

TIMIȘOARA (15–20 DECEMBER 1989) AND BUCHAREST (21–22 DECEMBER 1989)

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In 1989 Romania was, as Radio Free Europe called it, a “powder keg,” and a revolt seemed quite likely, given both the internal situation (with the country under one of the harshest neo-Stalinist dictatorships in the whole communist bloc) and the considerable political changes affecting Eastern Europe, which exerted a more or less direct influence upon political events in the country.

The story about the beginning of the revolt in Timișoara has been told by many of its protagonists, and therefore I shall present here only a brief outline of its main events. Basically, it all started with the protest of Reformed pastor László Tökes and of his congregation against the orders issued by the Reformed Church (controlled, of course, by the Romanian communists), according to which he had to leave the village of Mineu for having criticized Ceaușcu’s regime, especially in what concerned the planned restructuring (demolition) of villages, which would have most likely caused a loss of identity among the Hungarian minority. Some Timișoara authors have indicated that typewritten manifestos began circulating in Timișoara as early as 11 December 1989, featuring slogans like “End Ceaușescu’s tyranny!,” “Down with the dictatorship!,” “Death to the dictator!” Still, these manifestos were not necessarily related to the protest of the Reformed minister and had not been smuggled in by Hungarian, Russian, or other foreign agents. If we were to check the records of the former *Securitate*, we might read about similar attempts to spread anti-Ceaușescu leaflets in all major Romanian cities, and especially in places like Timișoara, which were closer to the West, had an ethnically diverse population, and offered a better likelihood of an actual effect. The protest began on 15 December 1989 as a vigil, but on December 16 the new turn of events frightened even pastor Tökes, especially since the members of his congregation were presently supported by a lot of Romanians. This show of solidarity was indeed most important, as people belonging to different nationalities and to different denominations came together in front of the parochial house and started by chanting “Freedom! Freedom!” The Reformed minister completely failed to realize that his protest and the support shown by the inhabitants of Timișoara was the spark that would ultimately bring the end of Ceaușescu’s dictatorship. On the contrary, as he came to the window and spoke to the people gathered in front of the house, he felt that things were getting

completely out of hand. Frightened by the massive Romanian show of support, László Tökes constantly told the people that they should go home rather than risk annoying the authorities. While he was not a major dissident, László Tökes did nevertheless use the means available to him (his sermons) to denounce the abuse of Ceaușescu's regime. He described himself as a nonconformist or rather as a dissident within the Reformed Church, a man interested in rallying the Hungarian minority in Romania around the idea of religious freedom. In fact, in a 1989 interview, Tökes stated that "I assumed the responsibility and faced the risks of fighting for the rights of the Church, of the Hungarian minority... I never sought to play a role at the national level. This is how things must be understood. As a mere Reformed minister, I never saw myself as a fighter seeking to end the communist oppression in the country" (Mioc, *Revoluția fără mistere*, p. 70). When asked whether he suspected that the show of solidarity with his protest would lead to the fall of Ceaușescu's regime, László Tökes gave a clear negative answer. It is obvious that, especially during the events of December 16 (the essential moment of the Timișoara revolt), Tökes sought to keep his distance from the protest against Ceaușescu's regime (he was strictly concerned with his religious protest), but he was eventually dragged into a revolt and insurrection that no longer had anything to do with himself or with his religious protest.

For the people of Timișoara, what happened in front of the parochial house was a sort of "apprenticeship," at least according to Ioan Savu (*Timișoara 16-22 decembrie 1989*, p. 88), one of the members of the famous revolutionary "commando unit" that occupied the great balcony of the Opera House. It was from Tökes and from the members of his congregation that the inhabitants of Timișoara learned the art of a nonviolent and peaceful criticism directed against an oppressive regime. In the following stage, the protest in front of the Reformed parochial house turned into a revolt, as the crowds began to march on the streets of Timișoara on December 16 and proceeded to erect barricades (on December 17–18). This is why some analysts speak of an "insurrectional commune" (Milin, *Timișoara 15-21 decembrie '89*, p. 172) or of a "state of revolution" (*Timișoara 16-22 decembrie 1989*) which lasted for several days and during which the main slogans were "Freedom!," "Down with Ceaușescu!," but also "We want bread!," "Romanians, join us!," "Down with communism!," etc. It must be said that, for several days, the "insurrectional commune" had no specific leader directing the street protests, only some inspired revolutionists (to borrow Costel Balint's phrase) who intuitively understood the significance of the events and managed to summon

the necessary courage. The revolutionary committee that took shape later in the balcony of the Opera House (December 19–20) was also a fortuitous creation, despite the occasional struggle for power among the new revolutionary leaders. On December 16, the protesters ceased their vigil around the Reformed parochial house and decided to take firmer action. What followed was a march across the city streets, to the building of the County Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP), where windows were shattered, the communist flag was destroyed, and the books written by the two Ceaușescu—on display at a nearby bookstore—were burned. On December 17 another march took the protesters to the same Central Committee of the RCP, where this time Ceaușescu's portraits were burned (as it had happened in Brașov in November of 1987). The same day of December 17 saw the first violent repressive actions, and several people were killed. It was only after the protesters took to the streets that word of the revolt spread around the city and reached the repressive forces, especially since, in certain cases, the protests also involved the destruction not only of communist symbols, but of anything that looked like a potential target to the angry crowds (some analysts assume, however, that in the crowd there were some provocateurs tasked with the destruction of public assets, maybe *Securitate* operatives posing as revolutionists and seeking to trigger a response from the repressive forces; also, as with any crowd, those of Timișoara had their share of common criminals, who found the circumstances ideal for their activities). Despite being informed about what was happening in Timișoara (information that may have been incomplete or somewhat inaccurate), Ceaușescu nevertheless decided to go ahead with his planned visit to Iran, in the belief that the events in Timișoara were of limited magnitude or, if not, they could be suppressed as it had happened in Brașov in 1987. This also because on December 18, Timișoara found itself under occupation or under siege (by the Army, the Militia, and also other forces), and the situation could be seen as largely under control, even if the revolt still continued and some locals were showing unexpected resilience and determination.

The barricades and the protests of the crowds determined to stand against the repression forces, in various hotspots of Timișoara, led to a large number of victims during the days of the insurrection (a few dozen dead and hundreds wounded). The bodies of forty victims were actually shipped by refrigerated truck to Bucharest and cremated, in order to erase all traces of the repression; the authorities presumably imagined that in this way they could put a positive spin on the story surrounding the events in Timișoara, especially insofar as the foreign media were concerned. After

the violent clashes and the repressive actions became too obvious to cover up, and with the people of Timișoara still undaunted, on December 19 Elena Ceaușescu—left in charge of the country after her husband’s departure for Iran—dispatched to Timișoara the country’s prime minister, Constantin Dăscălescu, accompanied by Emil Bobu. The two high officials of the regime were told to negotiate with the protesters and gather accurate information about the situation in the rebellious city. The negotiations failed because the protesters kept demanding Ceaușescu’s resignation and a new government (and implicitly a new political regime). Opera Square was presently occupied by determined protesters, who demanded the bodies of the assassinated victims and the release of those who had been arrested and who, as the people feared, were being abused by the repressive forces. Given the magnitude of the street movements (a general strike had also been called), some representatives of the Army shook hands with the protesters, their gesture symbolically understood as a capitulation of the Army to a revolution that presently no one could deny. Still, it must be said that it was not the Army as such who extended a hand to the revolutionists, but rather the common soldiers; the Army High Command was still undecided, showing caution and still some partial loyalty to Ceaușescu (Mioc, *Falsificatorii istoriei*, p. 19). On December 20, the army units were ordered to return to their barracks, as events in Timișoara had taken an irreversible turn; some commentators (Costache Codrescu) contend that the Army pulled back for fear of a civil war likely to provide a pretext for foreign military intervention. December 20 also saw the creation of the first revolutionary committee (the Romanian Democratic Front), which drew up a platform, a programmatic statement or a Proclamation, demanding the democratization of Romania (the statement circulated in two versions, a radical and concise one read at the Prefecture on December 20, and a more moderate one, written in the night of December 20 and read out to the people from the balcony of the Opera House. Here are some of the main points of the Proclamation: free elections; freedom of speech, of the press, the radio, the television; the integration of Romania among the states who guarantee and respect the fundamental human rights; the release of all political prisoners; economic reform; reforms in agriculture; a reform of the educational system; freedom for all religious denominations; a proper supply of food for the people; adequate medical assistance; the dissolution of the nomenclatura and the end of its privileges. Other demands were strictly related to the Timișoara uprising (the prosecution of those who had fired on the people, the publication of the list of the dead and wounded, the release of those imprisoned, etc.). Not least, the

Romanian Democratic Front demanded the establishment in all Romanian towns, companies, and institutions, of RDF committees that would begin the democratization of the whole country. Also, all Romanians were urged to begin a general strike “until the final victory,” as the document stated. The people of Timișoara were praised for their heroic resistance, likely to free the Romanian nation from dictatorship. This document, so important for the meaning of the Timișoara uprising (despite the occasional rhetorical fragments) clearly and accurately indicates that the RDF saw itself as a democratic body seeking to expand in the rest of the country, and also that the people of Timișoara were determined not to give up. As early as December 20–21, they knew that the communist dictatorship had fallen or was about to, and that there was definitely no turning back. Of course, it was hoped that the other major cities, especially the country’s capital, would also rise up in support, which is precisely what happened. It is obvious therefore that the RDF was the first democratic leadership body in the country and not just in Timișoara, even before the creation of the National Salvation Front in Bucharest. It is also obvious that the Proclamation or the programmatic statement of the RDF was an official document, expressing the essential desiderata for the end of the dictatorship and the democratization of the country, a first symbolic “constitution” of the country, predating the actual fall of communism. Therefore, the assimilation of the Romanian Democratic Front by the National Salvation Front (in the desire of maximizing the latter’s impact in the country) was a mistake. However, in December of 1989 no one could tell that the NSF was in fact a mixture of dissidents, members of the nomenklatura, adventurers, soldiers of fortune, *Securitate* operatives, and revolutionists; no one could predict that the NSF would in fact hijack both the Timișoara uprising and what passed for a Romanian revolution.

It must also be said that on December 19–20, several trains with workers from the southern parts of the country arrived in Timișoara. Armed with clubs, these so-called “patriotic guards” were to put an end to the rebellion in Timișoara. Still, they remained in their trains and stayed out of the city, fearing manipulation from the part of the communist authorities. Some of them were met at the railway station by the revolutionists, who took them to Opera Square and showed them that an anti-communist revolt was indeed taking place, but that it was a peaceful revolt of the entire city population.

In Timișoara, the repressive forces belonged mostly to the Army, with the Militia and the *Securitate* also present. They all opened fire upon the civilian population, but it was the Army that played a

central role in that (General Vasile Milea and his aides Ștefan Gușe and Victor Athanasie Stănculescu ordered the Timișoara troops to fire on the protesters; it was only on December 21, with Bucharest also in revolt, that General Milea had a partial change of heart and postponed for as long as he could the Army's involvement in the repression, probably realizing that the revolt would spread to the whole country; even more cautious, Stănculescu managed to remain completely uninvolved in the Bucharest repression of December 21). On 17 December 1989, the Army had received the code phrase "Radu the Fair," the implication being that the country was facing an imminent aggression meant to separate Transylvania from the rest of Romania. The rules of procedure related to this code phrase requested the troops to be issued live ammunition. On 10 and 20 December 1989, Ilie Ceaușescu visited various army garrisons in Timișoara, Oradea, Arad, and Cluj, announcing the infiltration of the Romanian territory by 2000 "terrorists," chiefly Hungarian nationals. The soldiers in those garrisons were thus misinformed in order to be ready to open fire, if worst came to worst, on the civilian population that presumably included the alleged anti-Romanian "terrorists."

The people arrested in Timișoara (close to one thousand individuals) between 19 and 19 December 1989 were subjected to a brutal treatment, questioned and tortured by agents of the Militia and of the *Securitate*. Their treatment is similar to the one inflicted upon the workers who had risen in protest in Brașov in 1987, indicating that the repressive forces had not changed their ways and still used the brutal Stalinist methods from the early years of the communist regime. From obscene verbal threats to severe beatings, victims were led to believe that they would be executed by firing squad. The arrested women later testified to the vulgar manner in which the prisoners, irrespective of gender, were told that they were "fucked" (I have decided to include the word as such in order to illustrate the deliberately rude atmosphere in the interrogation and detention rooms)—the implication was that they were to be liquidated and exterminated, but the word chosen was deliberately a rude one (testimony of Eugenia László). A similarly harsh treatment was inflicted upon those arrested in Bucharest in the evening of December 21, some of whom died during and after the torture sessions. This abuse is described not only in the testimonies of many survivors, but also in the 4 June 1990 indictment of the member of the Executive Political Committee of the RCP, on trial in Timișoara. In both Timișoara (16–20 December) and Bucharest (after 22 December), some people who were superficially wounded were shot in the head while in hospital (see the

Timișoara case of Remus Marian Tășală) or were simply left to die without medical assistance, in the false belief that they were “terrorists” (this happened in Timișoara to Dominic Paraschiv, who was mentally ill, and in Bucharest to Cristian Lupu). If, in the case of Bucharest, such events could be ascribed to the psychosis created by the misinformation regarding the omniscient and almighty terrorists, who wore a variety of disguises and could fool anybody, in Timișoara the only explanation for the death of these otherwise lightly wounded individuals is that some members of the repressive forces, who questioned the wounded in the early days of the insurrection, also killed some of them.

What happened in Timișoara between the 16th and the 20th of December (when the city stood alone against the repression of the Ceaușescu regime and played a catalyzing role in the revolution that eventually set the whole country against Ceaușescu and, implicitly, against communism) was referred to as a *manifestation, incident, demonstration, historic moment, movement, outburst of popular anger, unrest, events, protest, revolt, uprising, rebellion, insurrection (insurrectional commune), revolutionary phenomenon, and revolution*. The exact words, however, are less important. What matters is the goal of the Timișoara insurrection (to use the term I actually prefer) which, albeit ambiguous at the beginning, gained contour during the days in which the city’s inhabitants stood alone against the dictatorship and the repressive forces: fight Ceaușescu, and implicitly everything that communism meant. During the days of the insurrection, the people of Timișoara realized that they had to be better organized than the protesters who had risen in Brașov in 1987 and thus avoid a quick suppression of the revolt. They even accepted to become possible scapegoats, should their revolt end in failure, provided that at least something changed for the better in Romania. At the same time, they created the first democratic space, proposing a “transfiguration” of the county both externally and internally, following the democratic changes occurred in Europe in the year 1989. A credible and realistic presentation of the atmosphere of the Timișoara insurrection can be found in Radu Ciobotea’s preface to one of Titus Suciuc’s books (*Lumea bună a balconului*). It shows the Timișoara revolt as a “great political festival,” a “marathon” whose protagonists, the impromptu and prophetic revolutionists, were hardly perfect and simply human (in the sense that they also made mistakes, hesitated, and had their share of failures), an exhausting marathon in which good and evil collided and became intertwined and in which, as stated by a participant to those tormented days, “being a victim did not necessarily made one a hero.” After

December 20, the marathon of the Timișoara insurrection also became a contest between the new leaders of the revolt, who suspected one another of collaboration with the former authorities or of the ambition to gain a prominent position in the new regime. Before December 20, the protesters showed not just courage, but a mixture of courage, fear, and survival instinct. Radu Ciobotea came to the following conclusion: “no one fully controlled the events in Timișoara. There was no foreign intelligence agency to implement a sophisticated scenario, no specific individual to pull the political strings... The Romanian Democratic Front was born amid utter confusion, its platform was rather a moral one (demanding a return to common sense, to a normal daily life), the main request being the replacement of Ceaușescu and of his government... The great and chaotic reality of those days clearly contradicts the countless scholarly analyses that saw the Timișoara Revolution as a scenario written by the Hungarians and jointly executed by the CIA and the KGB” (Suciu, *Lumea bună a balconului*). A pertinent chronology of the events in Timișoara was put together by Claudiu Iordache (it can be found in the same book by Titus Suciu, *Lumea bună a balconului*, p. 29), who divided the period between 15 and 20 December 1989 into four phases: *unrest in the streets* (December 15), *street revolt* (December 16–17), *insurrection* (December 17–19), and *revolution* (after December 20). The final stage is seen as the revolutionary one because on December 20 the Romanian Democratic Front announced its platform, considered to be the first democratic political document, intended to be disseminated and implemented throughout the country. Therefore, we can say without fear of being wrong that what happened in Timișoara was a popular revolt leading to an insurrection which then turned into a revolution that engulfed the whole country, especially the city of Bucharest, on 21 and then on 22 December. At any rate, before the power was seized by the group led by Ion Iliescu.

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Emblematic displays of solidarity with the revolt in Timișoara were seen not only in Bucharest, but also in several other major cities, such as Cluj, Sibiu, Brașov, Arad, and Oradea, for instance (but also in the smaller towns), where quite a number of people lost their lives. Still, essential for the progress of the revolution was the revolt of the people of Bucharest, following the rally called by the authorities on 21 December. It may be that Nicolae Ceaușescu was thus seeking to gain popular support before putting down the Timișoara insurrection. Things, however, did not go according to

his plan. This is the reason why in the present study I shall only refer to the events of 21–22 December in Bucharest, leaving aside the revolts that took place in other brave cities. I most certainly do not wish to minimize the significance of what those people achieved. Still, in the absence of a Bucharest revolt, Timișoara (and the whole of Romania) would have experienced the same fate as the city of Brașov after the events of November 1987: after a long siege, the Timișoara fighters would have been arrested, questioned, and sentenced. This in the absence of a decision by the Western powers to directly overthrow Ceaușescu, presently deemed undesirable even by the reformist communist leader Mikhail Gorbachev, in a way the artisan of the revolutions experienced in the year 1989 by the former satellite countries of the Soviet Union.

The rally convened by the authorities on 21 December in Bucharest's Palace Square was important in the sense that it brought together huge crowds of people who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to gather together and protest. After the first typical phase, during which the dictator was praised, protests began to be heard in various places in the crowd. As the rally abruptly came to an end and participants began to flee, the protesters gathered in groups and proceeded to occupy University Square and a few other locations (Romana Square). The rally thus turned first into a revolt, and then increasingly into an "insurrectional commune." The phases were nearly identical to those in Timișoara, except for the fact that they occurred at a much faster pace. Just like the Timișoara "commune," that of Bucharest was also dominated by young people (not exclusively students), so that for a while the Romanian revolution was described as a "children's crusade" by the analysts who noticed the massive and decisive presence of the youth among those who rose in protest against the communist regime ("Who made the Revolution?" asks a voice in *Vom muri și vom fi liberi*, p. 130, and the answer comes: "the million babies of '68," *i. e.*, the children born following the decree of 1968 that banned abortions in Romania). The afternoon and the night of December 21, but also the controversial interval between 22 and 25 December, were dominated by a natural *furor heroicus* of the barricades (*Vom muri și vom fi liberi*), just like it had happened in Timișoara. It was especially the day of December 21 that showed the magnificent side of this collective struggle, in a combination of courage, impetuosity, and determination.

Opinions vary when it comes to what exactly caused the end of the 21 December rally in Palace Square. Some analysts believe that several groups of young workers carrying flags began to chant "Timișoara" and "Down with Ceaușescu," booing the dictator during his speech and frightening the

other participants in the rally who, fearing repression and the all-seeing eyes of the *Securitate*, ran away in disorder and threw down the portraits, the flags and the signs with inscriptions that praised the dictator. Others believe that a few desperate individuals began to boo Ceaușescu: their spontaneous and uncoordinated protest was amplified by the PAs located nearby and which were supposed to ensure that the crowd could properly hear Ceaușescu's speech; instead, they served to disseminate the protests and the booing. Other analysts believe that the alleged protesters who initiated the booing and the anti-Ceaușescu slogans were actually *Securitate* agents in civilian clothes or dressed up as workers bearing flags. This is the only explanation for the fact that they were not immediately arrested and managed to run away, creating a stampede and putting an end to the rally. Still others talk about groups of students who came uninvited to the rally in order to sabotage it, hoping that the crowd would join in the protest or that the disorder thus created would at least put an end to the rally. At any rate, if someone deliberately intended to sabotage the rally, they were certainly aware of the fact that the event was being broadcast live on television and could be seen by the whole country. Once the booing started and with the rally brought to an abrupt end, these viewers would have understood that Ceaușescu was beginning to lose his grip on power and that the time had come for a revolt throughout the entire country.

In Bucharest, the repressive forces included a mixture of units belonging to the Army, to the Interior Ministry, to the Riot Police, to the Militia. The first victims were those crushed by the army vehicles driven straight into the crowds gathered in University Square. The first bullets were fired at dusk, and the brutal repression came with the fall of night. Hotel Intercontinental was crawling with *Securitate* operatives who were filming the protesters gathered in University Square and monitored their movements. Nearly a hundred people were killed and many others wounded during the night of December 21, and when dawn broke on December 22, all resistance had ceased in University Square and in Romana Square. Those arrested on December 21, especially those coming from University Square, went through a Romanian version of the Night of St. Bartholomew, brutalized and abused by agents of the Militia and of the political police, who realized that the system was creaking at the joints but did not know what December 22 would bring: widespread revolution and the fall of Ceaușescu, or the survival of a regime whose pillars (the *Securitate*, the Militia, and other agencies) would have succeeded to suppress the revolt. An eloquent account of the night of December 21, spent in a detention cell and during which those detained were beaten to a pulp, can

be found in H.-R. Patapievici's piece "În preajma ștreangului (istoria unei nopți)" [At the gallows' feet (the history of a night)], which opens his book entitled *Politice*.

The day of December 22 brought with it, in an emblematic mixture of measures taken first by a falling regime and then by an emerging one, a state of emergency across the whole territory of the country, the death of General Vasile Milea (who committed suicide or was killed, or at least wounded in unclear circumstances, for he died only after being taken to the hospital); at any rate, the death of the general leading the Defense Ministry (a death made public while he was actually still alive) predictably turned the Romanian Army against Ceaușescu and his dictatorship; events continued with Ceaușescu's failed attempt to talk to the protesters gathered in front of the Central Committee building, and then with the dictator's flight (if it was indeed a flight and not a concealed arrest); what followed, in rapid succession, was the occupation of the Central Committee building by revolutionists, the official proclamation of the Romanian revolution, the proposals for the first post-Ceaușescu governments, the seizing of power by the group led by Ion Iliescu and, unexpectedly or not, the new victims of the revolution which opened the 22–25(30) December phase, during which an essential part was played by the "battle for the Television building" (December 22–23) and, prior to it, the gratuitous or deliberate—according to the various interpretations—shooting in Palace Square, in the evening of December 22, which caused the devastating fire that ravaged the University Library. It was here, in Palace Square, that we find the first casualties occurred after the fall of Ceaușescu's regime. Of course, one must not overlook the "trial" against the dictatorial couple and their grisly execution on Christmas Day. The main events of 22 December 1989 included a general strike in the capital city, the massive movement of workers from the industrial sites towards the city centers in order to protest against the regime, the invasion of the Central Committee building by the crowds of protesters (a seizure of the space that symbolized Ceaușescu's regime and communism). Equally important was the "TV revolution" broadcast by the only nationwide channel operating in the country at that time, which could also be received abroad. And, of course, the establishment of the National Salvation Front, which presented itself as the only democratic body likely to ensure a smooth transition and capable (according to its leaders) of running the country newly liberated from under Ceaușescu's regime. This body seemed credible at least in light of the democratic platform it adopted (the message to the country issued by the NSF on December 22 was a proper political document, but only from a theoretical point of

view, as many of the elements it contained were later discarded or ignored), despite the presence in its leadership structure of an inordinately large number of former members of the communist elite. From words to deeds the distance was long indeed, and this became particularly obvious during the dreadful year 1990, the most violently fratricidal in post-communist Romania (see the aggressive election campaign or the events of June 13–15, with the miners' incursion).

In the year 1990, soon after they took place and based mainly on what had happened in the capital city, the events of December 1989 were described as an *uprising, movement, rebellion, revolt, mutiny, insurrection, civil war* (between protesters and the repressive forces), *revolution, counterrevolution*. There were also some vague and ambiguous labels, avoiding a precise term—for instance, the events in question were referred to as “that thing” (*Vom muri și vom fi liberi*). Once early 1990 turned out to be a time of frustration, usurpation, and settling of scores, as the NSF broke the promises it had made as a provisional leadership body, the Romanian revolution began to be interpreted as a coup, a foreign conspiracy, etc. Foreign journalists, especially the French ones, were the first to initiate a media campaign that exposed the imposture of the Romanian revolution. I have not dealt in any measure of detail with the Bucharest insurrection of December 22–25, as the events of these days remain a bone of contention for the supporters of the hybrid thesis and for the conspiracy theorists interested in the Romanian revolution. They will be discussed in separate chapters of my book.

Before I conclude this study regarding the insurrections in Timișoara and in Bucharest, I would like to present some data regarding the number of victims recorded between 16 and 30 December 1989 (the figures are based on a synthesis of the bibliography listed at the end of the present study, which includes more than 100 titles): 1104 people died (543 of them in Bucharest), and 3352 were wounded (1879 in Bucharest); the Army had 260 dead and 545 wounded, while the forces of the Interior Ministry registered 65 dead and 73 wounded; 162 people were killed before December 22, and 942 after December 22; 1107 people were wounded before December 22, and 2245 after this date. All foreign journalists who, in 1990, sought to demolish the myths surrounding the Romanian revolution stated that the dead numbered a lot less than 1000 people, seemingly in order to compensate for the excessive use by the new authorities, in December of 1989, of the word “genocide,” a word which the civilian population itself had come to believe. 1425 people were suspected of terrorism, 820 of them members of the Army, 580 civilians, and 25 foreign citizens.

We have not included here the alleged bodies of dead terrorists (at the morgue, the word “terrorist” was written directly on their skin; others were left in the streets for days, their bodies desecrated), later proved to belong to civilians shot by mistake (some of them were authentic revolutionists) or to members of the Army or of the Militia also shot as a result of tactical errors or of confusion (it could also be that they were shot on purpose—nearly all of them were later proclaimed “heroes of the revolution”).

The Romanian revolution gathered together passionate militants, naïve dreamers, people of outstanding courage, people who had nothing to lose, people who had everything to lose, moles, plotters, opportunists, and others who were simply noseys. The events that took place are so complex and confusing that any synthetic presentation of December 1989 can only be a chaotic one. The psychological tension of those days sometimes drove people to hasty actions: abuse and errors were committed, people acted not only out of duty and in the desire to find the truth and bring justice, but also out of fear and frustration; the psychoses of those days (chief among them the one regarding the “terrorists”) often led to manipulation, and innocent people were arrested, beaten, and even murdered (or left to die without medical assistance); the massive involvement of civilians, who have exaggerated reactions under high pressure, rendered the situation rather explosive and sometimes impossible to control. Dennis Deletant (*România sub regimul comunist*), who accepted and quoted from the *Raportul Serviciului Român de Informații despre evenimentele din decembrie 1989* (Report of the Romanian Intelligence Service on the events of December 1989), indicated that, more often than not, the casualties occurred after December 22 were the outcome of the confusion in which anyone could have been a “terrorist,” errors were made, and bullets were shot wildly, with weapons presently in the hands of unauthorized persons, of people with rudimentary military training, or even of adventurers. But this sends us precisely to the idea of an “insurrectional commune” and of a revolution. The fact that, after the rise of the new authorities, it was hijacked by a group of communist restorers has to do with a first phase of the Romanian post-communist period, which is an altogether different chapter.

I shall only say here that many of the testimonies concerning the events of December 1989 used the stereotypical language of the anti-authoritarian discourse, the demagogy of regained freedom, of cheap rhetoric. But these are the pitfalls and, at the same time, the marks of authenticity of a revolution which, in its early stages, found it hard to generate a living and genuine discourse.

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