto, attention has tended to concentrate either on Romania’s leadership or upon its economic development, both considered from the point of view of social sciences. This present study offers a detailed *vue d’ensemble* of Romania under Communism.

My characterization of that period is one of paradox and degeneration. The paradox is evident in the several iterations of Communist rule. Whereas in 1956 Romania under Gheorghiu-Dej showed itself to be the Soviet Union’s most active ally in the suppression of the Hungarian uprising, within two years the same Gheorghiu-Dej had persuaded Nikita Khrushchev to withdraw Soviet troops from his country. Whereas Gheorghiu-Dej’s successor, Nicolae Ceaușescu, could, in the late 1960s, present himself to the outside world as a young, dynamic reformer in contrast to the ageing Leonid Brezhnev, so after the accession of Mikhail Gorbachev to the Soviet leadership in March 1985 the images were reversed: Ceaușescu now assumed the *persona* of a fossilized Brezhnev. The paradox is most marked in a comparison of Ceaușescu’s domestic and foreign policies. In foreign policy, he demonstrated the same skill, sensitivity and resourcefulness

that had been displayed by Gheorghiu-Dej in taking Romania on its autonomous course. It was Ceaușescu who put Romania firmly on the map of international relations; the fact that he made three state visits to the United States, an honour unprecedented for the leader of a Warsaw Pact member, shows the importance attached by successive US administrations to cultivating this maverick ruler. In contrast, in domestic policy, Ceaușescu displayed a doctrinaire obstinacy, degenerating into an inflexible, single-minded despot, insensitive to the needs of the population, and attentive only to his domineering wife Elena.

Visitors to Romania today will still find plenty of physical evidence of the legacy of the Ceaușescu regime, notably the monumental *Casa Republicii* (House of the Republic) in the centre of Bucharest, the largest building in Europe, and the abandoned plants of his countrywide industrialization drive. Less visible are the psychological scars which his repressive rule left on his people. This book seeks to provide a radiography of it.

Dennis Deletant
June 2017

Notes

- 1 Richard Crossman (ed.), *The God that Failed* by Andre Gide, Richard Wright, Ignazio Silone, Stephen Spender, Arthur Koestler, Louis Fischer (New York: Harper, 1950), p.10.
- 2 Adam Burakowski, *Dictatura lui Nicolae Ceaușescu, 1965–1989, Geniul Carpaților* (Iași: Polirom, 2011); Mary Ellen Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu. A Study in Political Leadership* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989); J.F. Brown, *Surge to Freedom: The End of Communist Rule in Eastern Europe* (London: Adamantine Press, 1991).
- 3 His period of leadership of the Party is discussed by Ghita Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania, 1944–1962* (London, RIIA: Oxford University Press, 1964), and by Tismăneanu in *Stalinism for All Seasons*.
- 4 Brown, *Surge to Freedom*, p.202.

1 The early years of the Romanian Communist Party (1921–1944)

The Romania in which the Communist Party operated was radically different from the Romania in which socialism first appeared. As a result of its participation in the First World War, the country more than doubled in area and increased in population from 7.5 million to more than 17 million. The enlarged Romania included areas formerly ruled by Russia, Hungary and Bulgaria—which left it with two neighbours unwilling to accept their losses and bent on revision of the treaties which legalized them; and one, the Soviet Union, refusing to recognize the loss of Bessarabia. By these additions of territory, the new Romania had minorities amounting to 29% of the population, which the centralizing policies of governments in the 1920s did little or nothing to reconcile to their new status. Both before and after the war, there were the Jews, largely concentrated in Moldavia, whose arrival, often under duress, from Russia and the Ukraine, nevertheless made them widely regarded, especially among peasants, as ‘Russians’. Sephardic immigrants from the south, largely settled in Wallachia, were not so much resented, and indeed were much more integrated, especially in finance and industry.

Industrial development was confined to an east-west axis from Timișoara to Brașov in Transylvania, and a north-south axis from Sighișoara in Transylvania to Ploiești and Bucharest in Wallachia. This left the country a prominently agricultural one, with great discrepancies between town and country. According to the 1930 census, 80% of the population of 18 million lived on the land in villages that were poorly served by transport and communications while according to one source there were 819,422 people employed in industry.¹ Few villages had piped water or electricity, health services were primitive, especially in the more backward regions of Moldavia and Bessarabia, and in such conditions it is hardly surprising that infant mortality was amongst the highest levels in Eastern Europe.

These problems were of a complexity which would have taxed the most farsighted government and the most thoroughgoing cadres of administration. In the interwar period, Romania had neither. The greatest discrepancy, from a Western point of view, lay in the gulf between word and deed. Behind the facade of political institutions copied from the West the practice of government was subject to patronage and to narrow sectional interests. Under the constitution of 1923 the king had the power to dissolve parliament and to appoint a new government. That government was charged with seeking a popular mandate by organizing elections

whose conduct was entrusted to the county prefects. Invariably the new government appointed new prefects to secure the desired result. By general consensus the only elections deemed to have been relatively free of such gerrymandering were those of 1928. Institutionalized corruption was matched by a personal variety. The exploitative rule of foreign princes in Wallachia and Moldavia in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century had helped to create a culture amongst the dominant élite in which rapacity was regarded as proof of dexterity and cunning, and therefore corruption of principles had become widespread. This culture had been assimilated by the small, bureaucratic middle class who expected to rely on unofficial remuneration in the form of bribes to supplement their meagre salaries. There was no native economic middle class to act as a check upon the élite since commerce had fallen mostly into the hands of the largely disenfranchised Jews who were barred from public service.

Idealism was scorned and those who searched for it, the young, were driven to the sole parties which seemed to have any on offer, those of the Right. Although a radical land reform was introduced soon after the war, many peasants were unable to afford the loans necessary to buy agricultural machinery. The economic recession of the 1930s ushered in a decade of instability in which the xenophobia of the impoverished peasantry was exploited by right-wing movements, principally by the Iron Guard, and directed against the Jews.² Disillusion with the failure of parliamentary government to solve economic problems fuelled support for the Guard, with its promise of spiritual regeneration and its programme of combatting 'Jewish Bolshevism'.

Until the end of the Second World War, the Romanian Communist Party was on the fringes of Romanian politics. The Party's identification with the doctrines of Communism, and the threat posed by the Soviet Union as a hostile neighbour, deprived it of any popular support.³ The interventions of the Moscow-based Communist International (Comintern) in the Party's affairs were invariably disastrous and further marginalized the Party since it was considered subservient to Soviet interests. Two Comintern policies gave particular offence: the demand for the return of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union, and for self-determination for the minorities in Romania. This view of the Party as 'alien' and as a tool of the Soviet Union led the Romanian government to ban it on 11 April 1924. The ban remained for 20 years and crippled the Party's activity. The faithful were obliged to work clandestinely and they were liable to be caught by the *Siguranța*, the secret police. Jail was therefore a common experience of party activists in the interwar period. Prison crystallized their beliefs and convinced many of them of the righteousness of their cause. In these circumstances, the Party became more like a sect, its members deprived of any check on their convictions which overt participation in politics might promote.

Some of the problems which the Party faced were not unique. The parties of the left in general exerted little influence on political life in the interwar years. Romania, being a predominantly agricultural country, lacked a powerful indigenous working class upon which these parties might have formed a base, whilst the electoral strength of the National Peasant Party (formed in 1926 from the union

of the Peasant Party and the National Party of Transylvania) demonstrated its attractiveness to the peasantry with its programme of peasant control of the means of production in agriculture, and of devolution of government administration in the village. In the 1926 general elections, the NPP won 727,000 votes (28% of the votes cast), in 1928, 2,209,000 (78%), in 1932, 1,204,000 (40%), and in 1937, 627,000 (20%).

The Social Democratic Party (SDP), the principal democratic party of the left, had been rent by dissension during the First World War and emerged from it split into two factions dubbed 'maximalists' and 'minimalists'. The former paralleled the Bolsheviks by advocating the immediate dictatorship of the proletariat through revolution and was led by Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Boris Ștefanov and Alecu Constantinescu. Among the younger members of this group were Marcel Pauker and his future wife, Ana Rabinsohn.⁴ Their differences with the minimalists were more of emphasis rather than substance, with the minimalists taking a more cautious line on the need for violent change. Further fragmentation occurred with the emergence of a third faction, the 'centrists', who supported affiliation to the Comintern, provided that it did not vitiate Romania's independence.

The creation of the Comintern in March 1919 profoundly changed the course of the socialist movement in Romania for it exerted an irresistible attraction to those in the SDP who sought change by revolution. The maximalists argued for immediate affiliation with the Comintern but were thwarted by the minimalists who, at a SDP congress held in May, persuaded the participants to adopt a programme of democratic socialism; the transfer of all means of production from the private sector to state control but within the existing political system. The conflict between the two factions was brought out into the open again in November 1920, when a six-member delegation of maximalists and minimalists was sent to Moscow to negotiate Comintern affiliation. When Bukharin and Zinoviev criticized the SDP for its unwillingness to adopt a revolutionary programme, the minimalists responded by complaining about Comintern interference with the composition of the SDP's leadership.

Upon the delegation's return from Moscow in January 1921, its members put a motion to the party's general council recommending affiliation. The vote highlighted the divisions within the party, with the proposal receiving the endorsement of the maximalists and the centrists, who together formed a majority. The minimalists, who opposed affiliation, decided to leave the party. The council decided to convene a party congress in May where the principal item on the agenda was to be affiliation to the Comintern. This became what is regarded as the first congress of the Romanian Communist Party which opened in Bucharest on 8 May 1921. It was scheduled to run for five days, but police raids and arrests forced the abandonment of the congress on 12 May, the day after it voted to declare affiliation to the Comintern. According to C. Titel Petrescu, a leading socialist in the interwar period, three of the most fervent advocates of affiliation were police agents who aimed thereby to provide justification for the arrests.⁵ The unfinished business, which included the adoption of a programme and the election of senior officials, was continued at a second congress, held in Ploiești on 3–4 October 1922, when

those participating took the name of the 'Communist Party of Romania, section of the Communist International'. This is indeed how the Party is styled in the records of the Comintern. Gheorghe Cristescu was elected general secretary.⁶

Membership of the Comintern gave the kiss of death to the fortunes of the Romanian Communists during the interwar period. By the time of the second congress of the Party, held in Ploiești in 1922, the impact of affiliation to the Comintern had become clear. At the insistence of Moscow the 'centrists' were expelled in early 1922; Comintern sources indicated that whereas the SDP had over 45,000 members before the split, the Romanian Communist Party retained only 2,000 members in 1922.⁷ On 11 April 1924, shortly after negotiations for resuming diplomatic relations between Romania and the Soviet Union collapsed over the Russian refusal to accept any formula which might be interpreted as an acknowledgement of Romanian sovereignty over Bessarabia, the Romanian government issued an order banning the RCP.

Henceforth, the Party was forced to conduct its activities underground or through surrogate organizations. Both means were impediments to recruitment and to the exercise of the democratic conduct of Party affairs. Even though it was reduced to a marginalized heap, the Party was required to behave by the Comintern as a 'proper' Communist Party by holding congresses and implementing a party line. Congresses were duly held, but in secret and outside Romania—the third in Vienna (August, 1924), the fourth in Kharkov (1928), and the fifth and final pre-war congress in Moscow (1931).

Most damaging to the RCP's hopes of winning new recruits were Comintern directives which constituted an attack on Romania's national integrity. These were diametrically opposed to the sentiments of the vast majority of Romanians, including those in the industrial working class. The directives also provoked divisions within the RCP. Cristescu, a Romanian by birth, recognized that the adoption of such a policy by the Party could lead to proscription, while the Transylvanian Hungarians Elek Köblös and Sandor Körösi-Krizsán were in favour. To resolve the conflict, Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea proposed the despatch of an RCP delegation to Moscow to discuss the issue with the Comintern executive. The visit in September 1923 resulted in defeat for Cristescu.

Typical of the directives was the call from the fifth Comintern congress, held in June and July 1924, for "the political separation of oppressed peoples from Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Greece", the demand that Bessarabia, northern Bukovina and the Western Ukraine be united with the Soviet Union, and that Transylvania and the Dobrogea be made independent states. With the RCP now outlawed, there was nothing to be lost by adopting this position and, as if to emphasize its anti-Romanian character, the Party installed Köblös as general secretary at the third RCP congress held in Vienna.⁸

The delegates accepted a resolution proclaiming the right of the minorities to secede from the newly enlarged Romania, a stance which it was to reiterate at its fourth and fifth congresses. The resolution effectively endorsed Soviet claims to Bessarabia by declaring that the hope of "workers and peasants of Bessarabia that their national revolution would unite them with the USSR".⁹ The Romanian

parliament responded in December by passing a law making Communist activity an offence. As a result, over “eight hundred members of the Party were arrested and an entirely new party apparatus had to be erected”, according to Comintern reports.¹⁰

The Party’s policy of self-determination for the minorities inevitably drew members of these groups to the Party’s ranks in disproportionate numbers and this, in turn, reinforced its ‘alien’ image.¹¹ That image was underlined both by the fact that between the late summer of 1924 and the spring of 1944, its general secretaries were not ethnic Romanians, and by the staging of its fourth and fifth Congresses in the Soviet Union. At the former, Vitali Holostenko, a one-time member of the Ukrainian Communist Party, was elected general secretary to replace Köblös, but the party continued to be rent by factional disputes generated by personality clashes rather than ideological conflict. Holostenko’s authority was challenged by Marcel Pauker who, under his conspiratorial name of Luximin, claimed to represent the party. He was supported by Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Boris Ștefanov, and László Luka (Vasile Luca), a Transylvanian Hungarian worker who, at the Kharkov Congress, had been elected to the party’s Central Committee. With the party paralysed by this confusion, the Comintern intervened to convene the fifth congress in Moscow in 1931, imposing yet another non-Romanian, Alexandru Ștefanski (Gorn), as general secretary. Ștefanski was a member of the Polish Communist Party and served as leader of the RCP from his base in Berlin for three years before Eugen Iacobovici took his place. In June 1936, the Bulgarian Ștefanov took over and held office until December 1940 when the Transylvanian Hungarian Ștefan Foriș was appointed by the Comintern.¹²

The ethnic composition of the party’s leadership made it particularly vulnerable in the ultranationalist arena of Romanian politics in the 1930s, when the myth of ‘Judeo-Bolshevism’ was propagated by Corneliu Codreanu’s Iron Guard and other movements of the extreme right such as the National Christian Party led by Octavian Goga and Alexandru C. Cuza. In an effort to present a more indigenous image, some Jewish party members took Romanian cover names, among them Iosif Chișinevski (Iosif Roitman), Leonte Răutu (Lev Oigenstein), and Valter Roman (Ernst Neuländer). Those that did not, for example, Ana and Marcel Pauker, Bela Brainer and Remus Koffler, confirmed suspicions in the public mind about their real loyalties. Their presence, coupled with that of Transylvanian Hungarians such as Köblös and Foriș, and the Bulgarians Gheorghe Crosneff and Dimitar Colev (Dumitriu Coliu), invited the conclusion that the use of ‘Romanian’ in the title of the party was a fiction. Most Romanians ignored the fact that the majority of Jews in Romania did not belong to the RCP, and that a number of these leaders, such as Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Marcel Pauker, were victims of Stalin’s purges in the Soviet Union.

Membership of the party remained small. In 1922, the party had 2,000 members but according to Comintern figures, the figure fell in 1925 to 1,661 members. In 1927, the number collapsed dramatically to barely 300, probably because the party’s stance on Bessarabia had become well known, but membership was to

rise slowly throughout the 1930s, reaching its highest point in 1937 with 1,635 activists.¹³ The minorities provided a disproportionately large percentage. An analysis of membership for the 1930s shows that the Hungarians, who constituted less than eight per cent of the country's population, made up some 26 per cent of the RCP; the analogous figures for Jews were four per cent of the population and 18 per cent, for Russians and Ukrainians, three per cent and 10 per cent, and for Bulgarians, two per cent and ten per cent. Romanians, by contrast, constituted 72 per cent of the population and yet only 23 per cent of party members.¹⁴

The party, despite its proscription, responded to the difficult economic conditions by being active on the labour front. It organized a number of strikes, one of which was to bring to the fore a railway worker who, after the imposition of Communist rule in Romania, became Romania's leader. Gheorghe Gheorghiu was something of a rarity amongst RCP members, being at once an ethnic Romanian and from a working-class background (his father was a manual worker). His lack of a formal education marked him out from the intellectuals in the party, such as the Paukers and Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, and even from his later close friend, Emil Bodnăraș, who had passed out from a Romanian officers' school.¹⁵ Gheorghiu was born in Bârlad in Moldavia on 8 November 1901. At the age of 11 his parents, Tănase and Ana, sent him to work as a porter in the Danube port of Galați. He managed to complete three years of secondary education in a trade school, qualifying as an electrician. According to one source, he took a series of jobs in a timber mill, a textile mill, and then in coopers' yards in Piatra Neamț and Moinești. From 1919 to 1921, he worked as an electrician in the town of Câmpina, after which he returned to Galați where he signed on as an electrician in a railway yard. Accusations of 'Communist agitation' led Gheorghiu to be transferred from the railway yards in Galați to Dej on 15 August 1931 and it was his association with the town which led the suffix Dej to be attached to his name.¹⁶

Various dates have been given for Gheorghiu-Dej's initiation into the Communist Party; 1928, 1930 and 1932. As state employees, railway workers were denied the right to strike, and this merely added to their disaffection. Gheorghiu-Dej took up his colleagues' grievances and on 20 March 1932 attended a national meeting of railwaymen in Bucharest where he was elected to the Central Action Committee. On 2 February 1933, the railway workers at the Grivița yards in Bucharest went on strike after the government withdrew from earlier agreements on working conditions with the men. The strike spread to railwaymen in Cluj and Iași. Gheorghiu-Dej and other members of the committee were arrested on 14 February and on the following day there were violent clashes at the yards between workers and police which left several railwaymen dead. Although in jail during these disturbances, Gheorghiu-Dej was put on trial as one of the instigators alongside Constantin Doncea, Chivu Stoica, Dumitru Petrescu, Ilie Pintilie, Gheorghe Vasilichi and over one hundred other 'agitators'. Sentenced on 19 August 1933 to twelve years' hard labour,¹⁷ Gheorghiu-Dej was sent to the Doftana prison near Câmpina where in 1936 he was joined by all the other jailed Communists following a decision by the authorities to place all of them together. If the aim was to supervise

them more effectively, it was a patent failure, as a police report from September 1936 indicated:

At Doftana the Communists, although isolated in their cells, carry on political work...hold daily conferences and...discuss subjects of communist agitation... The prisoners are organized in a collective which includes all communist prisoners... In addition, there is a communist group...which leads the collective.¹⁸

Imprisonment at Doftana, like the Grivița strike and the *coup* of 23 August 1944, was accorded a sacred place in Gheorghiu-Dej's career by post-war Communist historiography. It continued to enjoy mythical status in the annals of the Communist movement compiled under Nicolae Ceaușescu, who also served a two-year sentence there for Communist agitation between 1936 and 1938. The prison experience of the Communists in Doftana was presented as an integral part of the class struggle between the proletariat and an alliance of the bourgeoisie and landowners in which the latter, faced with the prospect of defeat, resorted to the use of legislation "of a repressive nature" in order to stifle the growth of "the revolutionary movement of the proletariat". The conditions in which the Communists were held in Doftana, one Party historian claimed, revealed "the premeditated aim of destroying them physically and morally through the use of pressure, solitary confinement, beatings and starvation".¹⁹

So sweeping a condemnation is not supported by reliable evidence. While isolation cells were occasionally used in which the prisoners were kept in total darkness and solitary confinement, prisoners in ordinary adjacent cells could communicate with each other. The Doftana prisoners were allowed visitors, food parcels, money and reading matter.²⁰ Even correspondence was smuggled in, and this allowed Gheorghiu-Dej to keep in touch with the party leadership, for he was co-opted to its Central Committee *in absentia* in 1935.²¹ In terms of his ethnic and social background he was, as a CC member, unique apart from Ilie Pintilie, a railwayman from Iași. Unlike Constantin Pârvulescu, Iosif Chișinevski, Petre Borilă and Gheorghe Stoica from among the Romanian Communists, or Klement Gottwald, Ernő Gerő, Boleslaw Bierut or Iosip Broz Tito from among the other East European Communist Parties, Gheorghiu-Dej did not study at the Comintern school in Moscow.

In Doftana the young Communists looked to Gheorghiu-Dej for leadership and he provided it. He cultivated an avuncular image, being addressed as 'the old man', even though he was only in his mid-thirties. Amongst their number were Gheorghe Apostol, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Alexandru Drăghici and Alexandru Moghioroș, all of whom were, after 1944, to be promoted to senior party and state positions as Gheorghiu-Dej's trusted lieutenants. Alongside this group of young activists he attracted a parallel set of friends who were all Soviet agents: Pintilie Bodnarenko, Vasile Bucikov, Pyotr Gonciaruc, Serghei Nikonov and Misha Posteuca. It was from the latter that Gheorghiu-Dej learned his halting Russian.²²

Nevertheless, prison was hardly a place from which Gheorghiu-Dej could translate his authority into effective action. It also cut him off from the Comintern and meant that he did not pass through the hands of its instructors, either in Moscow or elsewhere. This marked him out from those in the Communist Party in Romania who did and made him an unknown quantity to Stalin.

The opposite was true of the figure who was to become Gheorghiu-Dej's main rival after 1944. Ana Pauker was born on 13 December 1893 in the village of Codăești in Moldavia into a middle-class family called Rabinsohn. Her father was a *haham*, a Jewish butcher and teacher of Hebrew at the local school. At the turn of the century, the Rabinsohns moved to Bucharest. Details of Ana's youth and education are sketchy and largely anecdotal, and the first mention of any professional activity concerns her employment as a teacher of Hebrew at the *Brotherhood of Zion* primary school in Bucharest.²³ Shortly afterwards, in September 1915, she joined the socialist movement. According to an autobiographical pamphlet published in 1951, Ana helped to distribute literature produced by the Romanian SDP. She was more forthcoming about her activity during this period to Corneliu Coposu, private secretary to National Peasant Party leader Iuliu Maniu, who she encountered at Cluj prison in the mid-1930s. There she revealed that after leaving her post as a schoolteacher, she found a position as a secretarial assistant at the newspaper *Dimineața* where she had responsibility for the library. It was while working here that in 1921 she met the son of one of the major shareholders of the newspaper, Marcel Pauker, who was three years her junior and had just returned from Paris where he had taken a doctorate in law.²⁴

The two took part in the foundation congress of the RCP in May 1921, but the arrest of its leading members prompted them to flee to Zurich where they were married on 1 June. Marcel enrolled as a student of engineering at *L'École Polytechnique Fédérale* while Ana began a course in medicine. A few months after the wedding, Ana returned to Bucharest to give birth to her first child, a daughter called Tania, who died of dysentery before she was one year old. At the second RCP congress, held at Ploiești in October 1922, both Marcel and Ana were elected to the Central Committee of the Party. After the proscription of the party and the suppression of its newspaper *Socialismul* in April 1924, Ana was given the task of publishing underground propaganda, thereby becoming a target of the *Siguranța*, the security police. She was arrested with four female colleagues and held in Văcărești prison. At Ana's instigation the four went on hunger strike and were beaten, after which they and Ana were released until the date of their trial, fixed for July 1925.²⁵

The defendants absconded and Ana Pauker was sentenced *in absentia* to ten years imprisonment. The Paukers managed to flee abroad in 1926, staying in Berlin, Paris and Prague, and in the same year Ana gave birth to a son, Vlad, in Vienna. From there they went to Moscow where Ana attended the Comintern training school in order to become an instructor. In Moscow, Ana produced a second daughter, named Tatiana, in 1928. Her husband returned to Romania clandestinely in the spring of 1929, only to be arrested on 4 May, but he was to benefit

from an amnesty of which he took advantage to work underground for two years before returning to Moscow. In December 1932, he was again sent by the Comintern to Romania, this time to organize Communist activity in Transylvania, and in the following year he was recalled to the Soviet capital.

Ana, too, was given a mission by the Comintern. She was attached, in turn, to the Czechoslovak, German and French Communist Parties (from 1931 to 1932) as an instructor, with the cover name of Marina. In March 1934, she was sent back by the Comintern to Romania in the company of other comrades in an attempt to revive clandestine activity which had been severely curtailed following the Grivița strike. She was eventually arrested in Bucharest in the early hours of 13 July 1935. Her trial, and that of 18 other Communists—who included Alexandru Moghioroș, his future wife Stela (Esther Radoshovetsky), Alexandru Drăghici and Liuba Chișinevski Roitman—was scheduled to be held in the capital but street demonstrations in support of the defendants led the authorities to move it to Craiova. Proceedings opened on 5 June 1936, and were attended by several foreign press correspondents and observers. Among the 24 lawyers for the defence were Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu and Ion Gheorghe Maurer, as well as personalities from the Bucharest bar.²⁶

Ana Pauker was found guilty of being a leading member of an outlawed organization and sentenced on 7 July to ten years' imprisonment. She spent five in the prisons of Dumbrăveni, Râmnicu-Sărat and Caransebeș before being exchanged on 3 May 1941 for Ion Codreanu, a 62-year old Romanian from Bessarabia who had been arrested for 'anti-Soviet agitation' in the previous July following the Soviet annexation of the province.²⁷ Whilst Ana was in prison, her husband was arrested in Moscow in 1937 for 'Trotskyist' sympathies, together with other senior members of the RCP: Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Ecaterina Arbore, Pavel Tcacenko, Elek Köblös and David Fabian.²⁸ All became victims of Stalin's purges and were executed without trial in 1937.

These blows to the RCP did not prevent it from mounting a successful operation to recruit volunteers for the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War. Volunteers were also raised by the National Peasant Party and the Social Democratic Party. 'Committees in Support of Republican Spain' were set up by all three parties to help provide food and clothing for the front. The Liberal Government espoused a policy of non-intervention and instructed the passport authorities not to issue passports to volunteers, but many volunteers left without them. More than five hundred Romanian Communists fought on the republican side, and their passage to Spain was organized by a network covering Romania, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Switzerland and France. Among those who fought were Petre Borilă, Mihai Burcă, Constantin Doncea, Mihail Florescu, Valter Roman and Gheorghe Stoica. After the republican defeat in the Civil War, a number of the Romanian volunteers were interned in the south of France but some, such as Mihail Florescu and Mihai Patriciu, escaped and fought in the French resistance until 1944, after which they found their way back to Romania.²⁹

Internment in France, imprisonment in Romania and liquidation by Stalin all dealt crushing blows to the RCP. The Party's financial position was also

disastrous. From a report compiled by Scevortzov, described as one of the Party leaders, which reached the Executive Committee of the Comintern in January 1940, it emerged that members' contributions were totally insufficient to cover the costs of the Party's activities in Romania. According to the report, in 1939 there were only 26 paid activists, seven of whom worked in Bucharest and the rest in regional branches. The financial support required to maintain the remnants of the Party came from the Comintern which used different channels to filter the funds through. One of these was France. From Moscow the money was sent to the Romanian Communists in France who then despatched it to Romania. At the beginning of 1939, Boris Ștefanov, the general secretary of the RCP living in Moscow, wrote to the Comintern secretary Gheorgi Dimitrov alerting him to the fact that two Party members, Bela Brainer and Gheorghe Vasilichi, based in France, had complained to him about a shortage of money. Dimitrov approved the despatch of 1,000 dollars to be shared by the two men. On 4 August 1939, Vasilichi informed Ștefanov that he was sending a man to Romania to pass on the latter's instructions.³⁰

Until the summer of 1939, the Comintern, whose principal executives were the Bulgarian Gheorgi Dimitrov and Dmitri Manuilsky, a member of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, had conducted a crusade against Hitler and fascism as the main enemy of peace and of socialism in Europe, and in the context of this crusade the RCP had launched a slogan calling for 'defence of the frontiers'. But no sooner had Molotov and Ribbentrop signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August 1939, than the Comintern changed its line. Hitler and fascism were no longer the enemy; instead, Britain and France were to be blamed for the Second World War. A Comintern manifesto published in October 1939 avoided any attack on the Nazi dictatorship and echoed Molotov's and Ribbentrop's call for a negotiated peace. An article published in December 1939 in the *Communist International* by Ștefanov accused Britain and France of attempting to drag Romania into the imperialist war. He maintained that Romania's interests required a treaty of mutual assistance with the Soviet Union and directed the RCP to work for the right of self-determination in the annexed provinces of Bessarabia, Bukovina, Transylvania and Dobrogea, even if this meant their separation from Romania. Few Romanians believed the statement released later by the Soviet Foreign Ministry in which it denied that Ștefanov represented the views of the Soviet government, most Romanians being convinced that the article revealed a Soviet interest in Romania that went beyond the recovery of Bessarabia.³¹

The territorial losses suffered by Romania in the summer of 1940 almost eradicated the Party. Stalin, through his annexation of Bessarabia in June 1940, and Hitler, through his award of Northern Transylvania to Hungary in August, reduced Romania's total area and population by almost a third. The cession of these provinces was catastrophic for the RCP's membership since it removed areas where RCP loyalty was strong. According to Comintern figures, the RCP's membership of 4,210 dropped to about 1,000 as a result of the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina and the partition of Transylvania and the Dobrogea.³²

The desire of Dimitrov to ensure that the RCP remained a slave to the Comintern's bidding led him to request in early 1940 that the party send two delegates to Moscow to report on its activity. Vasile Luca and Zighelboim Ștrul were chosen as representatives and left in April only to be arrested while attempting to cross the Romanian frontier with the Soviet Union illegally. At a meeting during the following month chaired by Ștefan Foriș and attended by Teohari Georgescu, Iosif Chișinevski and Gavrilă Birtaș, the decision was taken to send Foriș and Georgescu to Moscow for consultation with Comintern officials and they crossed secretly into newly-occupied Bessarabia to receive instructions and appear to have reached the Russian capital in August 1940.³³ Foriș was appointed general secretary of the party³⁴ and Georgescu allegedly designated Foriș's successor should anything befall him.³⁵

The annexation of Bessarabia had other consequences for individual RCP members. Leonte Răutu³⁶ and Alexandru Bârlădeanu, who were both from the province, were accorded Soviet nationality and instructed to go to Moscow.³⁷ There they joined Valter Roman and Vasile Luca³⁸, the latter arrested as a Communist activist in Cernăuți (Czernowitz) in 1940 but released after the Soviet occupation of northern Bukovina.³⁹ With the arrival of Ana Pauker in May 1941, this group constituted the so-called 'Moscow bureau' of the RCP. All were contributors to the Comintern-backed Romanian radio station *România liberă*. In 1943, Pauker was given the task of assisting in the recruitment of the *Tudor Vladimirescu* division of the Red Army, formed from Romanian prisoners of war, and together with Vasile Luca and two captured officers, Colonel Captaru and Colonel Nicolae Cambrea, she visited prison camps to attract volunteers.⁴⁰

Romania's participation under her wartime pro-Nazi leader Ion Antonescu in the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 perpetuated the divisions within the RCP. From this date, jailed Communists, as their prison sentences expired, were transferred from Caransebeș to the internment camp in Târgu Jiu, which had been established in autumn 1939 for Polish refugees.⁴¹ Among them was Teohari Georgescu, who was caught by the police and jailed in Caransebeș in early 1941. These Communists were thus held, legally speaking, no longer as prisoners but as 'internees'. Gheorghiu-Dej emerged as the leader of this second group, the 'prison group' as it is sometimes known.⁴² Despite internment they were able, by bribing the camp authorities, to maintain contact with the remnants of the party who had avoided arrest. The principal figures in this third group, the rump of the party, were Ștefan Foriș, who was confirmed as secretary general of the RCP by the Comintern in 1940; his deputy, Remus Koffler; Constantin Agiu; Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu; Petre Gheorghe, head of the Bucharest party committee; Constantin Pârvulescu and Iosif Rangheț. Yet Foriș's passivity in the face of Romania's participation in Operation *Barbarossa*, in particular the lack of significant partisan activity, attracted criticism from Gheorghiu-Dej which was shared by Rangheț and Pârvulescu.⁴³ After his release from jail in November 1942, Bodnăraș allied himself with the latter in their opposition to Foriș. Their anger was fuelled following the arrest in May 1942 of Petre Gheorghe and an associate Nicolae Atanasoff by the Romanian Secret Service on a charge of espionage in favour of the Soviet

Union.⁴⁴ Foriș, whose relations with Gheorghe were strained, was alleged by colleagues to have refused to give any legal aid to Gheorghe and Atanasoff. At a summary trial in Ploiești lasting only a single day—6 August—both were found guilty and sentenced to death. After a delay of several months both were executed by firing squad on 8 February 1943.

At Târgu Jiu discipline was even less strict than in the prisons.⁴⁵ Gustav Corbu, a British subject of Romanian origin interned at the camp between October 1941 and November 1943, distinguished three groups of internees: those who could afford to pay for their keep (the equivalent of £8 per month at 1945 prices); needy intellectuals who could only meet part of the costs; and the destitute and Communists who were made to work. Until 1942, the camp commandant was Colonel Zlătescu, who was alleged to have made a fortune while in charge. Those who could pay fully lived in clean and comfortable huts, and were given good food. However, they had to pay Zlătescu for the smallest service.⁴⁶ Newspapers and books approved by the censor were allowed into the camp, but no radios.⁴⁷

On 8 September 1942, almost all the Jews among the Communists interned in Târgu Jiu were deported to Transnistria, the Romanian-administered territory between the Dniester and the Bug which had been overrun by German and Romanian armies in the autumn of 1941. The Jews were gathered in the camp at Vapniarka in the county of Juguastu.⁴⁸ A total of 1,312 Communists and Socialists from all over Romania were assembled in this camp.⁴⁹ The poor diet, which included a type of pea used for feeding cattle, caused permanent paralysis of the lower limbs in 117 detainees.

On 16 March 1944, General Constantin Vasiliu, the head of the gendarmerie, informed the Romanian Army Chief of Staff, that Antonescu had given orders for the repatriation of all Jews deported to Transnistria. Those deported from Bessarabia would be settled in Bălți and Hotin counties, those from Bukovina in the city of Cernăuți and in the districts of Cernăuți and Storojineț. Those from the Regat would be returned to their homes and the Jews interned in Grosulovo camp and those imprisoned in Râbnița jail would be transferred to the Târgu Jiu camp.⁵⁰ Most of the Communists among the prisoners in Râbnița never saw Romania again. Three categories of prisoner were distinguished by the Romanian authorities in Râbnița: 1) Communists brought from prisons in Romania; 2) Communist partisans of both sexes who were Soviet citizens, and captured Soviet parachutists; and 3) common law offenders sentenced by the local court in Râbnița.⁵¹ Although the Ministry of Internal Affairs gave the order on 16 March to the gendarmerie in Râbnița to evacuate the jail, the respective telegram never arrived because the post office in the town had been closed down. On the evening of 18 March, some 60 of the prisoners—apparently common law offenders—were removed from the prison under escort on the order of the local gendarmerie commander. Shortly afterwards, some of the partisans were also led away. The chief jailer, Văluță Pintilie, in the absence of the prison governor who was on sick leave, handed over control of the prison and its inmates—215 in number according to the transfer document—to a German officer named Uresan Zozi.⁵² The officer, identified as a captain in some witness statements, told the jailer Pintilie, to identify the principal

Communists and the two of them, accompanied by a Kalmuk soldier, went from cell to cell as the soldier shot each prisoner dead in the back of the neck.⁵³ The leader of the Communist youth movement, Andrei Bernard, was among the victims. Fifty-two prisoners were murdered, among them the female partisans.⁵⁴ The remainder survived the war and several of them, including Simion Bughici and Aurel Rottenberg (Ștefan Voicu), went on to occupy ministerial positions in the Communist government.

Following the battle of Stalingrad and the advance of the Soviet armies, the rules were relaxed for the Communist detainees in Târgu Jiu. At the same time, labour shortages meant that construction teams made up of Communists were sent to do repair work in the vicinity of the camp, and it was during such tasks that the Communists outside the camp were able to pass messages to those on labour detachment. Among those who did electrical repairs in homes near the camp was Nicolae Ceaușescu.

It was in the Târgu Jiu camp that the 'prison faction' under Gheorghiu-Dej took a decision to remove Foriș as General Secretary of the Party in April 1944. The circumstances in which this decision was taken are not entirely clear, for the mists of politically engineered distortion still linger over the matter. According to the official version propagated subsequently, a meeting was held on 4 April in the camp hospital involving Gheorghiu-Dej, Bodnăraș, Pârvulescu, Rangheț and Chivu Stoica at which Gheorghiu-Dej demanded the removal of Foriș on the grounds that he was a police informer.⁵⁵ In his place a provisional secretariat of Bodnăraș, Pârvulescu and Rangheț was appointed by those present. It is unclear as to whether Gheorghiu-Dej and his associates acted on their own initiative or upon instructions from Moscow, channelled to them by the Soviet agent Bodnăraș.

Contact between Foriș and the Comintern had been assured via Soviet agents in Sofia who travelled to Bucharest but this link was broken after Romania's entry into the war against the Soviet Union in June 1941. Instead, messages were relayed from Moscow to Foriș through Petre Gheorghe, the secretary of the Party in Bucharest, who had been sent for training to Moscow in the mid-1930s as an NKVD agent.⁵⁶ Relations between Foriș and Gheorghe became strained when the latter, apparently on the orders of the Comintern, instructed Foriș to organize sabotage actions behind the Romanian lines. Foriș refused, arguing that such a request was unrealistic in view of the fact that most of the Party members were either interned or under house arrest.⁵⁷ It was Foriș's inaction in this regard which appears to have driven Bodnăraș, Rangheț and Pârvulescu to organize—with Gheorghiu-Dej's agreement—the abduction of Foriș on 4 April 1944 to a party safe house in the Bucharest district of *Vatra Luminoasă*.⁵⁸

Much use of was made of Foriș's behaviour—whether justifiably or not is impossible to determine—by Gheorghiu-Dej and his associates in Târgu Jiu in plotting his removal. Bodnăraș gave his own account of his actions between the time of his release from prison in early November 1942 and his part in the removal of Foriș from the Party leadership on 4 April 1944 in discussions with Valter Roman, Gheorghe Zaharia and Ada Grigorian on 18 and 20 January 1960.⁵⁹ This group had been charged by Gheorghiu-Dej with examining the background to the

23 August *coup* in the light of the publication in the West of a book by General Hans Friessner, former commander of the German forces in Romania during the war, which had been partially serialized in a Soviet journal. Gheorghiu-Dej had also been stung by criticism in Soviet publications of Romania's part in the war against the Soviet Union and the RCP's alleged 'inactivity'.⁶⁰

The removal of Foriș in April 1944 and his subsequent brutal murder on the orders of Gheorghiu-Dej, symbolize, as Vladimir Tismăneanu has noted, "the essentially repressive, anti-democratic character of Romanian Communism".⁶¹ Gheorghiu-Dej's actions were characteristic of the inability of the Romanian Communists to follow any democratic procedures in implementing a change in leadership. Rumour and whispered denunciation were preferred to reasoned dialogue with Foriș, and Gheorghiu-Dej's *post factum* attempt to engineer a justification for his actions through the Pătrășcanu-Koffler trial in April 1954 represented the height of cynicism. Foriș's removal was to herald a decade-long mafia-like struggle for power in the Party.

Notes

- 1 Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2003), p.39.
- 2 Two basic studies on the Iron Guard are Francisco Veiga, *La Mistica del Ultranaționalismo. Historia de la Guardia de Hierro* (Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Bellaterra, 1989), translated into Romanian as *Istoria Gărzii de Fier, 1919–1941. Mistica Ultranaționalismului* [*The History of the Iron Guard, 1919–1941. The Mystique of Ultranaționalism*] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993), and Armin Heinen, *Die Legion 'Erzengel Michael' in Rumänien Soziale Bewegung und Politische Organisation* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1986); see also A. Heinen and O. J. Schmitt (eds.), *Inszenierte Gegenmacht von rechts. Die "Legion Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien 1918–1938* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2013); Constantin Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the "Archangel Michael" in Inter-war Romania* (Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies, no. 15. Trondheim, Norway, 2004); Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth. Fascist Activism in Inter-war Romania* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press), 2015, and Raul Cârstocea, "Uneasy Twins? The Entangled Histories of Jewish Emancipation and Anti-Semitism in Romania and Hungary, 1866–1913," *Slovo* 21(2009): 64–85.
- 3 Until it was legalized on 23 August 1944, the Romanian Communist Party was known by its Comintern designation of 'The Communist Party of Romania'. For the early history of the Party see: Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, pp.37–84; also Ghita Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania, 1944–1962* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp.1–28, Robert R. King, *History of the Romanian Communist Party* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), pp.9–38, and Michael Shafir, *Romania. Politics, Economics and Society* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985), pp.9–28.
- 4 Marcel Pauker's son-in-law, Gheorghe Brătescu, selected material from the Russian Centre for the Preservation and Study of Documents of Contemporary History in Moscow relating to Pauker and published it in *Lichidarea lui Marcel Pauker*, ed. by G. Brătescu (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 1995). They include 400 pages of autobiographical material written in October and November 1937 in Pauker's own hand while he was under arrest in Moscow.

18 *Romanian Communist Party: early years*

- 5 Ionescu, Communism in Romania, p.19.
- 6 Shafir, Romania. Politics, Economics and Society, pp.22–23.
- 7 Mary Ellen Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu. A Study in Political Leadership* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1989), p.20. For the sake of consistency I refer to the Party throughout this period as the Romanian Communist Party.
- 8 Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for all Seasons*, p.284, note 72.
- 9 Shafir, Romania, Politics, Economics and Society, p.24.
- 10 Mary Ellen Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu*, p.16 quoting from G.D. Jackson, *Comintern and Peasant in Eastern Europe, 1919–1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p.254.
- 11 Even key party documents were written, not in Romanian, but in German or Russian e.g. Marcel Pauker's 'self-criticism' addressed to the party's Central Committee in May 1932; see *Lichidarea lui Marcel Pauker*, pp.304–306.
- 12 For a biographical note on Ștefanov see Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania. Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948–1965* (London: Hurst and Co., 1999), p.2, note 3.
- 13 Membership of the RCP from 1925 to 1937 was as follows:

1925 1,661
1926 1,500
1927 300
1928 500
1929 461
1930 700
1936 1,083
1937 1,635

The breakdown of membership on ethnic affiliation for the year 1933 was: Hungarians 440, Romanians 375, Jews 300, Bulgarians 140, Russians 100, Moldavians 70, Ukrainians 70, Others 170 (Comintern files in RGASPI *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'noi i Politicheskoi Istorii* [Russian State Archive of Social and Political History] formerly RTsKhIDNI [Russian Centre for the Preservation and Study of Documents on Contemporary History], fond 495, opis, 25, dos.744; I am grateful to Prof. Ioan Chiper of the 'Nicolae Iorga' Institute of History for this information).

- 14 Shafir, Romania, Politics, Economics and Society p.26.
- 15 See the biographical notes.
- 16 Gheorghiu-Dej's personal life, given his years of imprisonment, was fraught with problems. In 1927, he married Maria Alexe, a local girl whose father was a trader. The couple had two daughters, Vasilica (Lica), born in Galați on 28 August 1928 and died in Bucharest on 15 March 1987, and Constantina (Tanți), born in Galați on 23 April 1931 who is believed to have died in 2000. In 1933, Maria divorced him and later remarried. In November 1938, Gheorghiu-Dej according to a police report, asked the party for permission to marry Elena Sârbu, a Communist activist, but he later withdrew this request (J. Enache, 'Căsătorii, divorțuri, iubiri, copii și nepoții', *Dosarele Istoriei*, vol.3, no.3 (1997), p.11). Maria was allegedly a heavy drinker and after his release from internment Dej took custody of his daughters. He did not remarry. Lica Gheorghiu made a name for herself as an actress, starring in a number of Romanian films in the early 1960s. She was married twice, first to Marcel Popescu whom Gheorghiu-Dej made minister for foreign trade (19 March 1957–17 August 1959). After Dej's death, he was vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce. He died in 1979. Lica and Marcel had two children: Sanda, born in 1950, and Camilia, born in 1955. In the late 1950s, Lica began a relationship with a doctor, Gheorghe Plăcințeanu. Their affair infuriated Dej and he ordered Alexandru Drăghici, the minister of the interior, to 'remove' the doctor. Trumped-up charges of sedition were brought against the doctor and he was

- found guilty and sentenced to ten years imprisonment. After developing tuberculosis, he was denied treatment in jail and died, it is believed, on 30 April 1961. Lica divorced Popescu and married Gheorghe Rădoi, who at the time was a director of the *Red Flag* tractor plant in Braşov. Tanţi, the younger daughter, trained as an engineer and became a lecturer at Bucharest Polytechnic. In 1953, she met a popular singer called Cezar Grigoriu. Dej frowned upon this liaison as well and in 1956 ordered Grigoriu's arrest. The singer was interrogated and beaten by Isidor Hollinger, head of the counter-intelligence directorate of the *Securitate*, and accused of being an Anglo-American agent. He was released after 24 hours and told by Hollinger to attribute his disappearance to drunkenness. Tanţi later married Stamate Popescu, a sculptor by whom she had a daughter (M. Oprea, 'Lica şi Tanţi Dej se iubeau cu doi burgheji', *Cuvîntul* (25–31 May 1992)).
- 17 His wife divorced him in the previous year and married a policeman. Mircea Chiriţoiu, 'Radiografia unui stalinist', *Dosarele Istoriei*, vol.3, no.3 (1997), pp.4–5 and Fischer, *Nicolae Ceauşescu*, p.23.
 - 18 Fischer, *Nicolae Ceauşescu*, p.23.
 - 19 Olimpia Matichescu, *Doftana. Simbol al Eroismului Revoluţionar* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1979), pp.12–13.
 - 20 Author's interview with Gheorghe Apostol, 7 May 1990.
 - 21 Mircea Bălănescu, an assistant to Ştefan Foriş, related how Foriş kept in touch with Gheorghiu-Dej by using couriers, known as *tehnicele*. These were young women to whom letters from Foriş were passed on by Bălănescu for delivery to Iosif Şraier, Dej's legal representative, who took them to his client in Doftana (Bălănescu interview, Romanian TV 1, 28 July 1994).
 - 22 Letter from Mircea Oprişan to the author, 3 January 1996. Oprişan, who knew Gheorghiu-Dej from his time in Caransebeş, wrote that the latter also learned some Yiddish from Simion Zeigler, a lawyer who became a close friend and served as Gheorghiu-Dej's personal secretary when he became a government minister.
 - 23 For this largely anecdotal account of Ana's background see Marius Mircu, *Dosar Ana Pauker* (Bucharest: Editura Gutenberg, 1991), pp.12–23. Another source places her in the northern Moldavian town of Buhuşi as a schoolteacher (Corneliu Coposu, *Dialoguri cu Vartan Arachelian* (Bucharest: Editura Anastasia, 1992), p.63). An authoritative biographical note on Pauker is given by Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, pp.264–65.
 - 24 Coposu, *Dialoguri*, p.63.
 - 25 Mircu, *Dosar Ana Pauker*, p.43.
 - 26 Ion Gheorghe Maurer (1902–2000) was born in Bucharest. His mother was Romanian but his father was from Alsace and was employed as French tutor to Prince Carol (later King Carol II). After studying law at Bucharest University, he practised at the bar. He developed Marxist sympathies and often appeared for the defence of Communists. According to his own testimony, he joined the Party 'somewhat before 1936'; see Lavinia Betea, *Maurer şi lumea de ieri* (Arad: Fundaţia Culturală Ion Slavici, 1995), p.13. For a more detailed bibliography see Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, pp.262–63.
 - 27 Details related by Codreanu to Archibald Gibson, Kemsley Newspapers correspondent, in 1945 and recorded in Gibson's private papers (seen by this author, courtesy of his widow).
 - 28 Dobrogeanu-Gherea was executed on 4 December 1937 at the Lubianka prison in Moscow. For a biography of Fabian see *Anale de istorie*, vol.16, 1970, no.6, p.174.
 - 29 *Voluntari români în Spania, 1936–1936*, ed. Gheorghe Adorian et al. (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1971). I am grateful to Mihail Florescu for giving me a copy of this volume. Roman allegedly travelled from the south of France to Paris from where the Soviet embassy arranged his passage to Leningrad via Le Havre; author's interview with Eduard Mezincescu, 16 June 1994.

- 30 Details of this correspondence and of relations between the Comintern and the Communist Party in Romania in this period are to be found in T.A. Pokivailova, "1939–1940. 'Cominternul și Partidul Comunist din România'", *Magazin Istoric*, vol.31, no.3 (March 1997), pp.45–48.
- 31 Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), p.258.
- 32 Comintern files in RGASPI *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'noi i Politicheskoi Istorii* [Russian State Archive of Social and Political History] formerly RTsKh-IDNI [Russian Centre for the Preservation and Study of Documents on Contemporary History], fond 495, opis, 25, dos.744; I am grateful to Prof. Ioan Chiper of the 'Nicolae Iorga' Institute of History for this information.
- 33 'Transcript of the Interrogation of Teohari Georgescu regarding the Departure and Activity of the Delegation of the Communist Party in Romania (Șt. Foriș, T. Georgescu) in the Soviet Union in 1940' in Dan Cătănuș, Ioan Chiper, *Cazul Ștefan Foriș* (Bucharest: Editura Vremea, 1999), pp.160–61. Georgescu was born on 31 January 1908 in Bucharest. After four years of elementary school, he became a printer's apprentice and in 1923 entered the printing plant of *Cartea Românească*. In 1928, he joined the printers' union and helped to organize a strike. His role in the strike brought him to the attention of the *Siguranța* who placed him under surveillance. In the following year, he joined the Communist Party. In November 1933, he was arrested for distributing Communist manifestos and detained for several months before being released on grounds of 'insufficient proof'. He was rearrested in June 1934 for Communist activity but released on bail. He was arrested once again in Ploiești in January 1935 for failing to appear at his trial, and held for several months before being released until the trial date was fixed. His trial was postponed on more than ten occasions between 1937 and 1940 when he was finally sentenced to two months' imprisonment. From 1937 to 1938 he worked as a printer for the daily *Adevărul* and the National Printing Office. In August 1940, he was sent to Moscow to receive instruction from the NKVD on orders from Georgi Dimitrov, secretary of the Comintern, on how to code messages and to use a special technique of writing them on glass. He was arrested in April 1941 as part of the Bucharest Party cell led by Iosif Chișinevski (Roitman) and sentenced in May to ten years in jail. The first part of his sentence was executed at Caransebeș jail. In April 1942, he was moved to Văcărești prison to work in the printing press and returned to Caransebeș at the end of August where he stayed until his release at the end of August 1944 (*Archive of the Romanian Security Service* (henceforth abbreviated to ASRI), fond Y, dosar 40009, vol.21, pp.111–37). This archive has been transferred to the Archive of the National Council for the Study of the Archives of the *Securitate* (ACNSAS) and is in the process of being re-catalogued. For this reason I have retained the original call-marks. For Georgescu see also Andrei Șiperco (ed.), *Confesiunile elitei comuniste. România 1944–1965*. *Arhiva Alexandru Șiperco*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2015), pp.337–412.
- 34 Foriș was born on 9 May 1892 in the village of Tărlungeni near Brașov in Transylvania, which at that time was under Hungarian rule. After completing a degree in physics and mathematics at Budapest University, he returned to Brașov in September 1919 and joined the Hungarian language socialist newspaper *Munkas* (Worker) as an editor. He joined the Communist Party in 1921 and in the following year moved to Bucharest where, after the proscription of the party, he worked underground as an agitator. In 1926, he became secretary of *Ajutorul Roșu* (Red Aid), the Romanian section of the Comintern-controlled International Organization for Aiding the Fighters of the Revolution, known by its Russian initials MOPR (*Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia pomoshchi bortsam revoliutsii*). The MOPR provided food and legal aid to activists in prison. In 1927, Foriș was *co-opted* as a member of the Central Committee and took part in the fourth party congress in the following year. He was arrested in July 1928 but a

rapid deterioration in his health led to his release and he was able to make his way to Moscow. At the end of 1930 he returned to Romania and was arrested once again on 26 August 1931. Freed in 1935, he was appointed in 1938 to the secretariat of the Central Committee, and in February 1940 he was summoned by the Comintern to Moscow from where he returned in December as general secretary of the party (A.G.Savu, 'Ştefan Foriş. Schiţă pentru o viitoare biografie', *Magazin Istoric*, no.7 (1968), pp.53–58). This issue of the review was withdrawn from circulation by the authorities shortly after its appearance because of this article on Foriş. I am grateful to Marian Ştefan for providing me with a copy; see also N.I. Florea, 'Ştefan Foriş', *Analele de Istorie*, vol.18, no.3 (1972), pp.150–53.

- 35 An appraisal of Georgescu, made by the British political mission in 1946, shed some interesting light on his family background: "Several responsible reports claim, although baptized Orthodox, Georgescu is of Jewish origin and his actual name is Burah Tes-covici. Married for second time to Jewess, Eugenia Samoila, a former dressmaker. He has one daughter. His family furnishes an interesting example of nepotism. He is the brother-in-law of General Nicolae Pârvulescu, Under-Secretary of Supplies, who through Georgescu entered into contact with the Communists. He has a brother who is the police chief of 31st Bucharest district. His wife has two brothers, one of whom was a press chief of the People's Court during war criminal trials, while the second on returning from Russia started in January 1946 a police information bureau under the name of 'Documentary Bureau'". (The National Archives, Kew (henceforth TNA), FO 371/59190/R7847/6181/37). General Pârvulescu was appointed Secretary General of Police in the Ministry of the Interior by Georgescu on 6 March 1945. Dissatisfied with this post, he was made Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Supplies in summer 1945.
- 36 For a biography of Răutu see Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, pp.267–68.
- 37 Bârlădeanu was born at Comrat in Bessarabia in 1911. He completed his secondary schooling at Iaşi and in 1932 was taken on as a lecturer in political economics at the University of Iaşi. He appears to have been active in the National Peasant Party at this time since Corneliu Coposu, its youth leader, recalls Bârlădeanu being presented to him during a visit he made to the town (Coposu, *Dialoguri*, p.67). Bârlădeanu admitted to being a Communist from his student days and having flirted with the NPP but he left the latter after its handling of the Griviţa strikes. The Soviet annexation of Bessarabia caught him there on holiday at his mother's house and he remained in the province. He worked at an economics institute in Chişinău until the outbreak of war in 1941, when he was evacuated to Kazakhstan. Poor eyesight saved him from conscription and he was sent down a coal mine in Karaganda for several months before persuading a local Party boss to assign him to a secondary school in the town teaching mathematics. In 1943, he was sent to Moscow for doctoral studies and returned to Romania in 1946. Bârlădeanu's unusually long stay in the Soviet Union led to rumours that he was in fact a Russian and a member of the Soviet Communist Party, but he denied these, claiming that he joined the Romanian Communist Party in 1946 (Betea, *Maurer şi lumea de ieri*, pp.289–90).
- 38 Vasile Luca was the Romanianized name of László Luca, a Hungarian born in the commune of Cătălina in Covasna County in Transylvania on 8 June 1898. He lost his parents at the age of seven and was placed in an orphanage in Sibiu. When he was 13 he became apprentice to a local padlock maker. In 1915, he secured a job in the railway yards in Braşov but at the end of the year was called up into the Austro-Hungarian army and sent to the front. In 1919, as a conscript in the Romanian army, he took part in the campaign against Bela Kun's Soviet Republic. He resumed his railway job at the end of the year when he also joined the trade union movement. In 1924, he became regional secretary of the Communist Party in Braşov. Arrested in the same year for membership of an illegal organization, he spent three years in jail. In 1928, he was elected to the Party Central Committee. As a result of the internal struggles within the Party he was

sent to do basic Party work in Moldavia. In 1933 he was arrested for organizing trade union activity, tried and imprisoned for five years. After his release from jail he was *co-opted* into the Party Central Committee and delegated to present a report to the Comintern about the Party's activity. On 4 April 1940, he was caught while trying to cross the frontier into the Soviet Union and detained in Cernăuți in northern Bukovina. He was released from custody following the Soviet occupation of the province at the end of June ('Documentarul referitor la procesul privind pe Vasile Luca', *Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale* (*The National Central Historical Archives*, henceforth abbreviated to ANIC), *Arhiva Comitetului Executiv al CC al PCR* (*Archive of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party*), No.264/19, 18.02.1972. I am grateful to Marius Oprea for locating this document.)

- 39 By virtue of his presence on Soviet territory, Luca was offered the right to claim Soviet citizenship which he exercised. He spent the next four years in Moscow, working for the Romanian section of Radio Moscow and for the Comintern-backed Romanian radio station *România liberă* (Ionescu, *Communism in Romania*, p.353); see also Gheorghe Buzatu ('Cominterniștii români se pregătesc', *Magazin Istoric*, vol.28, no.2 (February 1994), pp.41–42), who in Moscow consulted a register belonging to Ana Pauker with the names of 185 Romanian Communists who sought refuge in the Soviet Union during the war.
- 40 The first camp Pauker visited was at Oranki in July 1943; see: N. Fuiorea, *Divizia Stalinistă 'Tudor Vladimirescu' în Umbra Steagului Roșu* (Bucharest: Pan-Arcadia, 1992), p.17. Two army divisions, named 'Tudor Vladimirescu' and 'Horia Cloșca and Crișan', were formed respectively in October 1943 and April 1945 from Romanian prisoners of war in the Soviet Union. They were organized on the Soviet model in which political allegiance to the Communist Party was paramount. This was ensured by a political command which, in the 'Tudor Vladimirescu' division was composed as follows: Major Ștefan Iordanov, political officer for the division; Major Dumitru Petrescu, head of the section for education and culture; Captain Mihai Burcă, political officer for the 1st Infantry Regiment; Captain Dumitru Coliu, political officer for the 2nd Infantry Regiment; Captain Gheorghe Stoica, political officer for the 3rd Infantry Regiment; Captain Petre Borilă, political officer for 1st Artillery Regiment; Captain Sergiu Sevcenko, political officer for the anti-tank battalion; Alexandru Paraschiv, political officer of the reconnaissance section; Ștefan Rab, political officer for the signals company. They were Communists who had been given military rank. Petrescu and Stoica had taken part, alongside Ana Pauker, in the conference held on 3 and 4 September 1943 at Krasnogorsk, where a series of measures designed "to improve anti-Fascist activity" in the prisoner-of-war camps was taken. The most important took the form of the creation, in the following month, of the 'Tudor Vladimirescu' division from prisoners from various camps. They were encouraged to join at the instigation of Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca and other Romanian Communists living in the Soviet Union. Colonel Nicolae Cambrea, one of the prisoners, was appointed the division's commander. The Soviet High Command decided to prepare the division for action on 29 March 1944, and on that day General Kovalenko and General Melnikov visited the division. They resolved that the division should swear its oath on 30 March. This included the promise to "faithfully respect the brotherhood of arms with the Soviet Union" and "to fight for a lasting peace with the Soviet Union which has given me the power to fight with a weapon in my hand for the destruction of the common enemy, Nazi Germany". (A.D. Duțu, 'Politizarea armatei române', *Dosarele Istoriei*, vol.1, no.4 (1996), p.30.) However, sensitivity over the delicate problem of avoiding contact with Romanian units led the Soviets to keep the division away from the front line. It was moved to Vapniarka in Transnistria and on 9 May was visited once more by Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca. The 23 August *coup* removed the danger of a direct confrontation between the division and Romanian forces and it was ordered to move straight to Bucharest. To this end, it was provided with 150

Lorries, and on 30 August the advance units of the division entered Bucharest. Major Dumitru Petrescu immediately contacted Gheorghiu-Dej and other Communist leaders. The division went on to fight, as part of the Red Army, in Transylvania, Hungary and Slovakia. After being placed in the reserve on 20 March 1945, it was withdrawn from operations and sent back by train to Bucharest where it was received by Gheorghiu-Dej. Almost 1,000 officers and men were selected from the division and given training by Party activists. On 26 April, they were incorporated into the Romanian army, promoted and decorated. At the beginning of May, 986 of them were sent to units at the front where they were given the newly created posts of political officers. On 8 May 1945, the new command to which they were responsible, namely the Higher Directorate for Education, Culture and Propaganda of the Army, was established. This was the instrument by which the Communist Party imposed its policy on the army. The second division of Romanian volunteers, the 'Horia, Cloșca and Crișan' division, was formed at Kotovsk in the Soviet Union on 12 April 1945 by order of Stalin. Its commander was General Mihail Lascăr, who had been taken prisoner at Stalingrad. A Soviet counsellor was appointed to the division, in the person of Colonel Novikov Stepanovici, who was given the task of "helping the volunteers to familiarize themselves with Soviet weaponry". The political officer was Lt. Col. Dumitru Petrescu (who had fulfilled the same function with the 'Tudor Vladimirescu' division), while the head of the education and cultural section was Major Valter Roman. The division's mission was, in the words of Lascăr, "to be a model for the organization of the entire Romanian army for the purpose of building a new army, with a new spirit, the Romanian Democratic Army..." (A.D. Duțu, 'Politizarea', p.3). It was formally integrated into the Romanian army, together with the 'Tudor Vladimirescu' division on 15 August 1945.

- 41 Jailed Communists had been moved to Caransebeș in November 1940 after the destruction of Doftana jail in an earthquake. Some 26,000 Polish citizens—15,000 of whom were civilians—were, according to Romanian archival sources, interned in a number of localities in Romania, including Târgu Jiu, following their exodus from their homeland as a consequence of Stalin's attack of 17 September without a formal declaration of war (see *Refugiații polonezi în România 1939–1947. Documente din Arhivele Naționale ale României. Polscy uchodźcy w Rumunii 1939–1947. Dokumenty z Narodowych archiwów Rumunii* [The Polish refugees in Romania, Documents from the Romanian National Archives], 2 vols. Warsaw-Bucharest: Arhivele Naționale ale României, Institutul Memoriei Naționale—Comisia pentru Condamnarea Crimelor Împotriva Națiunii Poloneze, 2013).
- 42 It included Gheorghe Apostol, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Iosif Chișinevski, Miron Constantinescu, Alexandru Drăghici, Teohari Georgescu and Alexandru Moghioroș. Gheorghiu-Dej's leadership of the imprisoned Communists was initially contested. Pavel Câmpeanu, a young Communist jailed at Caransebeș, recalled how three fellow prisoners, Ion Mețiu, Tănase Bratosin and Virgil Fulgescu, who were also railwaymen, tried unsuccessfully to take over from Dej as leader of the Communist faction in the jail (Pavel Câmpeanu, 'Note asupra PCR în anii 40–50', *Sfera Politicii*, vol.1, no.2 (January 1993), p.18).
- 43 Antonescu had given the order in summer 1941 that if any act of sabotage was carried out by Communists, 20 Jewish Communists should be shot, and five non-Jewish Communists. There were occasional arrests of persons distributing Communist propaganda against the Antonescu regime. In a report of 18 August 1942, the head of the Bucharest police, General Pălăngeanu, reported that five printers had been arrested in January 1942 for printing and distributing a Communist pamphlet deriding the Romanian government. The ringleader had been sentenced to death. At a later date a further eight printers had been arrested for printing and distributing a speech of Stalin. Two received the death sentence (Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (henceforth ANIC), Ministerul Afacerilor Interne, Trial of Ion Antonescu, file 40010, vol.8, p.103).

- 44 Born on 19 March 1907 in Dobrici in Bulgarian Dobrogea, Gheorghe joined in 1927 the Bulgarian Revolutionary Organization, part of the wider Communist movement in the Balkans. In 1940, he became a member of the Dobrogea committee of the Communist Party in Romania and in 1941, secretary of the Ilfov district just north of Bucharest. He was arrested on 19 May 1942. The charge levelled against him at his trial was “crime against the security of the state” which police reports show to have been based on evidence that he had received instructions from the Soviet consulate in Varna through the intermediary of Soviet agents to carry out industrial sabotage at sites in Bucharest (see Mihai Burcea, ‘Judecarea comuniștilor în timpul războiului. Procesul lui Petre Gheorghe’, in Adrian Cioroianu (ed.), *Comuniștii înainte de Comunism. Procese și Condamnări* (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2014), p.370.
- 45 While in Caransebeș, Gheorghiu-Dej had managed to get on the right side of the governor, Constantin Dobrian, who allowed him to listen to the radio, thereby following the progress of the war (letter to the author from Mircea Oprișan, 3 January 1996).
- 46 His tariffs were fixed on a sliding scale, the equivalent of £15 (at 1945 prices) being charged for five or six days ‘leave’ in Bucharest or a telephone call to the capital, £5 for permission to receive a visitor or for permission to go into Târgu Jiu, and £3 for sending a letter by private messenger. Corbu had been educated at Glasgow High School and University, had worked in a Scottish shipyard as an engineer, had lived in Britain for 29 years and had married an Englishwoman. He failed to leave Romania before the outbreak of war between Britain and Romania in December 1941 and was interned.
- 47 After a quarrel with Zlătescu, Corbu was sent to do hard labour on the Târgu Jiu-Petroșani railway. He was quartered, with 50 others, in a hut three metres by ten, and helped to hew eight tunnels through solid rock. A Lieutenant Trepăduș, who was in charge of the gangs, was said by Corbu to have been brutal to Jewish Communists. Corbu saw a Jew tied to a cross and left on it for 24 hours in the bitter cold, and also witnessed beatings administered to Jews, some of whom died. (Recorded in the private papers of Archibald Gibson, *The Times* correspondent in Romania from 1928 to 1940.) Zlătescu’s malpractices came to the notice of the Ministry of the Interior and he was dismissed, being replaced by Colonel Serban Leoveanu who, nevertheless, is said by other internees to have continued them. A People’s Tribunal sentenced Zlătescu and Trepăduș on 22 May 1945 to death and life imprisonment respectively. Zlătescu’s sentence was commuted a few days later to life imprisonment.
- 48 An exception was Iosif Chișinevski (Roitman) who remained in Caransebeș. Born in 1905 in Bessarabia, Chișinevski is believed to have studied at the Communist Party academy in Moscow during the late 1920s. He was arrested in 1941 as the head of a Communist cell and sent to Caransebeș jail. He was spared deportation to Transnistria because only Jews with sentences under ten years were sent to the province while those with heavier sentences, like Chișinevski, Simion Zeiger and Radu Mănescu, remained in Caransebeș until their release on 23 August 1944; see Pavel Câmpeanu, ‘Pe marginea unei recenzii. Mistere și pseudo-mistere din istoria PCR’, 22, no.34 (23–30 August 1995), p.12.
- 49 The number of persons held in Vapniarka on 5 May 1943 was 1,312, of whom 1,092 were Jewish internees and 198 Christian internees. The remaining 22 were classified as criminals and were Christians. Of the Jews, 835 were males, 136 females, and five children (*Archive of the Romanian Ministry of the Interior*, packet 91, file 569, p.445).
- 50 Evreii din România între anii 1940–1944, vol.IV, 1943–1944: Bilanțul Tragediei – Renașterea Speranței, ed. Ion Șerbănescu (Bucharest: Editura Hasefer, 1998), pp.356–57.
- 51 Court testimony of Major Ștefan Mihăilescu, commander of the Legion of Gendarmes in Râbnița, given in March 1945, *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (henceforth USHMM), RG.25.004M, reel 30, file 40013, vol.6, p.340.

- 52 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), RG.25.004M, reel 30, file 40013, vol.6, p.428).
- 53 Court testimony of Walter Isac, one of the survivors of the massacre (USHMM, RG.25.004M, reel 30, file 40013, vol.6, p.379); see also *Evreii din România între anii 1940–1944, vol.IV, 1943–1944: Bilanțul Tragediei – Renașterea Speranței*, ed. Ion Șerbanescu (Bucharest: Editura Hasefer, 1998), pp.299–300.
- 54 Dora Litani, *Transnistria* (Tel Aviv, 1981), p.77 (in Romanian); *Evreii din România între anii 1940–1944, Vol.IV*, pp.299–300.
- 55 Gheorghiu-Dej always spoke with great animosity about Foriș as he regarded him as a *Siguranța* agent. He formed this view after an experience he had in Doftana jail in 1940 when, according to Alexandru Bârlădeanu, Gheorghiu-Dej told his lawyer, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, that he wanted to escape from the prison. Maurer relayed Gheorghiu-Dej's wishes to no one but Foriș. Gheorghiu-Dej was summoned a few days later by the prison commandant who told him that he had heard that Gheorghiu-Dej wanted to escape. (Author's interview with Alexandru Bârlădeanu, 8 August 1996.) Under cross-examination at his trial with Pătrășcanu in April 1954, Koffler stated that the man behind the arrest of more than 60 Communist activists in 1942 was a certain Melinte who was secretary of the Ilfov party organization. After serving a six-month sentence in 1941, Melinte was re-appointed to his position, even though, Koffler claimed, he was known to be a police informer: see *Principiul Bumerangului. Documente ale Procesului Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu* (Bucharest: Editura Vremea, 1996), p.576.
- 56 Author's interview with Eduard Mezincescu, 16 June 1994.
- 57 Mezincescu, 'Polemici', p.2.
- 58 Foriș was held responsible by Gheorghiu-Dej for a string of arrests which had debilitated its activity since 1940 (Mezincescu, 'Polemici', p.2). On the face of it, there was little to link Foriș and his deputy, Remus Koffler, with any of them, the arrests being the result either of the diligence of the *Siguranța*, or of the ineptitude of the activists themselves, or of information received from informers within the Party itself. Nevertheless, at the trial of Koffler and Pătrășcanu in April 1954, Koffler, Pătrășcanu and Foriș were all blamed for keeping known police informers in positions of responsibility in the Party who betrayed much of its activity to the *Siguranța* (Deletant, *Communist Terror*, p.32.)
- 59 See the biographical note on Bodnăraș in Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, appendix 1. 'Account by Emil Bodnăraș of his actions between November 1942 and April 1944', pp.297–308. Foriș was held until January 1945. He was arrested by the Communist *Siguranța* on 9 June 1945 and beaten to death with an iron bar in summer 1946 (N.I. Florea, 'Ștefan Foriș', *Analele de Istorie*, vol.18, no.3 (1972), p.153). The report of the Party commission, charged by Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1967 with investigating the circumstances of Foriș's death, concluded that 'Foriș's execution was carried out by [*Siguranța* chief] Gheorghe Pintilie, aided by his chauffeur Dumitru Necin [also known as Dimitrie Mitea], through blows administered with an iron bar. The body was thrown into a specially-prepared pit in the grounds of the building in which he was murdered' [Communist Party HQ on Alea Alexandru] (Stenogram of Gheorghe Pintilie's deposition before the commission in Deletant, *Communist Terror*, pp.316–17); see also 'Statement by Gheorghe Pintilie, former Head of the *Securitate*, dated 15 May 1967 and Presented to the Party Commission Charged with Investigating the Death of Ștefan Foriș', (*ibid.*, pp.314–18).
- 60 Deletant, *Communist Terror*, p.32.
- 61 V. Tismăneanu, *Arheologia Terorii* (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1992), p.106.

2 **The *coup* of 23 August 1944 and the path to power of the Romanian Communist Party**

The *coup* of 23 August transformed the status of the Communist Party in Romania.¹ At the beginning of 1944, after twenty-three years' existence, the party was a small faction-ridden political group with little or no effective resonance in Romania, its leadership scattered over three main centres and constrained to respond to policies decided in Moscow that were relevant to Stalin's political strategies rather than Romanian political conditions. By the autumn of that year, the Communist Party had become a major factor in the Romanian political scene. By the end of 1944, it had been thrust into the forefront of events by the occupying Soviet power, its factional rivalry blurred by the need to prepare itself for the role assigned to it by Stalin in Romania's future.

The seeds of the *coup* of 23 August 1944 were sown by the Axis defeat at Stalingrad in January 1943. In the course of the Soviet counter-offensive two German armies, two Romanian armies and one Italian army were decimated. The Romanian losses in the period from 19 November 1942 to 7 January 1943 were put at 155,010 dead, wounded and missing, most of the latter being taken prisoner.² This represented over a quarter of all Romanian troops engaged on the Eastern Front. Hitler lost the initiative in the war against the Soviet Union and his forces now began to be thrown back across Europe. The consequences of Stalingrad were equally momentous for Antonescu. He now realized that Hitler could no longer win the war. On the advice of his Chief of Staff, General Ilie Șteflea, he had wisely not committed all of his forces to the campaigns in the Soviet Union, holding half of them in reserve to protect his country's sovereignty.

As the military situation steadily deteriorated after the Soviet victory at Stalingrad in January 1943, Marshal Antonescu's mind began to turn to consideration of an understanding with the Allies. His thoughts were shared by Mihai Antonescu, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and Foreign Minister, who took the lead in taking soundings of the Italians. The Marshal tolerated the emission of such peace feelers, both from within his own government and from the opposition leader Iuliu Maniu, the leader of the National Peasant Party, but all these soundings foundered on the Anglo-American insistence upon "unconditional surrender" announced by Roosevelt and accepted by Churchill at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943.

Mihai Antonescu, gave some indication of his own change of heart in January 1943 to Bova-Scoppa, the Italian minister in Bucharest. Bova-Scoppa went to Rome to present a report of his conversation with Antonescu to Galeazzo Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, who had already anticipated the new mood of the Romanian leaders. In his diary entry for 10 January Ciano noted:

I think the Germans would do well to watch the Romanians. I see an about-face in the attitude and words of Mihai Antonescu. The sudden will for conciliation with Hungary is suspicious to me. If the Russian offensive had not been so successful I doubt that all this would have taken place.³

Mihai Antonescu's proposal elicited some sympathy from Ciano who recorded on 19 January:

Bova-Scoppa has made a report on his long conference with young Antonescu who has returned from German headquarters. The latter was very explicit about the tragic condition of Germany and foresees the need for Romania and Italy to contact the Allies in order to establish a defence against the bolshevization of Europe. I shall take the report to the Duce and shall make it the subject of a conversation which I have been planning for some time. Let us not bandage our heads before they are broken, but let us look at the situation realistically and remember that charity begins at home.⁴ Mussolini, however, was not swayed by Ciano's argument: Taking my cue from Bova's report I told the Duce what I thought. The Duce began by replying that 'he was sure that the Germans would hold tenaciously'. Then he listened to me attentively. He naturally refused Antonescu's offer, saying that 'the Danube is not the way we must follow'. But he did not react when at a certain point I said openly that we too should try to make some direct contact.⁵

The Duce reiterated his view the following day, 21 January: As I anticipated Mussolini wanted to reread the Bova report. He described Antonescu's language as oversubtle and he reaffirmed in terms much stronger than those of yesterday his decision to march with Germany to the end.⁶

This rebuff prompted Mihai Antonescu to attempt direct contact with the diplomatic representatives of the Allies in neutral countries with a view to concluding a separate peace. He himself raised the matter with Andrea Cassulo, the Papal Nuncio in Bucharest, while the Romanian minister in Berne was instructed to make contact with the Papal Nuncio there. In March, the Romanian minister in

Madrid asked his Portuguese and Argentinian counterparts to let the American ambassador Carlton Hayes know of Romania's desire to conclude a peace with the Allies. Similarly, Victor Cadere, the Romanian minister in Lisbon, took soundings in October of President Salazar and of the British Ambassador. In December, the Romanian Chargé in Stockholm, George Duca, contacted the British and American ministers in the name of Maniu and Brătianu.

When questioned by the writer Alexandru Brătescu-Voinești, in an interview published on 5 March 1943 in the pro-regime *Porunca Vremii* (The Command of the Times), as to why, having sided with the Axis, he did not maintain links with the Allies in case they emerged victorious, Antonescu retorted,

how, in the first instance, could such a stance be hidden from our own allies? And then, our major virtue, admired without reservation by our own great allies, is, alongside the bravery of our army, our loyalty, sincerity and lack of duplicity. This loyalty will represent one of the most precious possessions when peace is concluded.⁷

These peace feelers were not unknown to Hitler. At their meeting at Klessheim castle in Salzburg on 12 April 1943 the Führer confronted Antonescu with the information he had about them from German intelligence about the approaches made in Madrid and asked him "to analyse them" from the point of view of their impact on the international community. "He did not expect an immediate answer from Antonescu" to this unexpected problem. "He would fully understand, even if Antonescu did not give him a reply." Antonescu replied on the spot: "He could assure Hitler that the entire Romanian nation supported him now, more than ever, and that he would not allow anyone to carry out a policy other than that which he (Antonescu) considered the best one, in the interests of Romania and of Europe". He promised the Führer that,

Romania would continue alongside Germany until the end of the war... The policy of the opposition, especially Maniu, did not count... However, he (Antonescu) could not touch Maniu, since he (Antonescu) knew his people and did not want, through measures taken against Maniu, to make a martyr of this man who was advanced in years and who had negative ideas, thereby granting him what he had long wished to obtain.

He told Hitler that he would never take an initiative without informing him and undertook to investigate the action of the Romanian minister in Madrid. At the same time he defended Mihai Antonescu: "It was inconceivable that Mihai would have tried to conclude peace or to request assistance from the Americans or other states, since he (the Marshal) would not have anyone alongside him who would be disloyal to Germany." Hitler accepted this declaration of loyalty.⁸

Nevertheless, Hitler returned to the subject the next day. He was concerned that the approaches made in March by the Romanian minister in Madrid gave the impression to the foreign (Portuguese and Argentinian) diplomats that Romania

and Germany were ready to conclude a peace with the Allies. The Führer stated that “the important problem was that the main enemies of the Axis had formed a completely erroneous impression about the position of Germany and Italy and that was due solely to the action of Mihai Antonescu”. He asked the Marshal to ensure that such a thing never happened in future. The latter replied that he was grateful that they had discussed this problem, “but the truth was totally the reverse of what Germany knew”.⁹

Antonescu was less than honest with the Führer in this matter. He was aware of the approaches made by his Foreign Minister and did nothing to stop further soundings of all three Allies made by Mihai Antonescu and Maniu through different channels over the following twelve months. In their turn, the Western Allies, led by the British, sought to maintain regular contact with King Michael. On 2 December 1943, a figure arrived at the British embassy in Ankara and presented himself as Mr Stephen House, an ex-British journalist.¹⁰ According to his story he was a representative of Allied Newspapers in Denmark. When Denmark was invaded by the Germans, House/Ujhazy was interned, but had managed to escape and reach Budapest. The French authorities helped him to obtain a French travel certificate in the name of Etienne Langlois with which he travelled to Bucharest. There the French Minister Henri Spitzmuller, who remained in Romania after the fall of France to serve the Allied interest,¹¹ befriended him and introduced him into Romanian political circles, eventually securing for him an interview on 26 November with King Michael, the results of which were described by Spitzmuller in a letter to Knatchbull-Hugessen.¹²

Spitzmuller’s letter offers a rare contemporary first-hand account of Michael’s predicament and his relations with Antonescu, which shows them to have been severely strained. The King told House/Ujhazy, not to

forget to explain that consideration for my country’s future does not blind me to the fact that the Allies’ policy is based on cooperation between the three Powers and I therefore understand that Russia and Romania must come to some kind of agreement.

Mr House then remarked that the Allies had repeated most recently that unconditional surrender remained the essential condition of any armistice. ‘I know’, the King replied, ‘but it is not because of this formula that I would refuse to negotiate if the occasion arose. Without underestimating its importance, I consider and hope that even the framework of this formula would permit interpretations which would allow me to accept it.’

The conversation then concentrated on the possibility of a *putsch* linked to an approach by the King to the Allies. The King and all those present explained to Mr House that such a move would result in the complete and immediate occupation of the country by the Germans, who would then have all the resources of Romania at their disposal. The King and his

counsellors again explained to Mr House that the situation in Romania at that moment was unique in the sense that Marshal Antonescu's government represented only a tiny minority which, having taken power and maintained it with the support of the Germans, had imposed and continued to impose on the country a policy which was contrary to its wishes and its interests. A new government which would truly represent the people's wishes could only come to power through a *putsch*, which was impossible at the present moment with close cooperation with the Allies.

'If the Allies made a landing in the Balkans', the King said, 'everything would be simpler. The peninsula is practically undefended, but if Romania were to be occupied by the Germans the situation would immediately become less favourable.'¹³

The acceptance of unconditional surrender by the Romanians, whether Maniu or Antonescu, was the stumbling-block in all subsequent negotiations held between Maniu's representatives and the Allies in Cairo in the spring of 1944.¹⁴ Yet approaches made in December 1943 by Soviet officials to Romanian diplomats in Stockholm suggested that their government wished to set up independent contacts with Antonescu and Maniu and was prepared to accept less than unconditional surrender. A curious situation thus emerged in which both the Romanian government and opposition were seeking to obtain the best possible terms for an armistice in parallel negotiations, one in Cairo with the Allies collectively, and the other in Stockholm with the Russians separately. Not surprisingly, both Antonescu and Maniu believed that they were in a position to bargain over unconditional surrender, hence the misunderstanding that arose between the Allies and Maniu, and the increasing British irritation with the latter. Maniu wanted some assurance as to what conditions he could get before making any plans to overthrow Antonescu and was particularly anxious to prevent Soviet occupation of Romania. The Russians, on the other hand, doubtless took the pragmatic view that it was more realistic to treat with Antonescu since he controlled the army and an about-turn by the latter against the Germans would preclude the need for a *coup* by the opposition which the Communists did not control.

Antonescu's own position on the desirability of an armistice is evident from a memorandum of what appears to have been a meeting between the Marshal and Iuliu Maniu dated 21 January 1944.¹⁵ Antonescu argued that it was very difficult for Romania to withdraw from the war, given the importance of Romania's oil to Germany. Maniu said that "realistic solutions should be found to change our military and diplomatic position". The memorandum continued:

What are these solutions? Marshal Antonescu asked that they should be put to him in practical terms, but you [Maniu] were unable to do this. Mr Maniu thinks, however, that Marshal Antonescu has a mission