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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

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Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:
Petrescu, C., & Petrescu, D. (2007). Resistance and dissent under communism: the case of Romania. *Totalitarismus und Demokratie*, *4*(2), 323-346. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-311056

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Resistance and Dissent under Communism – The Case of Romania

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Abstract

Obwohl es auch in Rumänien Dissidenten gab, beförderten deren Aktivitäten weder die Revolution von 1989, noch stellten sie während des frühen Postkommunismus eine Alternative zum Neo-Kommunismus bereit. Der vorliegende Aufsatz betrachtet die bemerkenswertesten Resistenz-Handlungen von Persönlichkeiten aus dem intellektuellen Milieu wie solche der Arbeiterschaft, um die Besonderheiten der politischen Subkulturen des mit Polen oder der Tschechoslowakei nicht vergleichbaren Widerstandes in Rumänien herauszuarbeiten. Wichtig ist, dass es solche Resistenzbewegungen auch hier überhaupt gab, obwohl eine Tradition der Teilhabe an der politischen Kultur völlig fehlte. Aus dieser Perspektive dienten im Dezember 1989 kritische Intellektuelle der großen Mehrheit dann doch als Beispiel.

I. Introduction

When speaking about opposition to the communist rule, the conventional knowledge on the Romanian case is that, compared with that of the Central European countries – the former GDR, the former Czechoslovakia, Poland or Hungary – the civil society was barely existent. In other words, individuals in Romania did not fully internalize the fact that, after 1945, their country had become an "occident kidnappé" – to use Milan Kundera's inspired syntagm,[1] while the quasi-

1 Milan Kundera's essay "Un occident kidnappé – oú la tragédie de l'Europe centrale" sparked the most important debate on the fate of the "rebellious," anticommunist Central Europe, which took place in the 1980s. For him, Central Europe was "the East-

Totalitarismus und Demokratie, 2 (2005), 323–346, ISSN 1612–9008
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totalitarian regime under which they were forced to live was illegitimate. By revolting against the communist regime, the East Germans, the Hungarians, the Poles, the Czechs and the Slovaks demonstrated that they perceived themselves as cut from the free world to which they would have normally belonged. The 1953 revolt in Berlin, the Hungarian Revolution, the Prague Spring or the birth of Polish Solidarity proved indeed that a difference existed between the countries of Central Europe and the rest of the Soviet bloc. While the Central European societies were able to mobilize themselves against communism, the rest of the Soviet bloc, including Romania, was either not willing or not capable of acting similarly.

However, it is a fact that communism collapsed during the same "miraculous year" 1989 in all the countries of the Soviet bloc. In other words, the strength of civil society seemed to have influenced very little the moment of exit from communism, at least in the Romanian case.[2] Thus, this paper does not approach resistance and dissidence in this country from a teleological perspective,[3] interpreting all outbursts against the communist regime as preparatory steps for the Revolution of 1989. Instead, each form of dissent and resistance is analyzed given the internal and the external contexts that generated them in that particular moment. The present analysis is based on the concept of political culture, which is applied to highlight the patterns of thought and action that characterized various social groups and their forms of expressing their discontent with the communist regime. Obviously, political culture in a communist society, as in any other type of society, must not be considered homogenous at national level. What made communist regimes different though was the high polarization of the society that, in fact, simplified the typology of the political cultures (called sometimes subcultures) within such a unit of analysis. Thus, although different authors used various distinctions, these nevertheless overlap in the attempt to em-

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ern border of the West," a family of small nations that had its own vision of the world and, "by virtue of its cultural history," was "the West." See Milan Kundera, "Un occident kidnappé – ou la tragédie de l'Europe centrale." In: Le Débat, November 1983, pp. 3–22. The version cited in this paper was published under the title "The Tragedy of Central Europe." In: Gale Stokes (Ed.), From Stalinism to Pluralism: A Documentary History of Eastern Europe Since 1945, New York 1996, pp. 217–223.

2 It did however influence the transition from communism. The degree of rebelliousness under communism made the difference between the countries in East-Central Europe that experienced a more rapid transition to democracy, i. e., Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland (the former GDR is a clear exception), and those where the process was more tortuous and painful, i. e., Bulgaria and Romania. In short, the difference between the "rebellious" and the "submissive" nations resides in the pace of the democratic transformation that followed the 1989 revolutions.

3 In this study, these authors use only resistance and dissidence to refer to the forms of opposing the communist regime in Romania. The concept of opposition is carefully avoided, as it implies a higher degree of self-organization and a larger participation than it was the case in this country. For the distinction between these different forms of expressing the discontent towards the communist dictatorships, see George Schöpflin, Politics in Eastern Europe, Oxford 1993.

phasize the dichotomy party-state vs. community.[4] In the following, the authors focus on what can be defined as the *political cultures of resistance*, which represent a more restrictive concept than that of the community political culture, encompassing the patterns of thought and action originating in the interaction between the regime and the society. Two social groups are of special interest for the purpose of this study: the workers and the intellectuals. Both groups have distinct characteristics in Romania, which derive from the belated and incomplete modernization of the country, as well as from the socialist organization of the society.

Consequently, the political cultures of resistance have to be addressed at two levels: (1) elite political culture, i. e. the political culture of opposition elites; and (2) mass political culture, with special reference to the emerging working class. In order to explain Romanians' behaviour under the communist rule, the present analysis also employs Kenneth Jowitt's concept of "dissimulation" as the posture, response, and strategy that integrate the public and private spheres. Such a strategy, Jowitt argues, "takes the form, not so much of political opposition, as of a strong anti-political privatism in which family and personal interests are emphasized at the expense of regime and societal interests."[5] The concept of "anti-political privatism" is central in explaining the paralysis of Romanian civil society. Furthermore, during the 1980s, in the conditions of a deep economic crisis, communist Romania experienced a consolidation of the extended family pattern accompanied by the development of a complicated network of mutual services which led, as a side-effect, to an increasing "egoism of small groups."[6] At the same time, one should explain what subverted small groups' growing egoism in December 1989. In other words, what shaped the political cultures of resistance, what kept alive the spirit of opposition, and what made a majority of the population feel solidary in their protest against the regime of Nicolae Ceauşescu? The following study addresses these questions.

4 In this study, the authors use the distinction made by Kenneth Jowitt in an article of 1974, where he argued that one should distinguish between elite political culture, which was shaped by the "identity-forming experiences" of its members, and the regime political culture, that refers to the responses to the "institutional definition of political, social and economic life." Both should be distinguished from the community political culture, which emerged in response to the "historical relationship between the regime and the community." See the republication of his original article, "An Organizational Approach to the Study of political Culture in Marxist-Leninist Systems" under the title "Political Culture in Leninist Regimes." In: Kenneth Jowitt, New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction, Berkeley 1992, pp. 50–87.

5 Kenneth Jowitt, "Political Culture in Leninist Regimes," p. 80.

6 For an analysis of the Polish case see Michal Buchowski, "The shifting meanings of civil and civic society in Poland." In: Chris Hann / Elizabeth Dunn (Eds.), Civil Society: Challenging Western Models, London 1996, p. 85.

II. The Teleological Perspective Revisited

The history of resistance and dissidence in Romania, as it was already underlined, cannot be read as a cumulative process since the evolution of this process was not linear. In fact, the history of communism in Romania unfolds between two waves of societal mobilization against the regime. This assertion needs two explanations. First, it obviously implies a comparison, which should take as reference not the developments in the Central European countries, but the amplitude of oppositional activities in-between these waves, which manifested only through isolated protests. As recent researches attests, such protests were more numerous than it was known in the West before 1989, but unlike in other former communist countries, only few of them succeeded in rallying individuals beyond the local level or limited group interests. Secondly, there was a major qualitative difference between the two waves of mobilization against the regime: the first wave (1944–1962) was past-oriented, as it tried to restore the pre-communist political and social order, while the second (1977–1989) represented only a particular type of response to the challenges posed by the communist regime. This second wave of mobilization, however, did not envisage a change of the system; it was only in the very last days of the regime that the mobilization became future -oriented, culminating with the Revolution of 1989. The present analysis concentrates on the second, post-Helsinki wave of societal mobilization, which directly influenced the nature of regime change in Romania (violent and non-negotiated) and the subsequent process of democratic consolidation. Nevertheless, the first wave has to be addressed briefly in order to illustrate that no continuity existed between the two above mentioned waves of mobilization.

In contrast to the Central European countries, Romania produced a first form of oppositional activity against the incipient communist power in the aftermath of WWII. This phenomenon is known as the "resistance in the mountains," and occurred immediately after the coup of 23 August 1944, when the Romanian army switched sides in war and joined the Allies.[7] It should be emphasized from the very beginning that this phenomenon must not be understood as reflecting the capacity of the Romanian civil society to organize itself and act in defense of its freedom. On the contrary, it reminds a traditional defensive tactic used by

7 Information about it never reached Western public opinion, as it happened in the case of the strikes in the former German Democratic Republic or Poland, not to speak about the impact of such a dramatic event as the Hungarian Revolution. Moreover, even in Romania little was known about it before the fall of communism. After 1989, the "resistance in the mountains" stirred a sudden interest, especially among intellectuals. Ashamed that they dared less against the defunct regime than their Central European colleagues, some believed that by emphasizing the uniqueness of this phenomenon and, implicitly, its precedence over the rest of the former Soviet satellites could restore Romania's reputation of a non-rebellious country. Research on this topic is however still at an early stage. For a good introduction to the topic, see the chapter entitled "Armed Resistance." In: Dennis Deletant, Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State 1948–1965, New York 1999, pp. 225–234.

Romanians since the medieval times, which was applied whenever devastating wars took place on their territory: that of retreating into the forests and mountains instead of confronting directly a too powerful enemy to be beaten. In other words, such patterns of behavior represented the manifestation of an anti-modern political culture of the community.

Although as compared with later developments, this period can be considered as one of large mobilization,[8] "resistance in the mountains" was not a movement coordinated at a national scale. It rather consisted of several isolated groups, comprising individuals from the entire political specter.[9] Many of these groups were, in fact, spontaneously organized and, in terms of surviving resources, dependent of the support given by people in the nearby villages.[10] In spite of the fact that the number of those who hid in the mountains grew fast after the communist takeover, reaching a peak in the early 1950s, this type of anti-communist resistance never represented a real threat to the regime. By the beginning of the 1960s, the authorities succeeded in repressing it completely. To conclude, retreating into the mountains was a form of escaping the totalitarian control of the regime rather than a form of organizing an opposition movement. What is more, some of the individuals that resisted communism into the mountains were not confronting the regime established by the extreme left from democratic convictions, but from the perspective of the extreme right.

The "resistance in the mountains" was not the only form of manifesting the disagreement with the establishment of the communist regime. During the

8 At this stage of research information is still incomplete. According to a secret police report from September 1949, resistance groups activated in ten regions of Romania, but none of these were over twenty-five members. Several collections of documents regarding various groups were published after 1989. From among these, it is worth mentioning "Luptătorii din munți. Toma Arnăuțoiu. Grupul de la Nucșoara: Documente ale anchetei, procesului, detenției" [Fighters into the mountains. Toma Arnăuțoiu. The group from Nucșoara: Documents related to the interrogation, the trial, and the imprisonment], Bucharest 1997. Information on other groups is available from the memoirs of the survivors. Regarding another group in the Făgăraț Mountains, see Ion Gavrilă-Ogoranu, Brazii se frîng, dar nu se îndoiesc: Rezistența anticomunistă în Munții Făgărațului [Fir trees break but do not bend themselves: Anti-communist resistance in the Făgăraț Mountains], Timișoara 1995.

9 Although manifestos spread by some of these groups had nationalistic and even xenophobic appeals, at this stage of research it cannot be said that these groups were prevalently right wing. On the contrary, after the former members of the Iron Guard were allowed to enter the communist party, it is likely that their proportion in the mountain resistance groups decreased. A report of the secret police, dating from 1951, mentions that from 804 persons belonging to 17 different groups, only 73 were former members of the Iron Guard. See "Cartea Albă a Securității" [The white book of the Securitate], Vol. 2, Bucharest 1994, p. 82.

10 See in this respect the tragic story of Elisabeta Rizea, a woman who was arrested and imprisoned for many years for the guilt of helping the "bandits" in the mountains. As a result of brutal treatments during interrogations, she remained handicapped for the rest of her life. Her brave behaviour turned Rizea into a national heroine of anti-communist resistance after 1989. See "Povestea Elisabetei Rizea din Nucșoara" [The story of Elisabeta Rizea from Nucșoara], Bucharest 1993.

1950s, there were numerous riots organized by peasants that opposed collectivization and some revolts by workers who complained about the stiff work norms and the poor conditions of life. This wave of mobilization reached its peak in 1956 when, under the influence of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, students in several university centers – most prominently in the city of Timişoara – unsuccessfully tried to stir a similar upheaval in Romania.[11] The tragic evolution of events in the neighbouring country had a crucial influence upon the Romanians' drive to resist the communist regime. At a grass-roots level, the year 1956 constituted a turning point because it seriously shook the widespread belief in the arrival of the Americans. Gradually, more and more people understood that communism was to stay in Romania. Moreover, with the coming of age of the new generations, socialized exclusively under communism, the spirit of "resistance in the mountains" waned.[12] In short, the Romanians started to realize that, instead of revolting, they had to cope with the communist regime and adapt themselves to the new social setting.

Once this societal transformation was accomplished, the regime changed its methods of control accordingly. In 1964, a general amnesty was granted to all political prisoners in Romania. Since by that time, the interwar political and economic elites either disappeared or were tamed in the Romanian Gulag, repression was no longer needed. Consequently, the sheer terror aiming at achieving total control by affecting randomly all classes and social groups was replaced by less brutal and more persuasive methods. The Securitate continued its activity, but acted primarily in such a way as to prevent the emergence of collective protests through more sophisticated techniques of ensuring the obedience of the population, ranging from blackmails to various trade-offs. Obviously, this was a gradual process, which implied more complex political transformations. Briefly put, instead of a genuine de-Stalinization, Romania experienced only a "simulated change." The Ceauşescu regime however no longer relied on terror, but rather on co-optation.[13] By default, some forms of non-compliance with the regime became gradually tolerated by the regime. In other words, the articulation of discontent in public no longer automatically triggered the repression of the respective person. Such changes created the premises for the emergence of public protest and open dissent in the late 1970s, under the influence of a new international context and following the direct example of the Central European

11 On the 1956 events in Timişoara see, e.g., Mihaela Sitariu, Oaza de libertate: Timişoara, 30 octombrie 1956 [The liberty oasis: Timişoara, 30 October 1956], Iaşi 2004.

12 Nicolae Stroescu-Stînişoară, a former director of the Romanian section of the Radio Free Europe, remembers that in 1956, while still hiding from the secret police, he met a young student who took the risk of hosting him, but warned him that the time of the resistance against communism was passé. See his "În zodia exilului" [Under the sign of exile], Bucharest 1994, pp. 163–167.

13 This is the central thesis of two major works on Romanian communism: Vladimir Tismăneanu, Stalinism for All Seasons: A History of Romanian communism, Berkeley 2003, and an earlier work by Michael Shafir, Romania – Politics, Economics and Society: Political Stagnation and Simulated Change, Boulder 1985.

countries. This phenomenon is analyzed below, at two levels: (1) the working-class environments; and (2) the intellectual milieus.

III. Communist Romania: A Paradise of the Working Class?

Although workers did rebel against the communist regime in Romania, their protests did not lead to the birth of a Solidarity-like movement. Many arguments have been put forward in order to explain such a situation: the weak working-class traditions in Romania; the rural origins of the overwhelming majority of the Romanian workers; or the perpetuation of a traditional mentality in working-class environments, in spite of the policy of extensive industrialization and urbanization carried out by the communist regime. True, the Romanian working class movement had weak traditions. The process of "making" the Romanian working class has been slow and complicated. In the aftermath of WWII, as a legacy of the "capitalist" industrialization of the United Principalities (1859–1918), and Greater Romania (1918–1938), Romania was left with pockets of industrialization only. In other words, there were few truly industrial areas in Romania in which genuine industrial workers existed. Thus, only in the conditions of the process of "socialist" industrialization one can speak of a self-conscious Romanian working class. Until the early 1980s, the Romanian working class benefited from the policy of urbanization and industrialization carried out by the communist regime. Actually, the period from 1958 to 1977, can be considered one in which a "tacit deal" – to use George Schöpflin's inspired term – was established between the Romanian working-class and the communist regime, while the period 1977–1989 cab be defined as the period in which workers became increasingly frustrated with the communist regime.

The present analysis discusses strikes as the major forms of working-class protest. Since the solidarity of the protesters is essential in order to carry out successful strikes, the major factors that determine the formation of a working-class sense of cohesion and solidarity have to be addressed. With regard to their sense of cohesion and solidarity, miners proved to be a special category of workers, united and capable of conducting successful strikes. In fact, the most important strike in communist Romania was carried out by the Jiu Valley miners, in August 1977. Alternative forms of workers protest such as boycotts, machinery sabotage, wasting of raw materials or "go-slow" production did exist in communist Romania, but in this respect a more detailed research is needed. Such protests are very difficult to analyze because of the general characteristics of the work process in a communist society. In fact, the entire work process was based on the "go-slow" idea, as long as the salaries were more or less related to the quantity and quality of the work. A well-known joke of the 1980s summarized the situation as follows:

"Why do Romanian workers not go on strike?"
"Because they work so slowly, that nobody would observe the fact. They are on general strike for forty years, so there is no need to pour into the streets."[14]

Under the communist regime, Romanians' attitude toward work was illustrated by many sayings. Two such sayings of the 1970s were collected by Katherine Verdery:

"They pretend they are paying us, and we pretend we are working."
"We will complete the Five-Year Plan in four years and a half at any cost, even if it takes us a decade."[15]

According to the communist party propaganda, workers were "proprietors, producers and beneficiaries," but in reality they had no means to improve their situation. The official trade unions were perceived as "transmission belts" between the party and the workers and workers did not pay much attention to such organizations.[16] Workers' relations with technical and cultural intelligentsia were characterized by mutual mistrust and this contributed in hampering the development of free trade unions as an alternative to the official ones. Nevertheless, in 1979 a small group attempted at establishing an independent trade union in communist Romania and the signification of that episode is discussed below.

When addressing patterns of working class co-optation and protest in communist Romania, the period between 1950–1989 can be divided into three main periods: (1) 1950–1958, in which small scale revolts and strikes occurred in almost all major traditional working-class environments, i. e., those areas where the working class had roots in the interwar period or even in the pre-WWI period: the Jiu Valley, the Prahova Valley and the capital city, Bucharest; (2) 1958–1977, a period characterized by a relative co-optation of the working class by the communist regime, in which no major working-class protests or revolts occurred; and (3) 1977–1989, the period of structural crisis of the Romanian "multilaterally developed socialism," characterized by the most representative working class protests that ever occurred in communist Romania: Jiu Valley (August 1977), Braşov (November 1987) and the revolt in Timişoara (December 1989) that marked the beginning of the 1989 revolution.[17] These three episodes of prime importance, belonging to what has been termed by these authors the "second wave of mobilization," are also examined below.

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14 Mihai Botez, Românii despre ei înțiți [Romanians about themselves], Bucharest 1992, p. 57. See also Mihai Botez, Lumea a doua [The second world], Bucharest 1997, p. 204.

15 Katherine Verdery, Transylvanian Villagers: Three Centuries of Political, Economic and Ethnic Change, Berkeley 1983, p. 29.

16 Daniel Nelson, Romanian Politics in the Ceaușescu Era, New York 1988, p. 53.

17 For data concerning 35 working class protests that occurred in communist Romania during the period 1950–1989, see Table 1. In: Dragoț Petrescu, "A Threat from Below? Some Reflections on Workers' Protest in Communist Romania." In: Xenopoliana (Iați), VII, no. 1–2, 1999, pp. 165–168.

The Jiu Valley miners' strike of 1–3 August 1977 put an end to the period of "tacit deal" between the communist regime and the Romanian working class. The strike was determined by the new legislation introduced by the regime. During the 30 June – 1 July 1977 session, the Romanian Grand National Assembly voted a new law (Law 3/1977) concerning pensions. As far as the miners were concerned, the new law introduced some new provisions: (1) a raise of the retirement age from fifty to fifty-five; (2) an extension of miners' workday from six to eight hours; and (3) the cancellation or restriction of various categories of sickness benefits and entitlements to disability pension.[18] The strike began on 1 August in the morning, at the Lupeni mine and, according to different accounts by participants, when the strike reached its climax on 3 August, there were between 30,000 and 40,000 miners on strike.[19] It is still not clear to what extent the strike was prepared in advance. However, it may be argued that the Jiu Valley strike represented a mature working-class protest. The main aspects of the strike can be summarized as follows: (1) the emergence of a strike leadership and the establishment of a strike command post inside the cabin of the watchman at Gate No. 2 of the Lupeni mine; (2) the strike was a non-violent, round-the-clock, sit-down strike; and (3) the miners prepared a list of demands and asked to negotiate only with the supreme leader of the Romanian Communist Party, Nicolae Ceauşescu, face to face.[20]

18 For the complete text of the "Legea 3 din 30 iunie 1977 privind pensiile de asigurări sociale de stat și asistență socială" [Law no. 3 of 30 June 1977 concerning the pensions], see Ioan Velica/Dragoț Ștefan Velica, Lupeni '77: Laboratorul puterii [Lupeni 1977: The laboratory of power], Deva 2002, pp. 39–71.

19 Constantin Dobre affirms that it was he and his closest friend, Gheorghe Maniliuc, who conducted the protest. For a personal account of the strike by Constantin Dobre, see Mihai Barbu/Marian Boboc, Lupeni '77: Sfînta Varvara versus Tanti Varvara [Lupeni '77: Saint Varvara versus Tante Varvara], Cluj 2005, pp. 180–270. Hereafter quoted as Lupeni '77. Another participant to the strike, Istvan Hosszu, gave a six-hour interview on the events after he left Romania in 1986. For a summary of Hosszu's account, see Romanian Fond, Unit 300/60/1/837, Item 1750/86, OSA/RFE Archives (hereafter cited as Item 1750/86). For more details, see also Mihai Barbu/Gheorghe Chirvasă, După 20 de ani: Lupeni '77–Lupeni '97 [20 years after: Lupeni 1977–Lupeni 1997], Petroțani 1997.

20 The list of demands included: (1) the reinstatement of a six-hour working day; (2) retirement at age of fifty in the conditions of twenty years of effective activity; (3) the reinstatement of sickness benefits and entitlements to disability pensions restricted by the new law of pensions; (4) the improvement of working conditions, as well as adequate food supplies and medical care in the Jiu Valley; (5) the establishment of light industry enterprises in the Jiu Valley to provide work to miners' wives and daughters; (6) the establishment of workers' commissions at the enterprise level, and their empowerment to control managers' activity; (7) an agreement to be signed providing that protesting miners would suffer no reprisals; and (8) the national media to report accurately on the causes and progress of miners' strike. See Item 1750/86, p. 573. Constantin Dobre maintains that the list of demands had 23 points. See Barbu/Boboc, Lupeni '77, pp. 215–216.

On 2 August 1977, a delegation of high party officials, led by Ilie Verdeț, was sent to negotiate with the miners.[21] After strikers' refusal to discuss with the Bucharest delegation, Ceauşescu arrived at Lupeni on 3 August and, in front of a determined but not violent crowd, practically agreed to miners' demands. The fact that Ceauşescu agreed to consider workers demands resulted in the termination of the strike. At the same time, Ceauşescu did not use the force to suppress the strike; the repression followed gradually, during the winter of 1977–1978. Approximately 4,000 miners were forced to move to other mining areas of the country.[22] In spite of rumours, the strike leaders were not killed by the Securitate, but they were forced to move to other regions where they remained under the supervision of the secret police. The majority of miners' demands were satisfied for a short period of time, including the improvement of medical care and food supplies. Some improvements were made in creating jobs for miners' families through investments in the light industry of the Jiu Valley. It may be argued that the experience of the 1977 strike was decisive in setting up the regime's strategy of suppressing social protests and, especially workers' unrest. To conclude, the Jiu Valley strike was the best conducted workers' protest in communist Romania. The strike had mainly social goals and the protest did not turn into an anti-Ceauşescu demonstration. In fact, the miners believed that Ceauşescu was misinformed by the Party officials about the life and working conditions in the Jiu Valley. The existence of working-class traditions in the area (witnesses to the strike mention that the protesters shouted "Lupeni 1929!" as a reminder of the interwar workers' revolt that took place also in Lupeni)[23] and the dangerous activity performed created a special sense of cohesion among miners, which allowed them to conduct a large-scale protest.

The Braşov workers protest of 15 November 1987 was the first major protest that turned into a violent anti-Ceauşescu revolt. In the conditions of a deep economic crisis, the economic requests of the workers turned quickly to political demands. Furthermore, the fact that some of the Braşov citizens joined the workers in their protest indicates the deep dissatisfaction of the Romanian popu-

21 The delegation was composed of Ilie Verdeț, prime-viceprime minister, Gheorghe Pană, president of the General Union of Romanian Trade Unions and Constantin Băbălău, the minister of mining industry. High officers from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Department of State's Security (the Securitate) accompanied the party officials. See Florin Constantiniu, O istorie sinceră a poporului român [A sincere history of the Romanian people], Bucharest 1997, p. 519.

22 Cf. Dennis Deletant, Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania 1965–1989, London 1995, p. 245.

23 The 1929 Lupeni strike occurred after a long period of negotiations for the signing of the new collective work contract in the mining industry. On 5 August 1929, the Lupeni miners went on strike. On 6 August 1929, in the morning, the authorities decided to repress the strike. According to the official figures, between 20 and 30 miners were killed and over 100 wounded that day. See Mircea Mușat/Ion Ardeleanu, România după Marea Unire 1918–1933 [Romania after the Great Unification 1918–1933], Vol. 2, Bucharest 1986, p. 620.

lation with the Ceauşescu regime. Whereas the Jiu Valley miners were still convinced in August 1977 that Ceauşescu would solve their problems, in November 1987 the population of Braşov shouted, among others, the slogan: "Jos Ceauşescu!" (Down with Ceauşescu!).[24] The revolt in Braşov, however, took place in a totally different context than the 1977 strike, since it occurred during the most difficult period of the Ceauşescu regime in communist Romania, characterized by shortages in food, gasoline, natural gas, heating fuel, and electricity supply. In the mid-1980s, for the major part of the Romanian population the conditions of life were at the lowest possible level among the communist countries in East-Central Europe. Let us examine the unfolding of events in the case of the 1987 Braşov workers revolt.

The spontaneous strike, which turned into a violent protest, was initiated by a part of the *Steagul Roşu* (Red Flag) truck plant workers, in response to the wage cuts imposed by the management for the non-fulfilment of production targets. In the context of chronic food shortages and heating restrictions – one should be reminded that the city of Braşov is located in a mountain area – the wage cuts announcement provoked the workers' revolt. Everything started during the third (night) shift at the *Steagul Roşu* truck plant. Workers stopped working at 6.00 a. m. and around 8.00 a. m. marched off from the plant, in the direction of the city centre. According to an eyewitness account, at the beginning there were 300–350 protesters. Because on that day local elections were held in Romania, the police forces were dispersed to the voting sections, and the remaining forces tried in vain, two times, to stop the crowd. Around 10:30 a. m. the crowd, joined by workers from the *Tractorul* plant, a tractor manufacturer, and citizens of Braşov (some 3,000–4,000 people), gathered in the front of the Party Headquarters. Meeting no resistance, the protesters entered the building and threw out furniture and equipment, and set them on fire outside the building. A similar scenario was repeated at the People's Council building. Around 12:00 a. m., the special intervention troops (the riot police) entered the central square of Braşov. Simultaneously, fire engines and firemen entered the square. Around 1:00 p. m. the crowd was dispersed and the protest ceased. During the night of 15 to 16 of November 1987, the secret police arrested many workers of whom eventually 61 received different terms in prison ranging from 6 months to 3 years.[25]

The analysis of Braşov protest reveals that the spontaneous revolt of the *Steagul Roşu* workers was caused by deep economic and social problems. The protest was sparked the non-payment of wages, but turned eventually into an anti-Ceauşescu revolt. An important element is that many citizens of Braşov joined the workers in their protest. Moreover, the crowd protested not only against party's officials, but also against the rule of Nicolae Ceauşescu by shout-

24 Cf. Deletant, Ceaușescu and the Securitate, p. 250.

25 For witness accounts of the 1987 Brașov revolt, see Romulus Rusan (Ed.), O zi de toamnă, cîndva ... 15 noiembrie 1987, Brașov [A day of autumn, sometime ... 15 November 1987, Brașov], Bucharest 2004. For the sentences received, see pp. 101–121.

ing "Down with Ceauşescu!" In this respect, the spontaneous, unorganized and violent character of the Braşov protest reveals the enormous dissatisfaction of the Braşov population with the communist regime. The protest, however, did not spread to other large enterprises of the city. At the same time, the same unorganized and violent character of the revolt hampered the appearance of a much larger protest action, although large categories of the Braşov population were likely to join the protest. The fact that the strikers decided to leave the plant and protest in the front of the Braşov Party headquarters affected workers' capacity to defend themselves against the special intervention troops. For comparison, the miners' protest of 1977 showed that a round-the-clock, sit-down strike could have been more effective. Moreover, the Jiu Valley miners' proved to be more organized and conducted a non-violent protest, taking care not to damage the property and issuing a list of requests. In the case of the Braşov revolt, the damaging of the mentioned two buildings favoured the suppression of the revolt, as the authorities could claim that "hooligan elements" disturbed the peaceful atmosphere of local elections.

Until the 1989 popular revolt of Timişoara, the regime contained almost all the protests from below, with the exception of the 1987 Braşov workers strike. 31 years after the 1956 Polish workers revolt in Poznan,[26] the Romanian workers in Braşov carried out a similar protest. With respect to the "mechanism" of revolt, the similarity between the two protests is, indeed, striking: workers went on strike, marched into the town where they were joined by many city dwellers in their protest and, finally, attacked and damaged heavily the Party Headquarters building. Nevertheless, the 1987 Braşov workers revolt showed that a high potential for revolt existed not only among the workers, but also among the urban population in general. Workers' behaviour under the communist regime and the way protests developed in working-class environments deserves further exploration.

An analysis of long-distance migration trends within communist Romania reveals an important aspect: by the end of the 1980s there were four regions in Romania in which workers' potential of protest was particularly high, i. e., the counties of Constanța, Braşov, Hunedoara, and Timiş. In these four counties, long-distance inter-county migrants made up around 25 percent of the total population, of which over 60 percent were workers. When the revolution sparked on 16 December 1989 in the city of Timişoara, long distance migrants played an important role in the events. A participant in the events, writer Daniel Vighi recalls: "There were many Moldavians, very courageous .... Let us be fair and unprejudiced to the Moldavians from here [from Timişoara] ... who were in the front rows and got beaten. The truth is that they fought with the Militia in the Central Park, in the dark."[27] As for the Timişoara workers' involvement in the

26 On the 1956 Polish workers' revolt in Poznan, see for instance R. J. Crampton, Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century, London 1994, p. 285.

27 Miodrag Milin, Timișoara în revoluție și după [Timișoara in revolution and after], Timișoara 1997, pp. 28–29.

1989 revolution, it suffices to say that out of the total number of 376 victims in Timişoara during the period 17–21 December, 185 were workers.[28]

To understand better this argument, some elements pertaining to the sociology of the Romanian working class need to be emphasized. During the period of structural crisis of the 1980s, two distinct categories of workers emerged: (1) the peasant-workers or the commuting villagers; and (2) the "genuine workers." The former constituted a category less affected by the economic crisis, while the latter was a category which, by the end of 1980s, was increasingly forced to think in terms of biological survival. The peasant-worker is a good example of a strategy of the individual to survive in the conditions of a severe crisis: a job in industry in the nearby town and food supplies from the little farm he or she owned in the village. However, such a strategy of survival became less successful after the introduction of a strict system of quotas and increased control by the authorities of the output of small individual farms.

On the contrary, the category of "genuine" workers was the first and most affected sector of society in the conditions of economic crisis. They severed their ties with the countryside by migrating to industrial areas situated much beyond the commuting distance and had therefore no possibility of getting food supplies from the parental farm. Thus, beginning in the mid-1970s, four large, highly industrialized areas of communist Romania – Constanța, Braşov, Hunedoara and Timiş – attracted the largest number of internal migrants in the country, many of whom came from remote, less developed regions of Moldavia. In these four areas came into being a relatively numerous class of workers relying only on the salary they received in industry, a class of "genuine" workers. (The term "genuine" has to be understood in the sense of a category of workers entirely dependent on the salary received in the "socialist" sector and not in the sense of worker-father origins.) Until the late 1970s this category of workers benefited from regime's industrialization and urbanization policy. Beginning in the late 1970s, however, the same category of workers proved to be the most vulnerable to the deep economic crisis. Between 1977 and 1989, the most important protests from below occurred in "genuine" workers' environments: in the Jiu Valley (Hunedoara county) in 1977 and in Braşov (the capital of the Braşov county) in 1987. When the structural crisis deepened (food shortages and strict rationing, non-payment of wages), those workers were the first to suffer and forced to think in terms of biological survival. It was in the city of Timişoara – the capital of the Timiş County, where the 1989 Romanian revolution began.[29]

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28 Cf. Ion Pitulescu (Ed.), Ţase zile care au zguduit România: Ministerul de interne în decembrie 1989 (Six days that shook Romania: The Ministry of Internal Affairs in December 1989), Bucharest 1995, p. 100.

29 For more on this, see Dragoţ Petrescu, "Workers and Peasant-Workers in a Working-Class' 'Paradise:' Patterns of Working-Class Protest in Communist Romania." In: Peter Hübner / Christoph Kleßmann / Klaus Tenfelde (Eds.), Arbeiter im Staatssozialismus: Ideologischer Anspruch und Soziale Wirklichkeit, Köln 2005, pp. 119–140.

Finally, a question still remains unanswered: What hampered the development of a cross-class alliance in communist Romania, on the model of the Polish Solidarity? The answer is by no means easy. A first thing to say is that there existed a latent hostility between the intellectuals and the working class that hindered the establishment cross-class alliance in Ceauşescu's Romania. For instance, Istvan Hosszu, a Jiu Valley miner who participated in the 1–3 August 1977 strike, observed in 1989: "My discussions, as a worker in Romania, with the Romanian intelligentsia, were very unpleasant .... The intelligentsia in Romania, unfortunately, misunderstands, in fact disdains the working class and, in a way, brutalizes it."[30] Furthermore, the regime put a strong emphasis on undergraduate training in engineering, which hampered the development of a critical mass of "rebellious" intellectuals able to think in political terms. In other words, the technical intelligentsia proved to be less rebellious than the cultural intelligentsia and less prone to support workers' demands and actions.

There was, however, a daring attempt at creating a free trade union in Romania as early as 1979, that is, before the creation of the Polish Solidarity. The Free Trade Union of the Working People of Romania (*Sindicatul Liber al Oamenilor Muncii din România* – SLOMR) existed practically from January to June 1979. Its leaders, Ionel Cană, Gheorghe Braşoveanu and Nicolae Dascălu, were imprisoned immediately after Radio Free Europe broadcast the founding declaration of the SLOMR on 4 March 1979. The Party and the Securitate reacted swiftly and brutally, and the initiative was suppressed. SLOMR did not live long enough to become a movement, although the idea received support from the part of the Romanian workers.[31] Nevertheless, as shown above, a sense of solidarity between workers, intellectuals and students, although short-lived, developed only during the miraculous days of the Revolution of December 1989.

IV. Intellectuals and the Syndrome of "velvet" Dissent

The concept of "egoism of small groups" can explain best the feeble intellectual dissent in Romania. Taking into account the paralysis of civil society in Romania as compared to others under communism, some authors argued that the aborted "Goma movement" for human rights in 1977 epitomizes the entire story of Romanian dissent. Speaking about the Romanian dissidence, a Western specialist in East European affairs said in the early 1980s that: "Romanian dissent lives

30 Freedom House, Romania: A Case of "Dynastic" Communism, New York 1989, pp. 86–87.

31 For more on the creation of the SLOMR and the support it received from the part of many Romanian workers, see Oana Ionel/Dragoț Marcu (Eds.), Vasile Paraschiv: Lupta mea pentru sindicate libere în România [Vasile Paraschiv: My struggle for free trade unions in Romania], Iați 2005, esp. pp. 367–371.

in Paris and his name is Paul Goma."[32] This seems to be true even now, since after the "Goma movement" the other critical intellectuals of the 1980s experienced a sort of loneliness of radical dissidence. In short, aside the "Goma movement," no other critical intellectual succeeded in organizing a collective protest larger than two dozens of individuals. However, it should be taken into account that, although dissidence developed only tortuously in communist Romania and took a more articulate form only in the late 1980s, dissidents and critical intellectuals played a major role in transforming the anti-Ceauşescu character of the 1989 revolt into an anticommunist revolution. In other words, there were mainly the critical intellectuals that turned the expressive actions of a majority of the population, i. e., the anti-Ceauşescu protests, into purposive actions, i. e., a fundamental regime change.

Until writer Paul Goma launched, in 1977, the movement for human rights that now bears his name, dissidence was almost non-existent in communist Romania. There were two main reasons for such a situation. First, it was the regime's policy – devised in the late 1950s and quite effective until the late 1970s – based on two pivotal issues: modernization and nation-building. Especially after the condemnation of the Warsaw Treaty Organization's intervention in Czechoslovakia on 20/21 August 1968, this stance made of Ceauşescu the most prominent "dissident" in Romania.[33] Also, such a policy proved to be particularly successful because it was consistent with the efforts of the successive regimes, from the inception of the Romanian state in the middle of the 19th century onwards, to establish a modern and independent state. Thus, such a stance appealed not only to a majority of Romania's intelligentsia, but also to the population at large. A cultural syndrome – the *late creation of the nation* – developed among the elites and ordinary people alike and created a relatively enduring focus of identification with the communist regime. Such an approach to nationhood was skilfully exploited by the regime and hampered to some extent the development of intellectual dissidence in communist Romania.[34]

Secondly, the regime had something consistent to offer to the intelligentsia. After the period of Stalinist terror of the 1950s, the "tacit deal" offered by the regime allured the intellectual elites, which benefited widely from the period of relative ideological relaxation. In the case of Romania, the "new social con-

32 Michael Shafir, Romania – Politics, Economics and Society, p. 168.

33 This argument was developed in Cristina Petrescu, "Ar mai fi ceva de spus: Despre disidența din România lui Ceaușescu" [There is something more to say: On dissidence in Ceaușescu's Romania], afterword to Dan Petrescu / Liviu Cangeopol, Ce-ar mai fi de spus. Convorbiri libere într-o țară ocupată [What remains to be said: Free conversations in an occupied country], new and rev. ed., Bucharest 2000, p. 319.

34 For more on this see Dragoț Petrescu, "Communist Legacies in the 'New Europe:' History, Ethnicity, and the Creation of a 'Socialist Nation' in Romania, 1945–1989." In: Konrad H. Jarausch / Thomas Lindenberger (Eds.), Conflicted Memories: Europeanizing Contemporary Histories, New York 2007, pp. 37–54.

tract"[35] that worked well in the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s became more and more restricted because of the shortages as well as the paralysis of the bureaucratic system. Also, the "tacit deal" was no longer open to all those willing to abide by the rules because the regime did not need to co-opt the elites anymore. Furthermore, during the 1980s, in the conditions of the economic crisis, the resources became increasingly scarce and the regime was less and less able to reward properly the rapidly increasing numbers of sycophants. However, up to the very end, the regime had something very precious to offer: the permission to travel to the West.

In order to better understand the responses of the Romanian society to the challenges posed by the communist regime in the 1970s and 1980s, one should be reminded that, as compared to the period of repression of the 1950s, when the society was divided only into two distinct categories – victims and perpetrators – the strategy of control through co-optation created more complex and often overlapping social categories. Obviously, the most representative was that of the conformists. There was obviously a hierarchy of co-optation in the system ranging from accepting high offices into the party-state bureaucracy and down to the lowest level of being a humble employee of the state (instead of totally rejecting it). In Romania, the only employer was the communist state. Such a low level of co-optation, which did not really imply advantages, led though to conformism in public life and to a constant dichotomy between thoughts and acts, in short to the daily duplicity of living under communism.

The rejection of co-optation could have been done in various ways. Obviously, the most radical response was dissidence, a phenomenon that was well represented in Central Europe, but was rather marginal in Romania. In consonance with the literature dedicated to communist Europe, this study considers that a dissident was a person in disagreement with the ideological, political and economic fundaments of the society in which he or she lived. Such a person not only thought differently, but also expressed this publicly, outside of the small circle of friends and family.[36] In this respect, the most known dissidents were "writing people," who had a certain degree of education and were capable of articulating a critique of the communist system and, what is more, were able to make these understandable for a Western audience with little knowledge of what was happening behind the Iron Curtain.[37]

However, in order to better define the Romanian case in comparison to other former communist countries, it must be stated that, aside dissidence, there was another form of refusing co-optation. Much better represented than dissent, this

35 This concept is proposed by Anthony Liehm in his essay "The New Social Contract and the Parallel Polity." In: Jane Leftwich Curry (Ed.), Dissent in Eastern Europe, New York 1983, p. 174.

36 See the definition given by the well-known Soviet dissident Roy Medvedev, On Soviet Dissent, London 1980, p. 1.

37 Cf. Vaclav Havel, The Power of the Powerless, New York 1985, p. 3.

included all those who neither publicly criticized the regime nor openly supported it. This form of avoiding the ideological conformism is known in Romanian intellectual circles as "resistance through culture." Since dissidents in Romania were fewer than in Central European countries, these people – tolerated by the regime, but not regimented – contributed aside radical dissidents to the limitation of party's intrusion into culture. Although much less persecuted by the Securitate as compared to the public critiques of the regime, those who "resisted through culture" were often put under surveillance and were professionally marginalized under a regime that rewarded only the obedient mediocrity.

Finally, it must be mentioned that the third way of refusing co-optation was emigration.[38] Obviously, this was not open to everyone, as travels to non-communist countries were not easily available. Many risked their lives trying to cross the border illegally, some used the first visit on the other side of the Iron Curtain to ask for political asylum, while others left legally as the authorities were happy to get rid of troublesome people. As it will be further shown, the right to free circulation was invoked after Helsinki in order to be granted an exit visa. Not all immigrants were political: many left from economic reasons in search of a better life. However, in the case of Romania, those who chose to live outside the country because they could not bear living under a dictatorship became extremely active in exile, being instrumental in supporting the dissidents from inside the country. As the visibility of dissidents in the West was crucial for their protection, the Romanians working for Radio Free Europe or other Western broadcasting agencies played a key role in transmitting and even publishing the critical texts authored by those who decided to speak their minds in order to make them known. Also, the Romanians from the emigration, especially those in France, Germany and the United States, helped by advocating the case of dissidents to international organizations for the protection of human rights, to Western media and politicians interested in what was happening in the "other" Europe. In short, dissent inside Romania could not have been possible without the contribution of the exile.

Having said this, let us turn to the history of post-Helsinki dissent in Romania, which opens with the so-called Goma movement, as the Romanian response to Charter 77 is known in the relevant literature. This aborted movement for human rights was initiated by writer Paul Goma, who wrote in January 1977 a letter of solidarity to Pavel Kohout, one of the leaders of Czechoslovak Charter '77. The spark of revolt spread rather quickly, so that in a matter of two months a collective protest emerged. The most important document of this movement was the open letter addressed to the 1977 Belgrade conference (a Helsinki fol-

38 As Albert O. Hirschman masterly demonstrates, within a given organization there are three possible forms of response to the policies employed by its administrators: exit, voice or loyalty. Such a framework of analysis can be applied when addressing dissident activities under communist dictatorships. See Albert O. Hirschman, Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States, Cambridge 1970.

low-up conference), demanding that the Ceauşescu regime comply with the provisions of the 1975 Basket III of the Final Act concerning the observance of human rights. This letter was eventually signed by some 200 individuals. Taking this into account, one could conclude that the Romanian movement was comparable in amplitude with its Czechoslovak model. What was fundamentally different was that, apart from the writer Ion Negoiţescu and the psychiatrist Ion Vianu, no other public intellectuals supported the action initiated by Paul Goma. Moreover, the movement had a limited purpose from the very beginning: its purpose was to draw the attention upon the fact that violations of human rights were continuing in Romania, without even considering a long-term activity of monitoring the abuses. In fact, the overwhelming majority of those who signed the open letter were interested only in the observance of one single right, that of free circulation. In other words, such individuals were only seeking and a passport – which was dubbed the "Goma passport" – in order to emigrate to the West, which the authorities in fact granted, putting an end to the movement. This does not mean that the Romanian authorities did not react brutally. On the contrary, there were individuals persecuted, harassed and even imprisoned, including the main proponent of the movement, Paul Goma.[39] The failure of this movement for human rights lies equally in the capacity of the regime to suppress it as well as in the incapacity of the Romanian society, including the participants to surpass their own private interests and rally around a problem of public interest. The Goma protest made coagulated around human rights as these represented a problem of international concern after Helsinki, which was intelligently used by dissidents in Central Europe. Human rights, however, never shaped the political agenda in modern Romania, neither before the communist takeover nor after.[40]

39 Goma himself, after the authorities tried in vain to persuade him to renounce to his radical stance, was sent to prison on 1 April, 1977. After the news of his arrest reached the West, an international campaign, in which the Romanian desk of Radio Free Europe played a major role, was launched. As a result of the sustained international campaign, the communist authorities released Goma from prison on 6 May, 1977. Embittered by the lack of support from the part of his fellow writers, marginalized and frustrated, in November 1977 Goma left Romania definitively together with his wife and son, and settled in Paris. Goma wrote at length about his dissidence and the subsequent anticommunist activity in Paris. For a detailed personal account of the unfolding of events during the January-April 1977 period, see Paul Goma, Culoarea curcubeului '77: Cutremurul oamenilor [The colour of the rainbow '77: The earthquake of the people], Oradea 1993.

40 One must be aware of the discrepancy of perception on human rights in the West and the East. Historically and philosophically, in the West, the individual has always been in the centre of the debate about the basic human rights. In Eastern Europe, modernity was experienced differently than in Western Europe. Although the local elites found always inspiration in Western ideas, they defined the fundamental rights in rather collective, economic or political terms. In this respect, one must also take into account that East Central Europe followed a different path not only towards modernization, but also towards the foundation of a national state. Thus, the rights of the individual were neglected at the expense of the rights of their "nation." Considering the historical evolution of East Central Europe, Rudolf Tökés notices that "East European political

After the failed Goma movement, the initiatives of self-societal organization in the name of human rights had a much more limited impact than the workers' protests that were discussed above.[41] As for the discursive forms of collective protest, expressed through programmatic documents or open letters, these emerged only in the late 1980s. In fact, from 1977 until 1989, Romanian dissent consisted of a series of isolated acts by courageous individuals, who refused the more and more meager advantages offered by the regime if accepted to be silent and dared to openly criticize the abuses of the communist system. In other words, the history of dissent during this period cannot be but a succession of individual stories. It was the generalized obedience towards the communist state in Romania that made their singular initiatives to have at the time a greater significance than those born in the middle of very active civil societies. The number of dissidents grew significantly after the sudden manifestation of local popular discontent during the Braşov strike in November 1987. Again, this was a timid mobilization as compared to other communist countries, but it was much stronger in comparison to the previous years. As far as the Goma movement is concerned, it was influenced by the increase of oppositional activities in the entire Soviet bloc which, on their turn, were generated by the internal and external changes generated by Mikhail Gorbachev. In the late 1980s, the Romanians were looking with hope to the Soviet Union, a quite exceptional thing in the recent history of Romania. The case of Poland, with its Solidarity, was intensely popularized through RFE. Consequently, many Romanian dissidents inspired themselves from the texts authored by Central European critical intellectuals, which had become classic works for this genre, adapting general ideas to the local context. Others have joined cross-border protests initiated in Central Europe.[42] However, it must be stated that the number of dissidents that came to be known internally and externally through Western broadcasting agencies was smaller than that of those who ever dared to publicly express their discontent. Many had disappeared forever in prisons and psychiatric hospitals before having

beliefs have tended to be dominated by questions of security (with a record of trade-offs for liberty), collectivism (at the expense of satisfaction of individual rights and aspirations), and a historically conditioned sense of low regard for the political efficacy of the common man." See Rudolf L. Tökés, "Human Rights and Political Change in Eastern Europe." In: idem (Ed.), Opposition in Eastern Europe, Baltimore 1979, p. 12.

41 These were rather ephemeral movements, which emerged under the influence of the similar initiatives in Central Europe. Among these, the most known was the attempt to establish a Free Trade Union in 1979, a sort of Solidarity avant la lettre ți ŕ la roumaine, which was also discussed above.

42 A significant initiative of association with dissidents from Central Europe came from former members of the historical National Peasant Party: Corneliu Coposu, Nicolae Carandino ți Ion Puiu. In October 1986, they expressed their solidarity with the Hungarian, Czech, Slovak and Polish dissidents, who formulated a common letter to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution. See Vladimir Socor, Three Romanians Reported to Have Endorsed Joint Dissident Statement. In: "Romanian Situation Report," no. 6, November 1986, OSA / RFE Archives, Romanian Fond, 300/60/3/Box 18, File Opposition 1987.

the chance to be protected by international organizations because they either lacked the means to made themselves known in the West or did not understood the importance of being protected from abroad.[43]

From among those adopted by international organizations, many remained the authors of one single text of protest. Others succeeded – through their talent of putting into words the discontent of their fellow countrymen, their tenacity to persist on this perilous road, and their ability to find ways of communication – to be continuously present with critical analyses of the Ceauşescu's regime in the broadcastings of Western radio stations. Such individuals who became notorious dissidents by 1989 were really very few. As a matter of fact, even fewer of them succeeded in convincing others to join their lonely dissidence and sign collective letters of protest. The analysis provided below mentions only the most known Romanian dissidents, who succeeded in formulating an articulated criticism of the communist regime: Mihai Botez, Dorin Tudoran, Radu Filipescu, Doina Cornea, Gabriel Andreescu, Dan Petrescu and Mircea Dinescu. Soon after failing to launch in 1977, together with his friend – historian Vlad Georgescu – a flying university in Bucharest after the Polish model, mathematician Mihai Botez became a dissident. Constantly kept under surveillance and harassed by the Securitate, he imposed himself as one of the most prolific critiques of the regime, with an activity than spans over more than a decade. Botez letters to Vlad Georgescu, who emigrated in the meantime and became the director of the Romanian desk of RFE, represent an important and original corpus of analyses of the communist society, written from a perspective that reminds of the Central European Marxist revisionists.[44] Dorin Tudoran was, after the failed Goma moment, the first Romanian writer who decided in 1982 to make public his criticism of the communist regime. Until 1985, when he decided to emigrate, Tudoran radicalized his position, evolving from comments strictly limited to the abuses concerning the literary milieus to the denunciation of the communist system itself. After emigrating and settling in the United States, he became one of the most active supporters of the dissidents that remained in Romania. In the

43 Protests against the regime emerged continuously, but most of the initiators of such acts remained unknown because of their naiveté, ignorance and above all because of failing to make themselves heard abroad. Thus, the communist authorities could put such individuals in prison or psychiatric hospitals without risking to be criticized in international media or be pressed by Western diplomats to release them. Dissident Radu Filipescu, who was imprisoned between 1983 and 1986, met many such individuals during this period. See Herma Köpernik Kennel, Jogging cu Securitatea. Rezistența tînărului Radu Filipescu, Bucharest 1998, pp. 106–144.

44 A short biography of Mihai Botez is to be found in his Intelectualii din Europa de Est [Intellectuals in Eastern Europe], Bucharest 1993, pp. 8–10. His letters to Vlad Georgescu were published in Scrisori către Vlad Georgescu [Letters to Vlad Gerogescu], Bucharest 2003. For his texts published abroad before 1989, see Mihai Botez, L'Eurocommunisme vu de loin, in L'Alternative, no. 3, pp. 17–18. For his open letters to the Central Committee of the RCP, see OSA/RFE Archives, Romanian Fond, 300/60/3/Box 5, File Dissidents: Mihai Botez.

late 1980s, together with Vladimir Tismăneanu, he contributed to the publication of *Agora*, the first and only review published in the West and dedicated to the alternative culture produced in communist Romania.[45] The Bucharest-based engineer Radu Filipescu represents a special case due to his courage: in 1983, he had produced and distributed alone in several neighbourhoods of the capital tens of thousands of manifestos calling to a general strike. Caught by default by the communist authorities, he received ten years of prison for "propaganda against the socialist order." Released only after three years due to international pressure, he has done the most for protecting the political prisoners he had encounter by advocating their case in the West. In spite of his imprisonment, he resumed the dissident activity, continuing to believe that the Romanians only needed a spark to revolt. It was only the Revolution of 1989 that fulfilled his expectations.[46] The French lecturer at the University of Cluj, Doina Cornea, was another dissident with long-term activity, initiated in 1982 with a first letter sent to RFE. Initially concerned only with the decay of education under communism, her criticism inspired mostly from Christian ethics and the interwar intellectual traditions became more radical after the workers' strike of 1987. Until the collapse of the regime, Cornea distinguished itself as the author of a comprehensive program of reforms, and the initiator of a collective protest against the so-called program of rural systematization (in fact a plan to demolish individual households in the countryside in order to gain more agricultural land and force people to live in blocs of flats instead).[47] The activity of physicist Gabriel Andreescu, related mostly to monitoring the violation of human rights, took a new course

45 The dissident activity of Dorin Tudoran can be reconstructed almost completely from his post-communist volume "Kakistocrația," Khishinev 1998. A special mention deserves his text "Frig sau frică? Asupra condiției intelectualului român de astăzi" [Cold or fear? On the condition of the contemporary Romanian intellectual]. In: L'Alternative, no. 29, September-October 1984, and no. 30, November-December 1984, which constitutes an excellent analysis of the causes that hampered many Romanian intellectuals to enter public dissent. See also OSA/RFE Archives, Romanian Fond, 300/60/3/Box 9, File Dissidents: Dorin Tudoran.

46 Journalist Herma Köpernik Kennel authored a book on Radu Filipescu's avatars as dissident. See the above quoted "Jogging cu Securitatea." Although the story seemed romanticized, Filipescu confirmed to these authors that beyond the style, the facts are real. See also OSA/RFE Archives, Romanian Fond, 300/60/3/Box 8, File Dissidents: Radu Filipescu.

47 Doina Cornea was one of the most published Romanian dissidents in Western media, mostly in France. Her texts appeared in La Nouvelle Alternative, L'Autre Europe, Le Monde. Also, she was interviewed by the Belgian journalist Jose Dubié for his 1988 documentary, "The Red Disaster," which after being broadcast by most of the Western national TV stations produced an unprecedented wave of sympathy for the fate of the Romanians under the Ceaușescu regime. He images displaying an unusual level of shortages in the film reminded only the oldest people the days of WWII. For the letters sent to RFE by Cornea, see her "Scrisori deschise și alte texte" [Open letters and other texts], Bucharest 1991. More comments on the impact of dissident Doina Cornea by RFE, see in OSA/RFE Archives, Romanian Fond, 300/60/3/Box 7, File Dissidents: Doina Cornea.

after the 1987 workers rebellion in Braşov, in whose aftermath he was arrested for the first time. From that moment onwards, he became an important author of critical analyses of the regime, and one of the most known dissidents abroad, constantly invited to international conferences together with other dissidents from communist Europe, but was constantly hampered by the Romanian authorities to participate.[48] The Iaşi-based writer Dan Petrescu entered open dissent at the beginning of 1988 and established himself as one of the most prolific and subtle critiques of Ceauşescu's regime. Besides numerous short analyses of the communist system and its mechanisms of control over society, he was the co-author, together with Liviu Cangeopol, of an extremely valuable anatomy of Romania during the last years of communist dictatorship. This text, which is a book-length dialogue between the two dissidents, represents the most radical critique of Romanian communism. The conclusion of the above mentioned text is extremely telling: the authors argued that the solution was lying not in reforms, but in the change of the system itself. Based on first hand information and examples from everyday life, this text still is a valuable source for the study of the communist period. In addition, it is worth mentioning that Dan Petrescu and Doina Cornea were the co-signatories of a collective letter that asked the participants to the Fourteenth Congress of the RCP in November 1989 not to re-elect "comrade Ceauşescu" as the supreme leader of the party.[49] Another notable solidarity was created around poet Mircea Dinescu, who became an open critique of the regime at the end of 1988; he started with a soft criticism of the disastrous situation in the field of culture and radicalized himself towards the end of the next year.[50] His move towards radical dissent acquired a special significance due to the timing: it coincided with the moment when a number of Romanian critical intellectuals felt that it was the high time to do something. Thus, Dinescu's perse-

48 Gabriel Andreescu refers to his way of being a dissident in his "Spre o filozofie a dizidenței" [Towards a philosophy of dissent], Bucharest 1992, pp. 155–197. For the dissident texts produced by Andreescu, see also OSA/RFE Archives, Romanian Fond, 300/60/3/Box 6, File Dissidents: Gabriel Andreescu.

49 It must be mentioned that Dan Petrescu benefited from the support of a group of friends, from which many entered afterwards in open dissent: Alexandru Călinescu, Liviu Cangeopol, Liviu Antonesei, Dan Alexe, as well as from the support of his wife, Thérèse Culianu-Petrescu. All critical texts that survived the disintegration of the archives of various Western broadcasting agencies have been published in the second Romanian edition of his dialogue with Cangeopol. This text was published for the first time by Vladimir Tismăneanu in Agora, the review of alternative Romanian culture. Unfortunately, because of the difficulties of transmitting this text to the West, it arrived too late to the editors, and was published after the Revolution of 1989, loosing enormously from its anticipated impact as a dissident text. See Agora, Vol. 3, no. 1, February 1990, pp. 45–258. For the rest of the texts sent mostly to RFE, see the above quoted Dan Petrescu and Liviu Cangeopol, Ce-ar mai fi de spus. See also OSA/ RFE Archives, Romanian Fond, 300/60/3/Box 6, File Dissidents: Dan Petrescu.

50 Many of Mircea Dinescu's open letters were initially published in Libération. His texts can be found in OSA/RFE Archives, Romanian Fond, 300/60/3/Box 7, File Dissidents: Mircea Dinescu.

cution attracted for the first time the solidarity of other fellow writers. It was in those last months of the communist dictatorship period that the attempts to formulate collective protests grew. Some of them were annihilated in earlier stages by the Securitate,[51] while others were finalized, as it was the case of the above mentioned letter against the re-election of Ceauşescu, or that of the so-called "letter of the seven" who expressed their solidarity with Dinescu.[52] There was also a "letter of the eighteen," broadcast in December 1989, when the Revolution against Ceauşescu's dictatorship had already started in Timişoara.[53] Besides these collective documents – drafted by nuclei of the emerging civil society, which started to organize itself only when in other countries of East-Central Europe the communist regimes were seriously threatened by protests from below – there was also an open letter signed by prominent members of the party, all former veteran communists marginalized by Ceauşescu. This letter had a very limited impact on the Romanian population, but outside the country its echo was considerably greater than that of the letters signed by critical intellectuals.[54] What is important to notice is that only on the brink of the 1989 Revolution a timid but shared feeling of solidarity was replacing the "egoism of small groups."

V. Conclusion

Romanian dissent did not contribute to the sparking of the Revolution of 1989 and did not provide an alternative to neo-communists in early post-communism. Was there an interaction between these lonely critical intellectuals and the rest of the society? In other words, were the dissidents' patterns of thought and action influential upon the community political culture? The cases discussed above are

51 The files of the former communist secret police speak about failed attempts at organizing collective protests. See for instance "Cartea Albă a Securității: Istorii literare și artistice, 1969–1989" [The White book of the Securitate: Literary and artistic stories, 1969–1989], Bucharest 1996, pp. 394–408.

52 The seven intellectuals were from among the literary establishment in Bucharest: Geo Bogza, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, Dan Hăulică, Alexandru Paleologu, Andrei Pleșu, Octavian Paler and Mihai Șora, who were subsequently joined by other two from the province, Radu Enescu and Alexandru Călinescu. Written on 20 March 1989, the letter was addressed to the head of Writers' Union, Dumitru Radu Popescu but, in the given conditions of compliance with the regime in Romania, it represented a first major gesture of solidarity between regime's opponents. For more on the collective letters of protest, see Dennis Deletant, Ceaușescu and the Securitate, pp. 282–284 and 291–292.

53 For the "letter of the eighteen," see Cartea Albă a Securității, Istorii literare și artistice, p. 457. For an account on the sinuous way in which this protest emerged, see Stelian Tănase, Ora oficială de iarnă [Official wintertime], Iași 1995.

54 For more on this, see Cristina Petrescu, "The 'Letter of the Six:' On the Political (Sub) Culture of the Romanian Communist Elite" Studia Politica, Vol. 5, no. 2, Bucharest 2005, pp. 355–384.

obviously not representative for the elite political culture in its entirety. They epitomize only a subspecies, the political (sub)cultures of resistance. However, such values and beliefs, as well as behavioural patterns, could have influenced and modified the political culture of the Romanian society, a process difficult to detect before 1989, but perceptible during the 1989 Revolution and in the post-communist period. At a general level, one could say that dissidents' messages and the values they conveyed were in many cases very far from the current problems of the average Romanian – mostly related to the miseries of everyday life in the late 1980s – to have any significant impact upon the Romanian society at large. Dissident messages and values represented, however, a safety valve for the average Romanians, who could hear via RFE, on a daily basis, that the regime was acting against their interests, but were otherwise either unable to formulate what was wrong with it or unwilling to risk speaking out. In a country that never experienced a Prague Spring or a movement from below like the Polish Solidarity, it was not their content that counted, but their very existence. In short, what matters is the fact that such a pattern of behaviour emerged within a community that lacked a participatory type of political culture. In this respect, some intellectuals were indeed instrumental in convincing the large crowds gathered in the Palace Square of Bucharest on 22 December 1989 that the monopoly of the RCP was over. In other words, *they turned the anti-Ceauşescu popular uprising into an anti-Communist revolution*.

Although short-lived, that was the crucial moment of the Romanian Revolution of 1989. In spite of the prime importance of that moment, dissidents clearly had only a very limited influence in structuring the public sphere in the long run. In other words, the change in the patterns of behaviour that led to the overthrow of the communist regime was not supported by a similar change in the values and beliefs that would have supported a smoother transition to democracy. While in Central Europe the first free elections were won by former dissidents, in Romania it was a former *apparatchik*, Ion Iliescu, who received the overwhelming support of the population. Consequently, while the Visegrad group decisively oriented itself towards European integration, Romania embarked on an ambiguous and hesitant course, with tragic repercussions upon the entire process of democratization. Differences between Romania and Central Europe still exist today. Their origins also lie in the fact that, before 1989, much fewer people in Romania made public their democratic convictions by openly criticizing the communist dictatorship in comparison with the citizens of the Sovietised countries of Central Europe who dared to do so in much greater numbers.