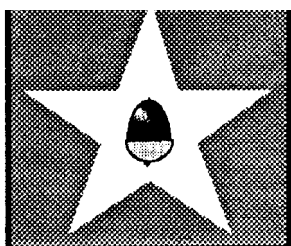


Conflict Studies Research Centre

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**The Dark Side of Politics
in Post-Communist Romania**

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The Dark Side of Politics in Post-Communist Romania

From Iron Guard Fascism and Ceausescu's Communist- Nationalism to C V Tudor's Extreme Nationalism

V G Baleanu

Synopsis

The success of the former communists and President Iliescu in the November 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections testifies to the short memories of the electorate, as well as to their disenchantment with the largely ineffective democratic coalition which had been in power since 1996. The surprise showing of CV Tudor and his Greater Romania Party, however, reveals the scope for extremism and nationalism to flourish, at both ends of the political spectrum, in an atmosphere of fluid and unacknowledged personal alliances, often built on expediency.

This paper traces in detail the history and ideology of a number of extremist Radical Return and Radical Continuity parties and politicians. The roots of all of these lie deep within Romania's prewar politics, and nationalism, antisemitism and ethnic chauvinism feature prominently in their pronouncements. While most of their support is mercifully small-scale, the Greater Romania Party currently constitutes the main opposition grouping in Parliament. Further, the hand of the Ceausescu-era Securitate and its network of relationships can often be discerned in political extremism and recent events. What this reveals about the character of Romania's developing democracy is not encouraging for those inside or outside the country.

Introduction

The results of Romania's November 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections sent shock waves throughout the international community, with very good reason. It became apparent that the Romanian electorate had voted out the liberal centre-right coalition, the Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR), in favour of the ex-communist Ion Iliescu's Party for Social Democracy (PDSR). In the process, they elected to second place extreme-nationalist Corneliu Vadim Tudor's Greater Romania Party (PRM), a right-wing party well known for its virulent anti-Hungarian, anti-Jewish, and anti-Roma attacks. Although ex-President Iliescu's success in the first round of the presidential election was very much anticipated after the incumbent President Emil Constantinescu withdrew from the contest, CV Tudor's surge in popularity, with a strong 28%, took the Romanian democrats and the international community by storm. The new political configuration in Romania was confirmed in the presidential runoff, when Iliescu obtained the support of 67% of voters, while Tudor increased his popularity to 33%.¹

Winston Churchill is reputed to have once said that opposition parties never win elections; it is the government that loses them. The situation so far in post-communist Romania is no exception. In 1996, the PDSR was swept out of power owing to its disastrous policies and delayed reforms. The CDR came to power

promising to implement radical economic reforms and to do so quickly. But it hardly achieved this, as the centre-right coalition was more preoccupied with inter-party infighting. Meanwhile, poverty and unemployment grew, the chances of European integration faded away, and corruption flourished. As expected, because of Constantinescu's disappointing four years in government, in the run-up to November 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections, Iliescu and the PDSR consistently led the opinion polls. The surprise came not from the triumphant return to power of the PDSR, but from the transformation of the extremist Greater Romania Party into Romania's second-strongest parliamentary party, and the nightmarish scenario of CV Tudor's possible role in drawing up Romania's future.

Obviously, the November 2000 election also indicated that Romania's options for a new-blood democratic president were far from great. Ion Iliescu, once a member of communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu's inner circle, was disgraced in the 1980s only to resurrect himself as the leader of post-revolutionary Romania in December 1989. In 1992, he was elected president but lost office in 1996 to the more liberal Emil Constantinescu. In 1996, the Romanians voted to relinquish their ties to communism and to progress towards democracy. Iliescu was seen to epitomise the "old regime", and the election of Constantinescu symbolised the dramatic change that Romanians were looking for. In the November 2000 elections, Romanians have once again shown a desire for change: the only difference being their willingness to return to the old style of governance, because many feel they were "better off under Communism."² Thus, the Romanian electorate appears to have forgotten that Iliescu is the man who is largely responsible for the slow, sporadic economic and political development of the early 1990s. As a result, Iliescu could be considered to some degree responsible for the current state of Romania and the poverty that many Romanians now face. However, it seems the Romanians are now happy to have as president the man who, during the past 10 years, has allegedly been linked to a series of scandals revealing the extent of corruption within the country. It also seems that the man who summoned miners to Bucharest in 1991 to rampage through the streets and violently break up student protests has been forgiven.

Nevertheless, his opponent in the runoff presidential contest was far from better. Corneliu Vadim Tudor is an extreme nationalist and a former court poet of the Ceausescus. However, throughout the 2000 election campaign, he played a very clever game. He renounced his 1998 slogan: "This country could only be governed through the mouth of a machine gun" and campaigned on exactly what the electorate wanted to hear, using in the process people's distress to his own advantage. And indeed, it was his fierce anti-corruption rhetoric that paved Tudor's party's way to becoming the second largest parliamentary force in a country where the average monthly pay is less than \$100 and corruption and cronyism are widespread.³

Based on his populist-nationalist agenda, Tudor's electoral success left the other parties represented in the legislature in a dilemma. Should the National Liberal Party (PNL), the Democratic Party (PD), and the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR) opt for an outright opposition to the PDSR minority government, they could risk pushing the PDSR back into the arms of the PRM and other Romanian radical formations, where it had rested from 1992 to 1996. Should they, on the other hand, collaborate with the PDSR, they could risk losing their identity and, furthermore, giving the PRM the advantage of running in 2004 as the only "genuine opposition" formation. This in itself would be an invitation to harvest even more protest votes in 2004 than in 2000. The PDSR, in turn, can afford neither to stall on reforms nor renounce its electoral promise to take steps to alleviate

widespread social problems. It is not unlikely that either of those two developments would cause a split in the PDSR between those pushing for reforms and for measures likely to promote EU integration, on the one hand, and those opposing such measures. A split between those considered close to the PRM on minorities' issues and those less nationalistic is also quite likely. Adrian Nastase's new government will probably opt for the reform alternative. But where will Iliescu be, and more importantly, has he learned the lessons of his previous failures? The answers to these questions are crucial since they might reveal whether in 2004 the PRM and extreme-nationalism in Romania will be able to ride an unstoppable protest wave triggered by continued stagnation or whether its simplistic demagoguery will by then have lost its appeal.

Nevertheless, the outcome of the 10 December presidential runoff has generally been met with a sigh of relief. Ironically, Iliescu's victory was secured with the help of many of those who until recently had denounced everything the PDSR candidate stood for: his communist past, his record as Romania's first post-communist head of state, and even his right to contest the presidential election for what they claimed was his third (unconstitutional) mandate. The explanation, as one journalist put it, is simple: the electorate has chosen "the lesser of two evils".⁴ With Iliescu and the PDSR in government, the party's reliance on the centrist PNL, PD and the UDMR should be enough to secure some form of ongoing programme dedicated to EU and NATO integration and the responsibilities of that process. But there is no doubt that Romania's position in terms of NATO and EU accession has been damaged by the large percentage of votes for the PRM and CV Tudor. Indeed, the sudden realisation that a new pariah of Europe may be just around the corner, that the far-right's surge in Romania was endangering both this country's prospects for NATO and EU integration and more importantly, security in the Balkans and in Europe as a whole, has determined western chancelleries to start reviewing their future strategy towards Romania.

And those worries are not without foundation, as large-scale absenteeism in the November 2000 election reflecting disenchantment with politics in general has increased, despite appeals by virtually the entire non-PRM spectrum to "stop extremism" by voting for Iliescu. But disenchantment with political alternatives also means disenchantment with democracy, and it is precisely this attitude on which the dark side of radical politics and "anti-system" parties are built. Romania's radical politics have not been able to succeed to power in 2000 but what is going to happen in 2004, when the only remaining opposition in Romania, the radical extreme right and extreme left, could benefit from further economic disarray and political instability? In order to assess the present situation of radical politics this study will try to present a global picture of Romania's extreme-nationalism, both right and left, within the context and logic of inter-war legionnaire and fascist movements, the communist-nationalist inheritance and post-communist experience. The study will also try to find the reasons behind Romania's nationalistic politics by emphasising the population's fear of the future, heightened political insecurity and extreme differences in wealth and opportunity, which combined with the highest unemployment rate since the 1930s have created fertile breeding grounds for a new strain of populist extreme nationalism.

Romania's Post-Communist Radical Politics

As in other European countries, Romania's radical leaders share their own very particular vision of a New Europe based on racial exclusivity rather than democratic citizenship and equal rights for all inhabitants. In the last ten years, for the first time since the 1930s Iron Guard and fascist movements in Romania, radical extreme-nationalism is again making its mark, not just through violence, but through the ballot box as well. This situation came about as a result of two main factors. Firstly, the inheritance of Romania's inter-war radical politics and of Ceausescu's communist-nationalist policy made possible a post-communist revival of extreme nationalism in the context of the country's transition to democracy characterised by political instability and economic disarray. Black money connected with Ceausescu's political police, the Securitate, helped to create the post-communist nationalistic movements and parties while electoral success has provided the extreme left and right with public funding and a public platform. Secondly, the parties of the traditional centre-right, including PNTCD during its 1996-2000 mandate, have attempted to regain popular ground by taking on the mantle of xenophobic intolerance against Roma and ethnic Hungarians and in the process they have swiftly moved to the outskirts of respectable political debate.

According to Michael Shafir, an expert on radical nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe, the scholarly literature on post-communist political formations has suffered from a very important deficiency. It has either dealt with the "extreme left" or with the "extreme right" of the political spectrum but never with both of them jointly. Indeed, although the applicability of the Left-Right convergency in post-communist states has been accepted by most scholars, continuity was implicitly re-introduced via the back door by dwelling on either "successor parties" or on parties that were alternatively labelled "right wing", "far right", "extreme right" or "radical right". There is no doubt that the legacy of national communism has heavily determined the choice of the post-communist political elite belonging to the successor parties when they were faced with having to opt between the "civic" and the "ethnic" alternatives. In Romania, radical politics are, by and large, either a matter of continuity from national communism, or opting for the non-communist and anticommunist values of the interwar period's opponents to democracy. That is why, as Michael Shafir put it, "one has to make a distinction between the "traditional," conservative ("Blue") right and the "revolutionary" right, regardless of whether the latter is to be traced back to the radical continuity of national communism or to the anti-democratic legacy of the more remote past of radical return".⁵

By applying this view to Romania's post-communist situation, it is clear that following the removal of Ceausescu from power in December 1989, the Romanians elected in their first legislature in 1990 only one radical communist continuity party, the newly created Party of Romanian National Unity (PUNR). By the time of the 1992 general election, the radical movement in Romania was in a process of re-organisation and another political party, the Greater Romania Party, also representing radical communist continuity, joined PUNR in the 1992 parliament. As a result, by the end of 1992 the newly created ex-communist nationalist formations promoting anti-Semitic, anti-Gypsy and anti-Hungarian feelings had fourteen seats in the Senate and thirty seats in the House of Deputies. Bearing in mind the question of Transylvania, it is no surprise that the PUNR nationalist leader and Mayor of Cluj, Gheorghe Funar, has publicly advocated, since his party's inception, institutionalised mass rape of Hungarian women. Other Romanian leaders have also played on anti-Hungarian sentiment, confirming the view that it is

increasingly difficult to confine the borders of right-wing extremism anywhere in contemporary Europe.⁶

Meanwhile, many Romanians have also had difficulty in coming to terms with their fascist past, seeing the pre-communist era as if it was a much brighter period that it really was. Old members of the Iron Guard and many neo-fascist sympathisers found a fertile soil in developing a post-communist radical return. They even managed to determine the National Assembly to observe on 1 June 1991 a minute's silence on the 50th anniversary of the execution of Marshal Ion Antonescu, the country's fascist military dictator during the early 1940s. But irrespective of their radical left or radical right tendencies, all these formations supported Ion Iliescu's regime within the so-called "red-quadruple coalition" until 1995 when, following sustained criticism from western countries, President Iliescu renounced, at least officially, his PDSR party's parliamentary cooperation with the nationalists. However, during the Constantinescu administration, in the context of political immobilism and increased popular grievance, the radical politicians in Romania succeeded in extending their popular base and the result was the astonishing success of extreme nationalism in the November 2000 general elections.

Radical Return and the Revival of Interwar Politics in Romania

The Party of National Right (PDN)

In scrutinising the "radical return" formations in Romania's post-communist political life it should be pointed out at the very beginning that this trend was less popular: only one such party was represented in parliament in 1995, and that representation was very brief. The Party of National Right (PDN) did not sit in the legislature via electoral choice. It was connected with Cornel Brahas, a former vice chairman of the extreme-nationalist and radical communist continuity PUNR. Brahas was expelled from the PUNR after embezzling funds from the Bucharest branch that he headed, and joined the PDN in 1995. The ideology of the National Right, as well as of the other radical return formations, is based on the concept of "ethnocentrism", considered to be the contribution of Nichifor Crainic, a Romanian right-wing poet, university lecturer and popular pundit, to interwar fascist philosophy. In the "ethnocratic state" that Crainic envisaged, national minorities had practically no rights: this concept came into being in the post-communist period in the former Federal Yugoslavia, where "expansionist-militaristic policies and demagogic nationalism were used to preserve the political hegemony of the communist elite around [Yugoslav President] Slobodan Milosevic".⁷

At the beginning of 1993, Radu Sorescu, the then leader of the by now defunct Party of National Right, resuscitated the ethnocratic state as a central component of PDN's "Manifesto" to Romanians which was published in April 1993, in the first issue of *Noua Dreapta* (The New Right). The manifesto stated that the PDN promoted a state that "excludes [national] minorities from its midst as long as they refuse to be assimilated into the Romanian nation." The ethnocratic state, it further specified, rejects democracy, for democracy is based on individual rights "regardless of race and religion." The foundations of the ethnocratic state, on the other hand, rest on "the will of the Romanian nation." Public office is, therefore, to be the preserve of "genuine Romanians" alone. Members of national minorities who proved to be "disloyal" to the ethnocratic state would be deported. The manifesto went on to state that mankind can only fulfil itself "within the framework of the state" and that, consequently, "human rights" were but a fiction "of the cowardly and the weak." A special sub-chapter in the manifesto dealt with the problems of national minorities. Roma were said to be "at war with the Romanian nation" and the

manifesto proposed to set up "reservations for their isolation" as a "last solution." Hungarians were deemed to be "cruel, vengeful and irredentist" and "if one million Hungarians refuse to abide by the new order, one million Hungarians must be expelled." The same fate applies to all "immigrants" who had come to Romania (particularly from the Middle East) after the overthrow of the former regime and who were said to be running "organised crime" in the country. Regarding foreign policy, the party "does not recognise the legitimacy of European forums" (ie the European Union and NATO) set up during the Cold War because they promote an "international world order" that does not "take into consideration the will of nations." Instead, the PDN advocated a Romanian "military and economic orientation towards Germany and Japan." In other words, what was envisaged was a revival of the Second World War Axis, minus Rome.⁸

Unlike the Roma and the Hungarians, Jews were not specifically mentioned in the manifesto. But the PDN's attitude towards them could be derived from the manifesto's description of the "offensive of Romanianism," where it was stated that "the Romanians' Latin national spirit was incompatible with Judeo-Masonic mercantilism." The latter was said to be the foundation of democracy, which transformed nations into "slaves of big international finance". Negative reactions to the PDN's manifesto were labelled as tantamount to "selling out" to the "Judeo-Masonic occult" and critics attacking the PDN philosophy were defined as "notorious mercenaries, who take salaries straight from the synagogue's cashier".⁹

The editorial in the April 1993 issue of *Noua Dreapta* was signed by PDN chairman Radu Sorescu, who wished to assure his readers that "... we are not what we seem to be," that is, legionnaires or fascists. But the issue's front page carried an article written in 1937 by Iron Guard politician Alexandru Cantacuzino, the title of which (reproduced on the cover) read "Pull out your guns, you lazy bums." Like other legionnaires of the time, Cantacuzino was calling on his fellow-Romanians to take up arms and impose their will on history. Whether by accident or not, *Noua Dreapta* announced (in the same issue) the setting up of a paramilitary organisation called "The Civic Guards." The front page article was accompanied by a photo showing the Iron Guards' leader Corneliu Codreanu decorating Cantacuzino who, as an introduction to his article, said: "violence was necessary for the purification of the nation."¹⁰

Furthermore, the PDN's statutes, which were leaked to the press and published in a Bucharest daily, clearly adopted the organisational structure of the Legionary Movement (as the Iron Guard was also called). PDN members had to take an oath in which "democratic chaos" was rejected while placing the interests of the "movement" above their own interests. Once taken, the oath would turn them into "brothers" (just as those aspiring to join the Legionary Movement had been "Cross Brothers"). The statutes further stated that "the PDN's 10 commandments were inspired by the six commandments of the Legionary Movement" and that members must salute each other with a raised arm "identical with the Legionary salute." Like the legionnaires, they called one another "camarad" and the official uniform was identical with that of the legion: green shirts with leather shoulder-straps and black trousers.¹¹

The leader of the PDN, the Commander (the title of Codreanu's successor, Horia Sima) headed a six-member Grand Council, which Brahas joined in 1995 after his defection from the PUNR. As an official bulletin of the PDN indicated in 1995, Brahas was put in charge of reorganising the movement, which had apparently suffered from Sorescu's sudden decision in 1994 to retire from politics. More

importantly perhaps, Brahas, a businessman, had apparently pumped funds into the PDN's coffers, as the party braced itself for the 1996 elections. Ironically enough, this is precisely what put an end to Brahas' membership of the PDN and hence to that party's presence in parliament, for in January 1996 he was again accused of having embezzled party funds and, therefore, parted ways with this formation.¹²

After Brahas' departure, the PDN was unable to contest the November 1996 general elections. A new law on political parties passed by parliament earlier in the year increased the number of supporting signatures necessary for a party to be legally registered from 251 to 10,000. The PDN was not among the 43 political formations that had managed to register by September 1996.¹³ Meanwhile, Brahas set up in 1997 his own rival formation called the Romanian Right (DR). Not long after, Brahas announced his intention to re-establish - possibly together with Funar - the "Maniu Guards," which had terrorised the Hungarian minority after World War II, seeking revenge for the suffering of northern Transylvania's Romanian population during the region's occupation by Horthy. Brahas also demanded the abolition of Harghita and Covasna counties, whose majority population is Magyar, a declaration that the two counties, were a "zone of exclusive Romanian language," and the expulsion of ethnic Hungarian UDMR activists from Romania.¹⁴

The Romanian Right Party (DR)

The Romanian Right Party, created by Brahas in 1997, defined itself in negative, rather than positive, terms as it claimed to be "anticommunist" and "anti-cosmopolitan." It also displayed irredentism, distinguishing between what was called Romania's "political" and its "historic" territory. The former were the country's present borders; the latter included "a foreign state on the territory of a historic Romanian province, whose name is Bessarabia." In other words, the right to the independent existence of what is now the Moldovan Republic was questioned, as a long-term programmatic objective of the party. As for the "political territory," this was deemed to be the "super-property of the Romanian nation" on which no "colonisation" was permissible. The "colonists" were, according to the DR's programme, those national minorities that had settled in the country in the course of its history. They were to be allowed ownership of "part of the super-property" only "to the extent that they prove loyalty towards the Romanian nation and its national state." That state must be "authoritarian." Only an authoritarian state is able to "rapidly settle" through dictatorship problems posed by "any forms of parasite and subversive minority - be that minority ethnic, political, sexual, religious or economic." Yet, at the same time, the envisaged dictatorship was said to reflect "the reign of the law and the political will of the majority." In foreign policy, the DR advocated "non-alignment" and the "pursuit of the country's own national interest". The reasons behind this kind of policy are obvious: membership of NATO or the EU as pursued by post-communist governments entails not only the renunciation of a portion of national sovereignty but also, and particularly, a pledge to respect human rights, perceived by the DR to be an "artefact" aimed at imposing the will of the mighty.¹⁵

The Prosecutor-General's office raised objections to the party's registration, on the grounds that it endangered public security. The Bucharest Municipal Tribunal refused to register the DR, but not because of the objections raised by the Prosecutor-General. Rather, it found that some articles in its statutes contradicted other articles. A first appeal against the ruling was rejected by a Bucharest court, but after Brahas submitted amended statutes, the party was registered in July 1997.¹⁶ The DR soon began attacking the Hungarian and Romany minorities,

describing them as "voracious and impertinent," "pseudo-Europeans" and "disloyal" to the "Romanian nation". Like many other radical return formations, the DR had what the Romanian-born American Professor V Tismaneanu calls a "phallocratic vision of the good society".¹⁷ No sooner was the party launched that it began speaking up against the "impotence" of the government and the parliament to deal "properly" with national minorities. When in November 1997 the owner of a nightclub in the Transylvanian town of Salonta segregated his premises against "niggers, Gypsies, and Arabs," Brahas applauded the initiative, expressing hope that others would follow in accusing foreigners of having "far too often profited from the legendary Romanian hospitality".¹⁸

In December 1997, the DR "enriched" itself with a formidable new acquisition: Ion Coja. Coja became DR "National Leader" and head of the party's "Authoritative Nucleus", though Brahas remained party chairman.¹⁹ Coja came to the DR from another nationalist formation, the Democratic Agrarian Party of Romania (PDAR), where he did not manage to receive the necessary backing to become this formation's presidential candidate in the 1996 elections. For Coja, the deputy chairman of the ultranationalist "Vatra Romaneasca" organisation, political migration had by then become second nature. He had started his political career in the Communist Party, which he joined in 1969, and is on the record as having stated that he does not regret having joined the communists. That did not stop Coja from eventually forging a "dissident past" for himself.²⁰

According to information provided by fellow ultranationalist Dan Zamfirescu, Coja was a former Securitate informer.²¹ Nevertheless, Coja was at the same time under the surveillance of the Securitate, being, among other things, suspected of contacts with old members of the Iron Guard. He would eventually proudly acknowledge those contacts and the influence those veterans had on forging his political outlook.²² Rather than being an exposé of the devious former secret police, the publication of the "White Book of Securitate" in September 1996 was masterminded by Romanian Intelligence Service chief Virgil Magureanu in an attempt to blur differences between dissent and collaboration among Romania's intellectuals, and it largely succeeded in doing so. That is where Coja emerged as a "victim" of persecution.²³

However, by 1994 Coja had become the driving force behind a PDAR-PUNR alliance called the Bloc of National Unity (BUN = good), which was enlarged in 1995 to include the Romanian Ecologist Movement (MER). The "ecology" promoted by the MER was demonstrated in November 1995, when its weekly, *Baricada*, accused Jews of ritual murder.²⁴ Having failed in his 1996 bid for the PDAR chairmanship and for its presidential candidacy, Coja then rejoined the PUNR and unsuccessfully ran for a Senate seat in the parliamentary elections held late that year. After he became the DR National Leader at the end of 1997, Coja strenuously continued in his attempts to cluster ultranationalism in one unified formation. He managed to recruit to the party some former members of the Action Committee for the Democratisation of the Army - a group of officers seen by some Western analysts as forerunners of Romania's military democratisation and forcefully disbanded by the Defence Ministry in 1991.²⁵ In 1998 he became the leader of the Electoral Nationalist Bloc (BEN) and acted to include in this electoral coalition former Moldovan Premier Mircea Druc's Party of National Re-Unification, which campaigns mainly for Moldova's reunification with Romania, as well as some former members of the Iron Guard.

One of the more exotic new recruits to the DR was Jean Maurer, son of Ceausescu's long-time Premier Ion Gheorghe Maurer (who died in 2000, aged 97). The "young" Maurer (he was 48 when he joined the party in 1998), a close friend of presidential son and heir-apparent Nicu Ceausescu, had left Romania in February 1989, settling down in Germany. After unsuccessfully trying to go into business, he returned to Romania in 1997 and joined the DR upon his father's advice - or so he claimed.²⁶ But the most spectacular recruitment to the DR was former Prime Minister Radu Vasile, and in the process, Brahas once again managed to split a radical formation, this time his own party. Radu Vasile was "revoked" from office by President Constantinescu on 13 December 1999 and expelled from the PNTCD on 27 December. A few days later, ten of his supporters in the party leadership left the PNTCD.²⁷ The Vasile-supporting faction in the party had been contemplating for some time forming a Popular Party, one that obviously derived its name from the parliamentary group in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe that represents Christian Democratic formations. But with elections approaching, and with a minimum 10,000 membership needed for party registration, time seemed to be running out. It was at this point that Brahas stepped in. He offered the Vasile supporters membership in the DR and Vasile the party chairmanship, hand-in-hand with changing the enlarged formation's name to Romanian Popular Right Party (PPDR). The DR stood to gain parliamentary representation once more (and a large one too) without electoral endorsement, while Vasile hoped thus to circumvent legal procedures for party registration.²⁸

A hastily organised DR National Conference on 3 February 2000 in Brasov approved the merger of the two formations, elected Vasile as chairman of the PPDR, and his number one supporter Sorin Lepsa as party secretary-general and executive chairman, with Brahas becoming one of the PPDR's 10 deputy chairmen. Strangely enough, Coja's name figured nowhere in the media reports on the conference. In a display of appalling frankness, Vasile said he had accepted Brahas' offer because "it was the best choice for us." He claimed to have been unaware of the fact that the DR had the reputation of being an extremist party, indeed to have "heard close to nothing" about it before receiving the offer. The claim was hardly credible, but if true, would have been reason enough to justify Vasile's dismissal as premier. If he had been informed of the DR's reputation, Vasile said, he would not have "opted for it." But in retrospect, he added, the merger would serve to "eliminate the possibility of the emergence of an extreme-right party on Romania's political scene," since the PPDR would certainly not pursue that road. In turn, Brahas seemed willing to play the game: "Even if we were an extremist force," he said, "we are now tamed" by the merger.²⁹ Who was transforming whom, however, was an open question. Indeed, delivering his "maiden speech" as PPDR chairman, Vasile emphasised "the central role of the nation and the Church, as well as the need for authoritarianism and the rejection of multiculturalism" as the basic principles of the new formation.³⁰

The deal worked out by Vasile and Brahas turned out to be judicially less than perfect. The party applied for registration on 9 February 2000, but a group of the original members of the DR's Authoritative Nucleus appealed against the registration of the PPDR before the Bucharest Municipal Tribunal. On 10 March, the tribunal accepted the objections raised by the group and denied registration. The PPDR, however, successfully appealed and the party was registered in April 2000.³¹ The party ran in the 2000 local elections, but its performance was rather meagre. It elected nine mayors out of 2,954 and obtained 0.37% countrywide in the elections for local councillors and 0.72% in the county local ballot.³² Following these disappointing results, the PPDR did not run in the November 2000 parliamentary elections. Vasile did, but not on that party's lists. He was elected a

senator on the lists of the Democratic Party, headed by Petre Roman.³³ This seemingly unimportant detail speaks a lot about "party consolidation" in post-communist Romania, as indeed it does about political morale. Radu Vasile, considered to be one of the most important leaders of PNTCD, a party allegedly democratic and pro-Western, joined a pro-fascist formation, only to end up one year later as a senator representing the Democratic Party. And, no less important, that latter party proved ready to accept into its ranks a politician like Vasile. Yet the Romanian political elite persists in emphasising the positive trend in the democratic process when analysing the evolution of the political carnival.

As for Coja, he can be counted on soon to re-emerge and renew efforts for the unification of the nationalist spectrum. His record speaks for itself. While still a senator representing the PDAR, he tried to bring about the formation of an electoral alliance between the PDN (then still led by Sorescu) and Marian Munteanu's pro-Iron Guard Movement for Romania (MPR). He used to be a regular contributor to Sorescu's *Noua Dreapta*, and to the MPR's *Miscarea*. The PDAR was largely perceived as belonging to the left side of the political spectrum, whereas the PDN and the MPR were on the extreme right. But Coja is a personal embodiment of the communist-nationalist alliance. Like CV Tudor, he openly acknowledged to be "neither left, nor right," being rather "nationalist." But unlike Tudor, Coja has also used nuances in presenting things slightly differently: as he explained when he joined the Romanian Right Party, he is "sometimes left, sometimes right" while "striving to be a nationalist".³⁴

Yet there is very little of the "left" in Coja's outlook and a lot of the "right." In the very first issue of *Noua Dreapta*, Coja explained to readers that "the right is God's," since one made the sign of the cross with that hand, not with the left one. The right hand, he wrote, is called *dexter* in Latin, from where comes the word "dexterity." The left hand, on the other hand, is called *sinistra*, and the left is indeed linked to whatever is sinister in this world. Among the "sinister" things, he counted the concept of human rights, which, he wrote, despite the etymological links to the "right" has very little to do with its perceptions of the proper order of things. According to Coja, while "the left" is "obsessed" by promoting individual rights, "the right" is mainly preoccupied by the individual's "obligations" towards the community. Individual rights, Coja went on to elaborate, cannot have priority over such innate rights as the survival of one's nation and "species." The "left" is opposing inequality, but "there is something more sinister than inequality, and that is equality." People are not born equal and to oppose that is to oppose nature itself. "We are unequal because we are different, and thus duty-bound to fulfil that which is given to us and us alone." No one, Coja wrote, "can jump over his own shadow." And "jumping over one's shadow" is precisely what the left is always attempting to do. The performance leads to a "lack of authenticity and organicism," the virtues that are "supreme" in the eyes of the right. Throughout history, the left has created "a plethora of forms without content." None of those forms is shallower than democracy, a system that allows the crowd to dictate through the universal ballot and that sent Socrates and Jesus Christ to death by "majority-decision".³⁵

From an "organic" view of history that places communitarian values, rather than individualism, at its centre - Coja uses for "nation" the term *neam*, which is close to the *voelkisch* perception of nation as a community of blood and soil linking past, present, and future generations - to an attempt to resuscitate the doctrines of the Iron Guard that best embodied these values the step is short, though not necessarily unavoidable. Coja did not hesitate to make it, as he would not hesitate to exonerate Codreanu's movement from its crimes against Jews, and the

Romanians from any responsibility for the Holocaust. Coja has become a chief Holocaust denier: "Our Legionnaires," a book he published in 1997, includes many (though not all) of his efforts in this direction. Indeed, Coja was preoccupied with turning Codreanu's famous "Booklet for the Nest-Chief" (*Carticica sefului de cuib*) into the basic doctrine of Romania's political revival, including the (false) claim that the Iron Guard had been exonerated of any guilt for "war crimes" at the Nürnberg trials, and the denial that the Iron Guard had ever been involved in pogroms.³⁶

The Movement for Romania (MPR)

But the most important exponent of neo-fascist radical return in post-communist Romania is considered to be the group of people concentrated around the Movement for Romania. Launched in March 1992, the denomination of the MPR's publication *Miscarea* ("The Movement") indicated where this formation placed itself on the political spectrum. "The Movement" is how the Legion of the Archangel Michael, or the Iron Guard, was generally referred to in the interwar period. This was no accident, for "movement," in the best fascist tradition, signified more than just a "party."³⁷

The leader of the MPR, Marian Munteanu, had been the chairman of the Romanian Students' League in early 1990 and very active in the "marathon protest" held in Bucharest's University Square against the National Salvation Front (FSN) and "neo-communism" between April and June that year. He was badly beaten by the miners who descended on Bucharest at President Ion Iliescu's call in June 1990. His cause was then taken up by Romania's centre-right, by independent protest movements and by Western associations, which considered him a hero and a martyr. The MPR became the first radical return formation to wholly embrace the Legion's model, preceding Sorescu's PDN by nearly two years. The MPR was set up by Munteanu in late 1991, being officially registered with the Bucharest Municipal Tribunal on 23 December that year. Like Ion Coja, Munteanu had been influenced by several former members or sympathisers of the Iron Guard whom he met in the late 1980s. Defined as National Democracy, the MPR's ideology was said to be "thoroughly based on solid metaphysical grounds." The instrument through which this doctrine would be implemented was said to be the "New Generation" which was "duty-bound to assume responsibility for political action." The "solid metaphysical ground" mentioned by the programme turned out to be the revival of the same "organic" view of history, with its emphasis on communitarian values, that Coja would later also emphasise, and of that brand of religious fundamentalism that had been the hallmark of the Iron Guard among fascist movements. The Romanian nation, the programme stated, was linked by generation bonds to its past and to its future. The past was best represented by the communitarian values of the village, which had survived history's idiosyncrasies and represented "classic Romanian civilisation." Past and future generations were linked by a "spiritual unity" represented by their "Christian [Orthodox] faith", "linguistic unity;" the "uninterrupted presence in a distinct geographical space", by a common "social organisation - the village community", and by a "harmonious, unitary and stable set of traditions, based on cultural, judicial, artistic, economic and political values".³⁸

"Romanianism" was also included in the ideological package that the MPR promoted. The concept was a central one in interwar radical right ideology. It is around the belief in "Romanianism" that the "New Generation" must, among other things, forge its identity, according to the MPR's party programme. But the "New Generation" itself is a rather problematic term, again bringing up associations with the interwar radical right. One should bear in mind that, like all fascist movements, the Legionnaires exalted youth and saw themselves as a movement of

and for the young, who would, they believed, do away with the corruption characterising the democratic system. Viewed from this perspective, the programme's attack on "politicking" and its call on the young generation to restore "purity" resembled, "both the legionnaires' disdain for the democratic system, which they viewed as being inherently corrupt and corruptive, and their religious terminology."³⁹

The programme's main ideas, as well as some of Munteanu's assessments on the matter, were striking in their clear endeavour to reproduce the organisational structure of the "movement". Any lingering doubts, however, were dispelled in early 1993, when the MPR monthly published an "open letter" addressed by Munteanu to the former members of the Legion. Different times, the MPR leader wrote, call for different strategies. The "content" of the belief-system may remain unchanged, he wrote, but its "forms" have to be adapted to the changing spirit of the times. And the "content" of the MPR ideology shared the same "metaphysical foundations" with "all other Romanian national movements." The MPR was not one and the same with the Legion but, as Munteanu put it, "we are streams in one and the same river".⁴⁰ He was personally "honoured" to be considered Codreanu's heir, Munteanu told an audience of young people and former Iron Guards later in 1993, but had to decline the merit because his organisation was attached to the values of democracy. Yet at another similar gathering, Munteanu emphasised that in his eyes democracy was "a means, rather than an aim in itself" for his party.⁴¹

Perhaps no other leader of an "anti-system" party in post-communist Eastern Europe was so frank in admitting what his formation was vis-à-vis the "system" by whose rules it claimed to abide. That adherence to the democratic system was indeed more a matter of "form" rather than one of "content" and was perhaps best illustrated by a letter addressed to the weekly *22*, which had taken a critical position towards the MPR and its leader. "We, young MPR members," wrote a 20-year-old student, "bow our heads before the sufferings of the legionary martyrs," for "the legionary spirit is identical with the Romanian spirit." MPR leaders were ready to "follow Marian Munteanu to our death, for our trust in him is unlimited." A time will come when "we shall be ready to take over power." And the editors of *22* had better pray for that time not to come too soon, for "we shall do justice and shall not forget you, just as we shall not forget the communists." And the letter concluded, "whoever is not with us, is against us".⁴² The letter was not simply the reaction of an overzealous rank-and-file MPR member. According to an non-attributed article in *Miscarea*, most probably written by the movement's chief ideologist Ilie Badescu, political extremism is in the eyes of the beholder. "If historic necessities demand replacing democracy with military authoritarianism ... one should not consider this extremism, and in this sense Antonescu was no extremist."⁴³ So much for the MPR's attachment to "democratic values".

The MPR's organisational structure indeed strongly resembled that of the legionnaires' "nests." At grassroots level, there were the "polycentric organisations," made up of three to 15 members. According to the party's statutes, the leaders of these organisations were not elected; rather, in what resembles the *Fuehrerprinzip*, they were supposed to be a sort of "organic" outgrowth of the group and to achieve leadership through "consensus." Anyone seeking membership had to pass examinations testing, among other things, the candidate's adherence to the values of "Romanianism." As with the "nests", candidates had to demonstrate that they were "morally worthy" of being accepted; that they were prepared to live in "austerity and modesty"; and that, once admitted, they would "resist any pressure" to violate the party's statutes.⁴⁴

Like the legionnaires, the MPR had a "Senate" made up of members of the older generation who distinguished themselves in the struggle for national ideals and who were supposed to "guide" the movement. Likewise, the MPR had a "Veterans Corps", of "anticommunist fighters, former political prisoners, people who dedicated their entire lives to the national struggle" - a euphemism for the old Iron Guard members.⁴⁵ The MPR Senate was headed for some time by Professor Badescu, a sociologist who is one of the founding fathers of the school of "protochronism", and on which the Ceausescu regime based much of its nationalist appeal.⁴⁶ In an article (said to represent "integrally" the views of the MPR), Badescu advocated in 1992 a fascist-style restructuring of Romanian society along "corporate" lines, headed by a "chief of state" who would stand above all social cleavages and in whose description (one who has "put on the eremitic garment of eternal Romanianism") one could hardly fail to recognise a joint Munteanu-Codreanu portrait.⁴⁷

While similar dissemination in the media of radical communist continuity parties abounded at the beginning of the 1990s, there was a clear line distancing the MPR as a radical return formation from radical continuity. Indeed, the MPR denied any merit to "national communism" and Munteanu was unwilling to pay any tribute to Ceausescu's nationalist policies for two main reasons. First, in his eyes, genuine nationalism could in no way be associated with communism, since the latter was by definition an internationalist doctrine disregarding national specificity. Ceausescu's nationalism, therefore, was considered to have been merely a "fake" nationalism, and, according to Munteanu, one cannot be a Romanian and a communist at the same time. Here he had parted ways not only with Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Gheorghe Funar, but also with Coja. To clarify his standing: Munteanu is on record as having advocated in 1994 (just as the PRM did earlier) that the militarisation of the economy was the only solution to Romania's problems.⁴⁸ Second, a genuine Romanian nationalist doctrine had to incorporate the Orthodox religious element, for the two are indivisible. What Romania needed, Munteanu stated in December 1991, was a "genuine right", one that left no room "for ambiguity".⁴⁹

Thus, the line between radical return right and radical communist continuity, as well as that between radical right and "traditional", "blue" right, seemed to be clearly drawn by MPR representatives. Yet, once again, things are rather more complicated than this. Munteanu and the chief exponents of radical continuity, above all CV Tudor, share not only a common interpretation of Romania's history (above all of Antonescu and the Holocaust) and ways to deal with Romania's present, but also a common past of service on behalf of the Securitate. As in Coja's case, it was fellow ultranationalist Dan Zamfirescu who made public Munteanu's links with Ceausescu's political police. Some two years before Ceausescu's overthrow, Zamfirescu said in a 1993 interview, he had proposed to Munteanu that they mutually tell one another what rank they had in the Securitate. Two weeks before the regime fell, again according to Zamfirescu, Munteanu complained to him that he was persecuted by members of the Securitate who "did not know I was one of theirs". If the need ever arose, Zamfirescu said, Munteanu's Securitate file might be leaked to the media in order to blackmail him.⁵⁰ This is precisely what happened in 1999, when the tabloid *Atac la Persoana*, whose links with the "old guard of Securitate forces" and PRM cannot be doubted, printed on its front page Munteanu's September 1988 hand-written pledge to act as a paid Securitate informer.⁵¹ The explanation of this belated leak is quite obvious when one bears in mind some indications that Munteanu, no longer the leader of a party, was drawing closer to the Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR) and was also wooed by a

rival formation (the Liberal Democratic Party) of the PRM and of the post-1989 Securitate web.

According to many analysts, Romania's secret services (officially and unofficially) are known to never forgive "traitors". Sharing an extreme-nationalist outlook with the former communist secret police might explain both Munteanu's (indeed Zamfirescu's, Coja's and Tudor's, to mention but a few) past collaboration with a service perceived by them as being "patriotic", and the service's own post-1989 silence on the MPR leadership. That silence had lasted as long as Munteanu had expressed his "just" ultranationalism. As in the case of the Securitate's links with exiled members of the Iron Guard, the "patriotic" community of values had been stronger than the divisions along communist-noncommunist lines. Once Munteanu appeared to draw closer to other more liberal parties, he had become a "traitor" to "the cause", because the PNTCD and the PNL, though not lacking their own nationalist skeletons in their closets, were basically viewed by the old Securitate guard as "cosmopolitan" servants of Western interests. Hence the leak to *Atac la Persoana*.⁵²

It is true that scepticism should be the order of the day concerning anything Zamfirescu said or wrote. Yet one did not have to await the tabloid leak to realise that the same community of values had made it possible for other former servants of "national-communism" and its intelligence structures to find a post-communist niche in the MPR. From an obituary published in June 1994, it became apparent that General Dumitru I Dumitru, a former chief of intelligence in the army's General Staff, had been a member of the MPR's Senate.⁵³ He was almost certainly not the only one. A likely candidate is chief ideologue Badescu, who has a long record of service "for the cause", as Ceausescu would have put it. The MPR, to be sure, denied that Badescu had ever served the Securitate, but competitors on the far right of the political spectrum were persuaded otherwise.⁵⁴

However, regarding MPR's impact on the Romanian electorate, the results of this formation, as well as of the Party of National Right (PD), in the 1992 parliamentary ballot and in the 1996 local elections were far from what their leaders had hoped for. In 1992, Marian Munteanu's movement obtained only 13,000 votes in the 1992 parliamentary ballot, whereas the PDN secured some 7,000 votes.⁵⁵ The poor 1992 results did not seem to particularly deter Munteanu, as he had repeatedly stated that his party's strategy was not one of immediate electoral success, but rather a "long-term strategy" aimed at slowly "educating" the youth and attracting it to its political outlook.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, this "strategy" was obviously failing to show any indication of eventual success. In the June 1996 local elections, MPR candidates barely scored 605 votes nationwide, representing 0.01% of the total vote in the first round of the elections and no vote whatsoever in the runoff. In the separate ballot held for seats on county councils, it received 963 votes nationwide, representing the same percentage, and thus failed to elect any local or county councillors. Meanwhile, the PDN obtained 114 votes in the first round nationwide and 192 votes in the runoff, but outdid the MPR in the ballot for seats on the county councils, receiving 1,369 votes nationwide (0.02%), and 135 total votes for all of its mayoral candidates. Like the PDN, the MPR was unable to gather the necessary 10,000 signatures for reregistering as a political party after the law was amended, and did not compete in the November 1996 parliamentary ballot.⁵⁷

It was probably his party's failure in the 1996 local elections that convinced Munteanu to give up his "long-term strategy" and to turn to business instead, becoming involved in arms trading. In July 1998, Munteanu was in the business

delegation that accompanied Premier Radu Vasile on a visit to Italy⁵⁸ and by September 1999 there were reports in the media that he was about to join the National Liberal Party (PNL), one of the two main formations of the CDR. Munteanu confirmed that contacts were underway with the PNL, emphasising that he was glad to have learned from its First Deputy Chairman, Justice Minister Valeriu Stoica, that the party was "preoccupied with granting an increased attention to the preservation of our national identity and the defence of our spiritual, not only materialistic values". In turn, Stoica said that the PNL "would be glad to have among its members Marian Munteanu, who is the carrier of an important political capital".⁵⁹

However, these arrangements did not materialise and Munteanu made a political comeback as the presidential candidate of the National Alliance in the November 2000 elections. The National Alliance (formed by former Romanian Intelligence Service chief Virgil Magureanu's Romanian National Party and the PUNR) was reputedly financed by circles involved in arms trading, and thus quite obviously linked with the former Securitate. At the same time, there was adversity between these circles and Magureanu, on one hand, and those Securitate circles linked to the PRM. As a result, only a few days before the contest Munteanu was forced to announce that he was withdrawing from the November 2000 presidential race and from the parliamentary lists of the Alliance. The reason invoked was the failure of his new political home to promote members of the "young generation" on its parliamentary lists. The Alliance co-chairman, Valeriu Tabara, however, revealed that by "young generation" Munteanu had in mind his old cronies from the MPR.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the National Alliance's very poor electoral performance (1.38% in the Chamber of Deputies ballot and 1.42% in the senatorial contest)⁶¹ makes it rather doubtful that Munteanu would have performed more honourably at its head. On the other hand, the surprising success of the PRM with young voters in the 2000 contest shows that Munteanu might have attracted at least part of the votes that were won by CV Tudor and his extremist formation.

For the Fatherland Party

Interestingly enough, since 1996 the MPR and the PDN had faced competition from a new radical return party, one that was no longer led by young people striving to emulate the Iron Guard, but by former members of the Iron Guard, reunited within the For the Fatherland Party (*Partidul pentru Tara*). This formation had been registered initially with the Bucharest Municipal Tribunal in June 1993 under the name Everything for the Country, which was the title of the Legionary movement's political arm between 1935 and 1938. Precisely for this reason, the request was turned down, and the party had to settle for a slightly changed denomination. Until his death in 1998, the party was led by Nistor Chioreanu, a former prominent member of the Iron Guard who, for some time after Codreanu's death, was considered to be third in the hierarchy of the movement.⁶²

For the Fatherland competed in the 1996 local and parliamentary elections but its electoral performance was not substantially more impressive than that of its younger competitors. It received a total of 93 votes in mayoral races in the first round of the local elections and 71 votes in the runoff - in other words 0%. But it did somewhat better in the race for local councillors, scoring a 2,527 total nationwide (0.03%) in the first leg and 119 votes (0.01%) in the runoff. In the competition for county councillors, it obtained 10,648 (0.13%) overall in the first round, and even managed to elect one councillor and 393 votes (0.18%) in the runoff.⁶³ Surprisingly, For the Fatherland had enough grassroots support to enable it to meet the newly instituted requirement for 10,000 registered members, and to run

in the November 1996 parliamentary elections as well. In this ballot, it obtained 21,295 votes (0.17%) in the contest for Senate seats and 17,841 votes (0.15%) in the Chamber of Deputies ballot.⁶⁴ Running again for the parliament in November 2000, this eminently radical return formation obtained 0.16 and 0.17 of the votes for the Chamber of Deputies and for the Senate respectively.⁶⁵ In the local elections held six months earlier in June 2000, it was unable to elect a mayor but obtained 3,877 votes nationwide for local councillors (0.05% of all votes cast) and 8,467 votes for county councillors (0.1%).⁶⁶

It is, however, important to point out that there were two clear distinctions between the MPR and For the Fatherland. First of all, the MPR was "Codrenist" in its position, and indeed Munteanu would often dress up, as Iron Guard leader Corneliu Zelea Codreanu used to do, in peasant costume and pose in "Captain"-like postures, as a Romanian author with unconcealed sympathies for Codreanu's movement described him.⁶⁷ Of course, that was possible because Munteanu was young while at the time of his party's foundation Chioreanu was 86 years old. He would eventually resign, staying on as "honorary chairman" until his death, but none of the other 13-member initiative committee that had set up the party was much younger. Secondly, unlike Munteanu, Chioreanu was a "Simist", though he was a controversial personality even among the supporters of Codreanu's successor, Horia Sima. Chioreanu had headed the Transylvanian Iron Guard regional organisation in 1940-1941 and followed Sima into German exile after the crushing of the Legionary rebellion against Antonescu in 1941. He was parachuted back into Romania in 1944 and while in the underground, Chioreanu headed the Guard's domestic command until 1948, when he was arrested and remained in prison until 1964. In his memoirs, Chioreanu attempted to whitewash the Guard of the crimes committed while under Sima's command, while at the same time criticising some of Codreanu's actions, which unavoidably brought on him the wrath of the Codreanu wing.⁶⁸

According to Chioreanu, For the Fatherland was set up on the direct orders of Horia Sima, at that time still alive in his Spanish exile. But the Simists suffered from divisions themselves, some of which can be traced back to their German exile. While they were interned (in quite comfortable conditions) in the Rostock concentration camp where they were held "in reserve" in case Marshal Antonescu deceived Hitler, Horia Sima, suspecting some of his followers were the Marshal's informers, had ordered their torture to force them to confess. Chioreanu was one of those who supervised the torture, but this was later denied by Sima's faithful. Those who were subjected to torture were later known among Sima's faithful as "Mexicans", a pejorative Simist equivalent to "deviationists". And despite the fact that Chioreanu had followed Sima's orders, he would eventually be criticised for having let the party fall under "Mexican" control by agreeing to leave Sima's name out of the official propaganda in an attempt to bridge differences between the "Codrenists" and the two "Simist" wings.⁶⁹

The criticism might have been not entirely unfounded, as another legionary party had been established, also on Sima's orders, in 1993. This was New Christian Romania (*Noua Romanie Crestina*), whose mentor was veteran Iron Guard member Mircea Nicolau, but who appointed as leader the 32-year-old Bucharest high school teacher Serban Suru. The party was set up on Codreanu's birthday and openly declared its Iron-Guard orientation, determining the Bucharest Municipal Tribunal to refuse its registration in November 1993.⁷⁰ But Serban Suru's nomination as leader of New Christian Romania was an appointment the veterans and those of the young generation who followed them would deeply regret. A tempestuous

character, Suru had little patience for the Legionary "gradualist" tactics and for their insistence on educating the young generation. And indeed, Suru, in a well-covered media event that the veterans feared might lead to their activity being outlawed, had launched in 1994 the first post-communist "nest" in Bucharest, named after Sima. This was followed, in 1995, by the setting up of other "nests" in Brasov, Sibiu, Constanta and Chisinau. Members of the latter were involved in demonstrations against the government of Moldova, organised by partisans of reunion with Romania, and they were eventually arrested and accused of preparing "extremist actions", the nature of which was not specified. Also in 1995, Suru, who one year earlier had inaugurated in Bucharest a library providing documentation on the Iron Guard, attempted to officially register an association called *Legiunea Crestina* (The Christian Legion), whose declared purpose was the "dissemination of historic truth" about the Iron Guard. The Notary General refused registration, however, and the Bucharest Tribunal, before which the decision was appealed, upheld the ruling, viewing *Legiunea Crestina* as unconstitutional.⁷¹

Other members of the movement started to criticise Suru in *Gazeta de Vest*, and the pro-Iron Guard *Puncte Cardinale*, for "showing-off", for not having really "internalised" the movement's values, and for possibly endangering its post-communist "achievements" by provoking the authorities to react. The movement had fallen into disrepute by June 1999, as members of the Legionary movement started to accuse Suru of having infiltrated the movement as an agent of former Romanian Intelligence Service chief Virgil Magureanu, with the purpose of creating scandals that would provoke a negative reaction towards the movement both inside Romania and abroad.⁷²

From Fascism and Anti-Semitism to National Communism and Radical Politics

Fascism and Anti-Semitism in the Interwar Period

In order to put into perspective Romania's post-communist radical politics one must take into consideration the country's situation before World War II and the existence of a virulent anti-Semitic political-ideological movement which cast a shadow on the country's interwar democratic system. Indeed, accepting Hitler's delirious formula of the "Jewish-Bolshevist-plutocratic" conspiracy, where Jews were responsible for Bolshevism and capitalism alike because they had invented and established both, not only had the Iron Guard movement sprung to life in Romania but this movement had been tolerated and even encouraged by different Romanian political forces. The governments of fanatical anti-Semite Romanian Prime Ministers Octavian Goga and Alexandru C Cuza initiated discriminatory, anti-Semitic legislation in 1938. The setting-up of the "National-Iron-Guardist" state in 1940 considerably aggravated the situation. Massacres of Jews during the Iron Guard rebellion against Antonescu in January 1941 and the massacres in Iasi in June 1941 were followed by the deportation of Jews in eastern Romania, in Bessarabia's Transdnistria. Marshal Antonescu, who came to power in 1940 and was ousted four years later, is blamed for the deaths of some 250,000 Jews. He was executed by the communist government in 1946, but some Romanians still consider him a hero for his opposition to the USSR and communism, and want him rehabilitated. Indeed, according to nationalist Romanian historians, the reason for the deportations ordered by Marshal Antonescu was not massacre, an act they always denied, but to move the Jews as far away as possible from the Gestapo's attention and thus to protect them from Nazi concentration camps. However, there is no doubt that the Jews were accused by Marshal Antonescu of pro-Soviet feelings, and indeed, "... the majority of the Jews saw the Soviet Union as a place of

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refuge in case the looming persecutions broke out in Romania as well", a Romanian historian recently wrote. When those persecutions did start, "Jews were accused of treason, of betraying a country, which in its turn betrayed them by questioning their civil rights".⁷³

In analysing this problem, external factors to Romania also have to be taken into consideration. In the 1930s, Nazi Germany had openly declared its anti-Semitism and its quest to eradicate all the Jews from the world. As a result of Hitler's policies, approximately 60 million people died in World War II, 6 million of whom were Jews, 10% of all the war's victims. The remaining victims are divided between all European peoples and other non-European nations who participated in the war. Those 6 million Jews represented 70% of the European Jewish population: no other people, including the belligerents that suffered the greatest losses, had to sacrifice more than 10% of their numbers. In the face of these far from rhetorical threats, some Jews opted for the communist political ideology and for a regime that they considered to be the most steadfast in fighting fascism. Although, subsequently, the communist regime proved to be totalitarian, and similar to the fascist regime, between 1936 and 1939, according to a Romanian historian, "the Romanian Communist Party increased the number of its Jewish members and followers, because the slogans of anti-fascist struggle based on the Popular Front and certain international actions which joined Romania, France, and the Soviet Union, could not, at least at first sight, but satisfy their major interests - above all that of right to life - of this minority threatened by measures taken or envisaged by the regimes or movements of the extreme right".⁷⁴ From this perspective, it is not difficult to comprehend why many Jews opted for what they believed to be another type of democracy, one that would hopefully secure their full emancipation. Thus they fell into the trap of the communist illusion.

Moreover, many Jews - primarily, but not only intellectuals - enrolled in the communist movement because they were attracted by its ideology, which they perceived as the most suitable for the purpose of emancipation, since its internationalist slogan implied the equality of all individuals, regardless of origin and ethnicity, as well as social justice postulated in a future communist utopia. This is not surprising in the case of a people that had been subjected to discrimination for a long time. The Jews' affinity to the communist movement seemed to be based on the original ideology formulated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, which has very little in common with the nature of the ideology that was produced to legitimise the deeds of Lenin and Stalin, and even less with the practice of Soviet-type communism. Marxist ideology acted as the "opium of intellectuals", including many non-Jewish intellectuals in Western countries, as French sociologist Raymond Aron wrote in the 1950s.⁷⁵ It was certainly "opium" for Jewish intellectuals all over the world, East and West; and one could very well speak of overrepresentation of Jews among those who opted for that "opium". Although it is true that the communist ideology eventually proved to be destructive, that the established communist regimes did not implement equality and general justice (not even equality between nations) but was blended with nationalism, this reality could not completely justify attributions of bad intentions to those who once made the option in question.

In the interwar period, Jews were also charged, and not only in Romania but in other Central European countries as well, in the same generalising terms with having introduced capitalism in their countries and of having been the promoters of those modernising influences that undermined, as it were, the traditional, pre-modern way of life of the ethnic majority and exposed them to the "ill-fated"

modernity. Again, it is true that there was Jewish overrepresentation in commercial and industrial activities in Romania in the interwar period, but one finds such a trend in many other countries of the region. Thirty percent of the major processing industry units in Romania in the 1930s had Jewish ownership while the percentage of Jews in the Romanian population as a whole stood only around 4%. This overrepresentation was even greater in the capital at the end of 1938 where 1,300 industrial enterprises were owned by Jews, representing 38% of all industrial enterprises of this type in the city, while Bucharest's Jewish population was 100,000 out of a million inhabitants.⁷⁶

In all these cases, the orientation of Jews towards capitalist and communist movements or a specific career was judged by the radical nationalists through the lenses of certain, evidently negative, characteristics, typical of their supposedly inborn and invariable psychological structure. Diversity in orientation and political attitudes, the multiplicity of value options and the large span of professions opted for defy falsely generalising judgements, but this does not seem to bother the anti-Semites. Neither are they interested in the social-historical causes of Jewish overrepresentation, which in these, but also other areas of human activity such as the humanities, medicine, music, political life in general, and the leftist movements, including communism, in particular, is neither the expression of a maleficent, domineering attitude as the anti-Semites assert, nor is it an expression of intellectual superiority as Jewish nationalists maintain, being rather the outcome of a long chain of social causality that cannot be analysed here in detail. Essentially, one is dealing with the natural quest for emancipation and assimilation of the Jewish people, a tendency long suppressed by discrimination, persecution and interdictions.⁷⁷

But this issue is not at all a specifically Romanian problem: it has analogies in Russia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and elsewhere. In Russia, for example, there was an incontestable overrepresentation of Jews among the Bolsheviks who prepared the 1917 Revolution and among the first leaders of the Communist Party after it took power. However, neither Lenin, Stalin, Lavrenti Beria, Georgiy Malenkov, Nikita Khrushchev, nor Leonid Brezhnev were Jews. Moreover, the main opponents of Stalin in the Bolshevik leadership (Lev Trotskiy, Grigoriy Zinov'yev, Lev Kamenev, and many others) were Jews and were executed, with few exceptions, by Stalin during his bloody "purges" because they stood in the way of his overall dictatorial power. In the Soviet repression apparatus, the Cheka and then the NKVD, ethnic Jews were also overrepresented in the 1920s, with some 40% as compared to their 2% proportion in the total population, only to be drastically eliminated later on during the great terror of the 1930s. On Stalin's personal orders, their ratio in the repressive apparatus was cut to 2% and the campaign against "cosmopolitanism" after World War II was directed against Jewish public figures who were stigmatised as "imperialist agents". It is important, however, to point out that Stalin's regime offered all Sovietised countries the model of a stratagem for self-legitimation through nationalism and anti-Semitism. Looking for "scapegoats" to account for historical failures and picking out minorities in general and Jews in particular for that role is therefore not a Romanian invention. "Nationalism is a way to prevaricate responsibility for the past and it is always the foreigners who must be blamed, and this is the conviction of all nationalists".⁷⁸

Jews and the Communists in Post-War Romania

If we want to define anti-Semitism we have to take into account its core idea that the Jews are the cause of all the misfortunes endured by the peoples among whom

they settled throughout history. In Romania, as well as in other East European countries, this fundamental idea acquired a strange form in the second half of the last century when the Jews were considered to be the only ones responsible, or at least largely responsible, for the establishment of the communist regime at the end of World War II, but also, more recently, to be "guilty" of destroying that regime. These two accusations are put together and circulated mainly by the representatives and descendants of the quite strange political-ideological blend of national communism, in which the extreme left and the extreme right, once bitter enemies, joined each other. Their rationale in Romania, if a series of completely irrational ideas might be called rationale, can be summed up by the following assertions⁷⁹:

1. "Cominternist" communism established in Romania after 1944 was "bad" because of its international, and therefore anti-national, character and not because it was dictatorial-totalitarian.
2. Jews are responsible for the establishment of communism in Romania because they acted as agents of a foreign power, the Soviet Union, which in turn acted "in collusion with the great Western powers," for it is allegedly a well-established fact that the Americans "sold Romania to the Russians" at Yalta.
3. However, national communism, initiated in Romania by late Romanian Communist Party (PCR) leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (who died in 1965), and exacerbated by dictator Nicolae Ceausescu (executed December 1989) was "good" precisely because of its national character, and for its "independence" from the Russians, regardless of its dictatorial nature, the economic bankruptcy it brought about, and the misery into which it plunged its own people. It was also "good" because it applied the ethnocentric principle - the rule of the ethnic majority over the national minorities - and because it conducted a policy of social and national homogenisation.
4. The Jews staged the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime, planned the killing of the dictatorial couple (Nicolae and his wife Elena), once more acting in the service of external powers, this time the United States and its Western allies, in turn dominated by "international capital", which is itself mastered by the Jews.

The problem of Jewish participation in the establishment of communism in Romania, as well as in other Central and East-European countries, is a real one⁸⁰, but who actually "imported" communism into Romania? It was literally "brought" from outside. But it was not established by the Jews or by foreigners in general, but rather by Soviet troops, during their victorious offensive launched against the countries of the fascist Axis and its allies, acting - and this fact must by no means be overlooked - in coalition with the great Western democratic powers. The gradual establishment of totalitarian communism was the outcome of actions by communist parties in each of those countries, under the monolithic leadership of the Soviet power centre, and the Jews were indeed overrepresented in those parties in Romania and elsewhere.

The roots of this situation however, must undoubtedly be traced to the interwar period. According to Romanian historian Dinu C Giurescu, the ethnic composition of the 1,665 PCR members in 1933 was the following: 26.8% were Hungarian, 22.65% ethnic Romanians, 18.22% Jews, 10.275 Russians and Ukrainians, 8.45% Bulgarians, and 13.93% other nationalities. As one can see, there was a clear overrepresentation of national minorities, indicating a reaction against the official policy of ethnic supremacy. However, the figure of 22.65% ethnic Romanians is by no means negligible and the leading PCR elite that came to power after 1944 (Gheorghiu-Dej, Lucretiu Patrascanu, Chivu Stoica, Constantin Parvulescu,

Gheorghe Apostol, Nicolae Ceausescu and others) was mainly recruited from these Romanian "illegalists". The Jews were the third most numerous group, and evidently this was an overrepresentation in relation to their 4% proportion in the 1933 population as a whole.⁸¹

However, by the end of the war, Romania's Jewish population was reduced to approximately half or less of its numbers in the interwar period. In a total population of approximately 20 million, Jews now made up approximately 1.5%. At the end of August 1944, when the PCR ceased to be illegal, it had no more than 1,000 members, according to the unanimous estimation of researchers. In other words, the party had lost more than one third of its 1933 estimated membership. Undoubtedly, one encounters once more Jewish overrepresentation in the party, but even if one ventures that half of the 1,000 communist party members were Jewish, the ratio of Jewish communists would be between around 0.16% of Romania's post-war Jewish population as compared with Romanian communists at 0.003%. But the number of PCR members increased vertiginously after the Petru Groza government came to power (6 March 1945), and especially over the next two years. According to Daniel Barbu, there were 700,000 PCR members in 1947 - a 700-fold increase over August 1944, and at the same time the most spectacular increase among all countries with "Popular Democratic" regimes.⁸² Thus, the PCR also gained a solid majority of Romanians all over the country. In the following years, this Romanian preponderance in the PCR would be consolidated. On 31 December 1970, in the party there were 89.11% ethnic Romanians (as compared to the 87.66% in the country's population), 8.21% Hungarians, 0.22% Germans, and 1.46% "others," with Jews being included in this last category.⁸³

The party tried to "improve" its ethnic composition constantly and insistently. It did not accept members by chance, but regulated the enrolment of new members from the very beginning, through central orders, creating the desired "class" structure, and at the same time attracting mainly members of the ethnic majority. It made use of all the means at the disposal of a governing party and a totalitarian regime in which the party membership card was the key to all careers. There was also an established quota of desirable and permissible admissions to the party in terms of ethnic groups. The Communist Party did everything to legitimise itself as the party of the ethnic majority, the Romanians. And indeed, at the XIVth PCR Congress in November 1989, one month before it went into historic oblivion, the PCR announced that 92% of its 3,800,000 members were ethnic Romanians, 6.53% Hungarian, 0.51% German, and the rest was made up of other "other nationalities". This 0.96% included Jews, Armenians, Serbs, Turks, etc. It is clear that the final representation of all national minorities was lower than in the first post-war years and considerably lower in the case of the Jews. However, there was still overrepresentation of Jews in the PCR, because the Jewish population of the country had, in the meantime, been drastically reduced to less than 20,000 due to emigration. In addition, anti-Semites also argue that the Jewish proportion - as well as that of other ethnic minorities - in the central, mid-level, and local party leadership had been "too large", as many changed their names and identity in order to survive in the new political climate. One cannot deny the accuracy of the contention, applied to a certain period of time, and Romanian historian Lucian Boia speaks of "... quite a large number of Jews and other non-Romanians in the political, propaganda and repression apparatus in the Stalinist epoch".⁸⁴

In sum, after 23 August 1944 the communist power centre adopted a policy of Romanisation of its own apparatus at all levels. This policy implied the replacement in waves of Jewish "activists" with members of the ethnic majority.

This line intensified after the removal of Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca from the PCR leadership and again towards the end of the leadership of Gheorghiu-Dej, after the Soviet army left Romania and the PCR strove to gain independence from Moscow. It continued with a new swing in a frenzy of zeal under Nicolae Ceausescu. According to Mihail E Ionescu, "... in the time of N Ceausescu, the communist elite was selected according to the criteria of national-communist exigencies, and as a result, Romanian ethnic origin, working class or peasant descent, a clean political 'file' (without any compulsory 'underground' past) were the basic criteria in the severe selection of the new elite and its successive groups".⁸⁵

However, special attention should be paid to Romania's main instrument of repression, the Securitate, which had a special role in the party-state apparatus. Jews and other minorities are often accused of having played a prominent role in the Securitate. Again, while an initial overrepresentation of Jews in the apparatus of the communist secret police cannot be denied, some explanations are in order. One could argue for instance that the overrepresentation, which was indeed present immediately after the setting up of so-called "popular democracy" in Romania, was due to the fact that the Jews were less suspected of having participated in any fascist movement or organisation. Second, Jewish overrepresentation must not be understood as if they ever were a majority on the staff of the sinister institution. "The first statistics concerning ethnic composition carried out by the General Direction of the Securitate [after its establishment in 1948], show that of the 60 senior officers in command of the General Direction (major or higher in rank), 38 were Romanians, 15 Jews, three Hungarians, two Ukrainians, one Czech and one Armenian". And, according to a report presented by Securitate commander General Gheorghe Pintilie at a closed meeting of the Securitate staff, this institution had the following ethnic composition in February 1949: 83% Romanians, 10% Jews, 6% Hungarians, and 1% other nationalities. These numbers were based on staff files and in these files one could find the "real names of officers who in the meantime had opted for 'Romanising' their identity". In the same files, "the real nationality of staff members was registered, not the one suggested by the adopted name" so that the figures presented were undoubtedly real.⁸⁶

According to journalist Marius Oprea, it is true that "in 1948 there was a preference for Jews, Hungarians and other national minorities for leading positions in some of the Securitate's regional divisions, which, however, did not reflect the ethnic composition of the institution as a whole (which was dominated by Romanians). The ratio of Romanians/non-Romanians with decision-making power at Securitate leadership level reflects the ratio of decision-makers in the Communist Party (the make up of the Political Bureau of the Romanian Workers' Party)".⁸⁷ And, as Oprea emphasises in another paper, the entire repression apparatus was, after all, commanded and controlled by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the secretary-general of the party. This explains the gradual restraining of the number and influence of foreign, non-Romanian, elements in the Securitate in the following years and, finally, the elimination of Dej's Romanian and non-Romanian rivals alike (Lucretiu Patrascanu, Ana Pauker) from the leadership of the party, with the help of the Securitate. Hand-in-hand with the gradual prevailing in the party of the national and nationalist line in subsequent years, the numbers and the power of ethnic non-Romanians constantly decreased in the Securitate as well. Under the Ceausescu regime there were certainly no Jews in the leadership of the Securitate and the number of Jews serving at lower ranks tended to zero as well.⁸⁸

Nevertheless, in the 1970s and 1980s, following the PCR's relatively "internationalist" period, Romanian communism became increasingly and openly

national through the composition of its nomenclature and nationalist in its political-ideological orientation. In this second, much longer period - and especially in the 25 years of the reign of Ceausescu - all aspects of public life, the entire political, repressive and ideological apparatus were intensely Romanised. Despite its nationalism, the Ceausescu regime starved, humiliated and exasperated the Romanians. People went on the streets to protest against the regime in that memorable December 1989 and the regime was finally shattered and overthrown by the anger of the masses.

Jews in Post-Communist Romania

After 1989, several newspapers published lists of Jewish "party activists" of different ranks, but these lists generally included some 200-300 names, many of them well-known. Moreover, in the Romanian anti-Semitic media after 1989, there were lots of voices - louder than their real weight in public life - which accused the Jews in Romania of having organised, or at least inspired - the "demolishing" and destruction of the Ceausescu regime, and implicitly of the communist system. To this day they repeat all the old and new themes of anti-Semitism, such as one can find in the pages of *Romania Mare*, *Europa*, *Totusi Iubirea* and others, as well as books and pamphlets. The absurdity of the allegation is obvious: if the Jews had really "provoked" the fall of communism, this would be a historical merit, not yet another "crime" to add to their "record". There is also a logical contradiction in the anti-Semitic discourse because if the Jews had really "brought" communism to Romania, its destruction by them would amount to a remedy for their past sin, as it would mean that they had liberated the country of an evil thing. The contradiction, however, is rendered comprehensible by the shift of anti-Semitic nationalism from the position of extreme right to the extreme left, more precisely, by the amalgamation of the two extremes into national communism.⁸⁹

However, the question remains: who, in fact, "destroyed" communism in Romania? No person, group, community or institution can be credited with being the forger of this historic change. Many people undoubtedly contributed to it, but, essentially, communism was not "demolished". Rather, it destroyed itself: it became bankrupt as a social, economic and political system, it imploded and collapsed because it could no longer stay on its feet. Among the factors that contributed to its collapse one must mention the historic success of the capitalist system under all aspects, the success of democratic constitutional states and the open society; the "reform communism" which was born and acted even within the leadership of certain communist parties and states, and which produced the first cracks in the "wall"; and finally, the masses, exasperated because of the material, moral, and spiritual misery of the system, and who actually imposed this change by coming out on the streets and openly expressing their will. In Romania, the changes imposed a bloody tribute, due to the harsh resistance of the Ceausescu regime, which held its ground until the last hour. On that last day, 22 December 1989, which also became a first day, not only did the communist state system in Romania collapse, but the Romanian Communist Party was also disbanded. It was not dissolved by anybody, nor did it dissolve itself after the decision of any political body, but disappeared completely, at once, as though it had never existed.

Accusing the Jews of destroying Romanian communism is one of the conspiracy theories on changes of social systems. Jews, allegedly, had acted from within the system, in connivance with the great foreign intelligence agencies - the Mossad, the CIA, and the KGB. The Jews were allegedly in league with all of them, and at one and the same time, which is again an absurdity. What is essential here is whether the internal and external agents brought people onto the streets. As the answer is

no, this conspiracy theory is a negation of evidence and of the reality of a mass movement observed and experienced by the whole country. It is also an insult to all those who went onto the streets at considerable personal risk, and whose historic contribution is thus denied. Moreover, accusing the Jews of the fall of communism is often accompanied by allegations that the Jews are the profiteers of these changes, in an analogy to the post-1944 period. Only after 1989 one can no longer speak of an overrepresentation of Jews in leading positions, in the state apparatus, in the economy or culture. On the contrary. Jews nowadays represent 0.05% of the Romanian population; the great majority are more than 65 years old and retired. This small minority group can hardly "grab" power in any political, economic, or professional sphere. Immediately after the "great change," the two most prominent Jewish leaders were the new prime minister, Petre Roman (whose ethnic origin is half Jewish, but who repeatedly insists on his affiliation to the Romanian Orthodox Church) and Silviu Brucan, the chief ideologist of the post-communist National Salvation Front, a former Stalinist, then reform-communist, who had no connection with the Jewish community and who soon withdrew from the leadership structures. The presence of Jews in the parliament, the government, the central government apparatus, the leadership of central, county, and local institutions is completely insignificant at present. There are some rare individual cases, but one cannot speak of significant percentages. What sense is there, then, in the claim of the radical parties in post-communist Romania that the Jews are those who profited from the elimination of Ceausescu? It is the whole population of Romania, both majority and minority, which actually profited from it, profoundly so and rightfully so.⁹⁰

But in spite of this overwhelming evidence, there is no doubt that the debate about the role of the Jews and anti-Semites in Romania's history is going to continue. And indeed, after his inauguration, the newly re-elected President Ion Iliescu said on 21 January 2001 at a ceremony at the Coral Temple in Bucharest marking 60 years since the 1941 Iasi pogrom that "one must not forget" what the Iron Guardist "delirium of intolerance and anti-Semitism" signifies for Romanian history. That brief "delirium" excepted, he said, there is no Romanian contribution to the "long European history" of persecution of the Jews and it is "significant" that there is no Romanian word for "Holocaust" (as if "Holocaust" has different names in different languages). And while paying homage to the Iron Guard's victims, he said it is "unjustified to attribute to Romania an artificially inflated number of [Jewish] victims for the sake of media impact". This mistaken view, he added, might disappear when "Romanian (ie non Jewish) historians tackle this subject".⁹¹

Iliescu's views, and not only his, are based on the fact that many historians and intellectuals in contemporary Romania deny or minimise the number of Jewish victims who perished as a result of being deported to Transdnistria by the Antonescu regime. In spite of international criticism, local officials in Bacau decided on 30 January 2001 that a statue of pro-Nazi leader Marshal Ion Antonescu will be erected in their eastern Romanian city. Bacau Mayor Dumitru Sechelariu said, "Whatever the criticism, his merits in the fight for the country cannot be denied".⁹² As happened when other similar actions were organised in Romania, strong criticism for this initiative was not long in arriving. In a letter to President Ion Iliescu, the leaders of three large US Jewish organisations protested at this decision because "statues erected in the memory of Marshal Antonescu, as well as plaques and street-naming in his honour are tantamount to paying homage to one of the darkest periods in Romania's past". They also wrote that they "would like to be able to support" Romania's quest for NATO membership but "for this to occur, Romania needs to make a clear break with the Antonescu legacy".⁹³

Radical Communist Continuity and the Rise of Greater Romania Party

Bearing in mind Romania's post-communist political configuration - in which interwar fascism and anti-Semitism amalgamated with Ceausescu's national communism is playing a very important role in modelling the political mentality of the population, it could be assessed that the Party of Romanian National Unity (PUNR) and the Greater Romania Party (PRM) are by far the most important formations of radical communist continuity. Both these parties, but particularly the PUNR, were from their early days close to "Vatra Romaneasca" (The Romanian Cradle), a nationalist movement whose honorary chairman was Iosif Constantin Dragan, an Italian citizen originally from Romania. According to files made public by a Romanian weekly in early 1995, Dragan, a former Iron Guard sympathiser, had been an agent for the communist secret police, the Securitate, having been blackmailed into collaboration by a threat to reveal the fraudulent sources of his wealth. Dragan also heads the Marshal Antonescu League and the Marshal Antonescu Foundation, while PRM chairman Corneliu Vadim Tudor and other leading figures of his party are prominent members of both.⁹⁴

The Party of Romanian National Unity (PUNR)

The PUNR, known until August 1990 as the Party of National Unity of Romanians in Transylvania, was set up on 15 March 1990. Just a few days later, on 19-20 March, the interethnic Romanian-Hungarian clashes in Targu Mures left wounded and dead on both sides. This was no coincidence, as the PUNR was packed with sympathisers of "Vatra Romaneasca", whose involvement in the clashes is beyond question. For many years, the PUNR was nothing but the political arm of the so-called "cultural" "Vatra" organisation. Radu Ceontea, PUNR's first chairman, described his formation as "a party that embraces the general ideas covered in Vatra Romaneasca's platform programme" and, as he admitted some time later, the PUNR was "the son of 'Vatra' because it has been born from 'Vatra'". Ceontea himself had been "Vatra" chairman before switching to the chairmanship of the PUNR, and all the party's parliamentarians in the 1990-1992 legislature were also members of "Vatra".⁹⁵

But there is another, equally important, link affecting the identity of this party - its ties with the former Securitate. The March 1990 Targu Mures clashes, in which "Vatra" played a prominent provocative role, served as a justification for setting up - on 24 April 1990 - the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI) under the directorship of Virgil Magureanu. Ceausescu's political security service, the Securitate, had been officially disbanded on 30 December 1989, but never really disappeared. Like "Vatra" itself, the PUNR has been suspected from its inception of being yet another outlet manipulated and penetrated by, as well as serving the interests of, the former Securitate. Indeed, the links between the "old Securitate guard" and "Vatra's" eruption onto the scene of post-communist politics has been quite substantially documented as well as analysed. Both PUNR and PRM were rightly placed in the category of "unruly coalitions", as these formations were led primarily by local "officials of the old Communist Party, one or another fraction of the old/new secret police, members of the local police, and the henchmen of all these". The same categories would make up, or benefit from links to people that would simply use both know-how and ties acquired or established while working for the Securitate's dubious foreign trade and other commercial outlets.⁹⁶

However, the first post-communist rulers in Romania promised initially to end the process of discrimination against minorities in general, and the Hungarian national minority in particular. On 5 January 1990, the National Salvation Front (FSN)

"solemnly" declared that it would "guarantee individual and collective rights and freedom for ethnic minorities." The declaration condemned Ceausescu's policies towards ethnic minorities, stressing that the "sad inheritance left behind by the dictatorship" made it necessary to "elaborate constitutional guarantees for the individual and collective rights of ethnic minorities". It was also stated that "the blood shed in common has shown that the policy of hate-mongering based on the chauvinistic policy of forced assimilation, as well as the successive attempts to defame neighbouring Hungary and the Hungarians of Romania, could not succeed in breaking the confidence, friendship and unity between the Romanian people and the national minorities".⁹⁷

To the disappointment of many Romanians believing in the spirit of the December 1989 revolt, none of these promises were fulfilled, and the FSN soon "re-discovered" that the appeal to nationalism and alliances struck with its extreme exponents were more profitable. When members of the Hungarian minority sought to impose the implementation of those promises by occupying former Hungarian-language schools that had been abolished by the communist regime, the Transylvanian Romanian intelligentsia was struck by panic. This is not surprising since the intelligentsia has played a major role in forging the modern national identity of Romanians in general, and Transylvanian Romanians in particular. Appeals of members of the intelligentsia for the rescue of "our ancestral maternal cradle of Transylvania, which has been so often covered in blood" have not fallen on deaf ears of simple folk, who had been the beneficiaries of internal migration aimed at changing the region's ethnic structure. It was against this background of mutual suspicion that the former Securitate had played the role of "Vatra's" midwife, had staged the Targu Mures clashes (being involved on both sides), and finally had successfully achieved its self-serving purpose of re-emerging as the new SRI.⁹⁸

Needless to say, the first emerging Romanian post-communist party, whose virtual leader was Iliescu, played its cards closer to its chest. While denouncing the "exaggerated demands" of the UDMR on "autonomy" and refusing to meet even the more modest demands of the Hungarian formation, the FSN (later FDSR, and then PDSR) could be considered in many ways a party of "radical communist continuity." However - unlike the PRM, and the PUNR - it had been more heterogeneous, having in its ranks both "moderates" and "radicals". Nevertheless, indications that the then-dominant party was courting "Vatra" were not missing, as FSN sympathisers of "Vatra" hissed at members of the opposition suspected of being "soft" on the Hungarians in Alba Iulia, on the occasion of the first celebration of Romania's new national day, on 1 December 1990. Instead of calming the atmosphere, FSN Prime Minister Petre Roman acted as mob cheerleader. In what was apparently prompted by the urge to demonstrate that he was a "genuinely good Romanian," Roman - the grandson of a rabbi and the son of a Spanish Roman-Catholic mother - claimed that he was the "bone," that is the offspring, of a family with an ancient tradition of struggle for Romanian rights in Transylvania. "In me, I bear the idolatry [sic] for this part of the country, without which Romania could not exist," he said in an interview on 14 December 1990 with the extremist PRM weekly *Romania Mare*, which, at that time, had not yet turned him into an emblematic agent of the Mossad.⁹⁹

However, the main political force in the first post-December 1989 years, the chameleonic FSN (FDSN, PDSR) had to be more restrained in its pronouncements, becoming aware that these could negatively impact on the country's image abroad. This was not the case for the PUNR, whose first chairman, the painter Radu Ceantea, has freely exposed his culturally-inherited perceptions of the Hungarian

ethnic minority, as well as his views on what Romania's post-communist future must look like.¹⁰⁰ Under Ceuntea's leadership, the party had done poorly in the 1990 elections. It gained only 2.12% of the votes (9 seats) in the ballot for the Chamber of Deputies and 2.15% in the Senate contest (2 seats), running on joint lists with the Republican Party, in the Romanian Unity Alliance (AUR, "Gold"). Bearing in mind that the PUNR was just two months old at that time, its electoral performance was not insignificant. Nevertheless, it was another electoral contest, that of the local elections of 1992, that brought about Ceuntea's dismissal as party chairman. In his home town of Targu Mures, in a rare display of overcoming mutual suspicion, Hungarians and Romanians opposing the PUNR's policies of incitement had elected in May 1992 UDMR candidate Viktor Nagy as mayor. The UDMR had thus humiliated Ceuntea, and did so defeating a local alliance of the PUNR, the FSN, the Agrarian Democratic Party (PDAR) and other smaller formations. This was precisely the opposite of what happened in Cluj, where Funar had become mayor, with the help of the commander of the military garrison stationed in the town, who ordered soldiers to vote for the PUNR candidate.¹⁰¹

Ceuntea was unable to last longer as PUNR chairman, being replaced in October 1992 by Gheorghe Funar, a Ceausescu-style economist specialising in collective agriculture, educated at Cluj University. He directed his electoral appeal to ethnic Romanians, many of whom were residents of the new working-class sections of the town erected by the communist regime to facilitate "internal emigration", by using the simplistic nationalist clichés into which this sector of the population had been socialised by Ceausescu's national-communism. According to Professor Tom Gallagher, a comparison of Funar's strategy with electoral appeals in Latin America is more than obvious. There, "urban populists had successfully used dissimulation techniques for controlling uprooted individuals from the countryside. Migrants to cities were often enrolled into movements which promised economic wealth distribution and identified 'imperialism' or 'Uncle Sam' as a source of their poverty and hardship". In a Romanian version of the same appeal, the PUNR offered "... categories of explanation which could enable migrants to make sense of their marginal situation and dream of improvements. In the process, the Hungarians replaced the Americans as the external enemy ready to buy up their factories, use them as cheap labour, throw them into destitution, and, in the final analysis, seize back all of Transylvania."¹⁰²

But Funar's accession to power was neither easy nor swift. First of all, during 1991, Funar managed to create a division within the PUNR ranks, mainly between its two main branches in Targu Mures and Cluj. Dominated by what Gallagher defined as "hard-nosed professionals who had been adept at bargaining for resources and preferment in the Ceausescu era", the Cluj branch exploited the Funar victory in the 1992 local elections and the Targu Mures electoral failure to impose its dominance over the party. Funar used the situation and secured his designation as PUNR candidate in the 1992 presidential elections, and then ousted Ceuntea as chairman of the party in a stormy meeting of the party's National Conference in October.¹⁰³ In the 1992 November general elections, the PUNR performed considerably better than it did two years earlier. While under Ceuntea the party had been mainly the Transylvanian fortress of Romanian nationalism, it now managed to expand beyond the region's borders, winning seven seats in the parliament in Moldova and in southern Romania. In Transylvania itself, it won seats in all but one electoral district. In the country, the party obtained 7.71% of the vote for the Chamber of Deputies, electing 30 representatives to that house, and 8.12% of the vote for the Senate, which gave it a representation of 14 senators. Furthermore, running for the presidential office, Funar scored a respectable 10.87%

The Dark Side of Politics in Post-Communist Romania

of the vote, coming in third place after the two main contenders, Iliescu and Emil Constantinescu. But it was not the party organisation that secured this performance. Rather, it must have been its "Vatra" backbone that did so, since in 1993 - the last year for which party membership figures are available - the PUNR did not have more than 49,000 members across the country.¹⁰⁴

Once in the saddle, Funar thrived on producing conspiracy theories, simplistic economic solutions, mending the image of Romania's immediate political past, and, above all, used the interwar ethnocentrism philosophy in developing a personal authoritarian rule. In 1992, "Vatra" was arguing that Romania had been turned into "the target of a conspiracy of domestic and external forces that pursue the dismemberment of its being [and] the degrading of those human values that have characterised us all along our history".¹⁰⁵ Funar was the most vociferous partisan of this view, arguing during a debate on television that there had been basically nothing wrong with Ceausescu's economic policies, and, if elected as president, he would turn the former dictator's industrial mammoths into profitable enterprises again. Likewise, in an interview with the weekly *22* in September 1992, he said that agriculture would be revived within two years, industry within three at most, and all those willing to work would have jobs. Ceausescu had been "a good Romanian", he repeatedly emphasised, but had made the mistake of "granting too many privileges to the Hungarian minority". Members of that minority were not only undermining the security of the Romanian state by, among other things, having secret paramilitary organisations, but also by being agents of a devious design aimed at buying up Transylvania. The province was going, according to members of the PUNR, to be confronted with the same danger that Palestine had been confronted with when Jews started buying land there.¹⁰⁶

In fact, the outlawing of the ethnic-Hungarian UDMR became the main component of Funar's "crusade" that would never be renounced. In order to do that Funar was even willing to risk his party's lucrative membership in the coalition with the PDSR (1992-1996) by repeatedly accusing President Iliescu of forsaking his duty in failing to act against the ethnic-Hungarian formation. But his arguments were not necessarily consistent. While on one hand insisting on the mortal danger that the Hungarian minority posed to Romania, on the other hand Funar argued that the number of ethnic Hungarians in Romania was grossly exaggerated. In an interview in February 1995, he warned that an armed conflict between Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania could not be ruled out, while at the same time saying that more than half a million of the 1.7 million Magyars in Romania were "Gypsies," whom the UDMR had "blackmailed or bought" to register as ethnic Hungarians during the January 1992 census. In reality, he said, "there are no more than 300,000 Romanians of Hungarian origin in Romania".¹⁰⁷

Tom Gallagher might have been overstating his case when he wrote that the PUNR's partnership in the governing coalition with the PDSR between 1992 and 1996 was "a loveless marriage of political convenience". It might have been more accurate to present the partnership as PDSR's option for what in its eyes must have been the "lesser evil" - the other option being granting access to resources to its ideological arch-rivals within the Democratic Convention of Romania. President Ion Iliescu's secret membership of "Vatra Romaneasca", acknowledged late in 1999, demonstrates that he was closer ideologically to the PUNR than to the CDR. But Gallagher was right to point out that the relationship was never an easy one. While Funar said what he meant, the PDSR often meant what it would rather keep silent about. Funar was indeed "an embarrassment internationally", as well as "increasingly exasperating" in his domestic political demands. The politically more

sophisticated Iliescu, on the other hand, "was more aware of the post-1989 international spirit and attempted to walk the tightrope stretched between his heart and his mind".¹⁰⁸

Still, Funar was not willing to forego the benefits of coalition membership. Rather, it was the PDSR that on 2 September 1996 announced it was terminating the partnership. Twice in the past, in March and May 1996, the party had threatened to do so in the wake of Funar's attacks on Iliescu, but had failed to act on the threat. This time around, it was in earnest. With elections upcoming and with Funar running against Iliescu, the PDSR was obviously hoping to build electoral capital out of the treaty with Hungary, presenting itself as a mature and moderate political formation, in contrast not only with the PUNR, but also with its other former allies, the PRM and the PSM (Socialist Workers Party). That, too, proved to be a miscalculation, though less gross than that of the PUNR chairman.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, it soon transpired that many of Funar's peers in the PUNR leadership were no longer willing to follow him. The party had been showing signs of dismembering for some time now and in this situation, many leading members of the PUNR began "jumping ship" politically. With party ranks depleted and party coffers empty after the demise of the Caritas scheme and its ouster from the coalition, Funar still sought to enlist nationalist support by repeatedly drawing attention to the "danger" emanating from the treaty with Hungary. On top of this, Funar faced not only the expected competition of the PRM for the nationalist vote, but also an unexpected one from Iliescu. As polling day drew closer and indications abounded that the incumbent head of state and the PDSR might lose the election, Iliescu changed course and began directing his attacks to ethnic Hungarians and their UDMR party. Addressing a rally of his followers in Alba Iulia, central Transylvania, he accused the UDMR of planning the "Yugoslavisation" of Romania and the secession of Transylvania. A highly influential journalist wondered whether one was now witnessing Iliescu's own "Zhirinovskiyisation", while PRM leader Tudor accused Iliescu of plagiarism, assessing that his "anti-Magyar campaign was the reaction of a desperate party led by irresponsible leaders".¹¹⁰

The electoral outcome of November 1996 was a debacle for the PUNR. Funar obtained the support of only 3.22% of the electorate in the presidential contest, some two-thirds less than in 1992. In the Chamber of Deputies, PUNR representation dropped from 30 to 18, the party having obtained only 4.4% as compared to 7.7% four years earlier. Senatorial representation was reduced by half - 7 instead of 14 - reflecting a vote of 4.2% instead of 8.1% in 1992. The PDSR itself came in second after the central-right CDR coalition, while the PSM was not able to pass the electoral hurdle. Only the PRM from among the former coalition members was able to increase its parliamentary representation slightly, possibly picking up some of the PUNR losses. The other three members of the coalition that had ruled most of the time since the 1992 elections thus paid a heavy price for the country's economic mismanagement and deterioration in living standards. It is in this light, rather than one signifying a rejection by the electorate of extremist policies, that the outcome of the 1996 ballot must be judged.¹¹¹

Following the 1996 general elections, a meeting of the PRM Steering Committee decided on 22 February 1997 to oust Funar from his chairmanship, and to replace him with former Agriculture Minister Valeriu Tabara. But Funar (and his followers from the Cluj Branch) was not ready to go quietly and for more than a year he tried in desperation to reverse his party's majority decision. When finally the conflict reached the courts, the Bucharest Municipal Tribunal ruled in March 1998 in favour of the Tabara wing, deeming all actions taken by the rival wing illegal.¹¹² In

this situation, Funar then proceeded to launch his own new Party of Romanian Unity Alliance, whose initials, AUR, were identical to those of the PUNR-Republican Party alliance that had run in the 1990 elections. Three deputies and one senator representing the PUNR followed him in the new party, thus reducing PUNR representation in the legislature even more than the electorate had done. Tabara and his friends ran again to the courts, contesting Funar's right to that denomination, and once more won. Meanwhile, Tudor invited Funar to join the PRM as its secretary-general and on 30 October 1998 he accepted the offer. However, most of his followers in AUR did not join him and in May 1999 they signed an agreement with Iliescu on the merger of the two formations.¹¹³

The participation of the ethnic Hungarians' UDMR in the coalition government during the Constantinescu administration only exacerbated Funar's provocative acts against them and in the process, the then PUNR leader acquired world notoriety for his dubious architectural initiatives. He ordered, for instance, the town's park benches to be painted in the colours of the national flag "to show that Cluj-Napoca is a Romanian town" and defied government orders for displaying bilingual street signs in places where minorities make up more than 20% of the population. He also nearly succeeded in turning the town-centre of Cluj into a battleground between Romanians and Hungarians by allowing archaeological excavations around the statue of Hungarian King Mathias Corvinus (1458-1490) to vindicate the Romanian claim in the age-old historical dispute about the "right of first settlers" in Transylvania. The excavations were to uncover the remains of ancient Roman structures, and thus "demonstrate" that the Romanians' forefathers had indeed inhabited the locality, whose name had been changed by Ceausescu into Cluj-Napoca precisely for the same purpose. But nobody doubted the Romans' presence, and no excavations were really needed to demonstrate it. The Hungarians, who make up about one-fifth of the town's population, feared that the purpose of the endeavour was to eradicate their own monuments attesting to Hungarian historical presence in Transylvania. The excavations were to be conducted in the town's main square and in the vicinity of the Hungarian Roman-Catholic Saint Michael Cathedral. What is more, Cluj deputy prefect Liviu Mendrea, a member of the PUNR, said that the equestrian statue, inaugurated in 1902 under the Austrian-Hungarian rule of the region, might soon be removed from Union Square. After the excavations were finished, he said, the square was to be turned into an open-air museum, around which modern stores would be erected. The situation came to an end only when the government finally ordered the excavations to be stopped.¹¹⁴ But the long list of provocative acts did not stop here, and included changing the Hungarian names of streets and banning local radio broadcasts in Hungarian.¹¹⁵

By the end of Constantinescu's term in office, decimated by internal conflict and by defections, and performing very poorly in the local elections of June 2000, when it scored less than the ethnic Hungarians' UDMR in the ballot for the county councils, the PUNR started desperately to look for electoral allies ahead of the parliamentary elections scheduled for autumn 2000. It was quite obvious that on its own, the PUNR would not make it again to the legislature. At the end of the day, Tabara forged an alliance with former Romanian Intelligence Service chief Virgil Magureanu, whose Romanian National Party had been set up in March 1998. The two formations merged in September 2000, setting up the National Alliance. The merger in many ways marked the full circle of this nationalist movement in Romania: "Vatra Romaneasca", whose logo was taken up initially by PUNR and now by the National Alliance, had been the child of Magureanu's manipulations from the very beginning. Many, however, were surprised by the National Alliance's choice for

presidential candidate in the November 2000 elections in the person of the radical return leader Marian Munteanu. This should have been no surprise, however, as it is very widely believed that the "old Securitate Forces" are behind many of the attempts to manipulate nationalism and xenophobia, and not only in Romania. Moreover, the leaders of radical parties (both continuity and return) are often "the conscious or unconscious pawns on a political chessboard whose most important players are not always the most visible ones".¹¹⁶

One of these is without doubt the present President Ion Iliescu. In late 1999 it had become known that he was not only a "Vatra" sympathiser, but also one of its founding fathers. He had apparently kept secret his membership in the organisation as his presidential status did not allow him to identify with such organisations.¹¹⁷ However, by the time of 2000 general elections the PUNR had lost much of its support, being decimated by internal strife. Public opinion surveys were showing that the party would not make it to the parliament in November 2000, being backed by less than 5%, the electoral hurdle. Uncertain of their political future, the organisation's leaders opted to run in 2000 on Iliescu's PDSR lists, and an official agreement in this sense was sealed on 19 December 1999. PUNR Chairman Valeriu Tabara, another "founding father" of "Vatra Romaneasca", was coopted within Iliescu's party but continued to protest against his connections with "Vatra", claiming that the organisation's statutes prevented it from identifying itself with any single political formation. Tabara's protest was obviously pharisaic, since "Vatra" had long functioned as his own party's political arm.¹¹⁸

Greater Romania Party (PRM)

The PRM was set up in November 1990 by two extreme nationalist writers, Eugen Barbu (who died in late 1993), and Corneliu Vadim Tudor. From the start, it adopted anti-Semitic and xenophobic postures, targeting not only Jews, but also Hungarians and Roma. It deplored - at first in hints and later openly - the departure of communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu from the political scene, seeing in him a national hero who, like wartime Marshal Ion Antonescu, had fought for the country's independence, seeking to deliver it from the plight of Jewish, Hungarian, and other international conspirators and from its predatory neighbours, all of whom were put in one basket. By early 1996, the "open secret" of Tudor's former connections with Ceausescu's secret police was officially disclosed by none other than Virgil Magureanu, the then director of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), whose removal Tudor had demanded for having earlier hinted at such connections. Magureanu, whom Tudor accused of being an ethnic Hungarian, had been acting in concert with President Ion Iliescu. From 1992 to mid-1996, the incumbent president and Tudor had been official political allies in what was a perfect display of Iliescu's "utilitarian anti-Semitism." Unofficially, the alliance dated back practically to the PRM's birth, whose midwife was Iliescu's Prime Minister, Petre Roman, later to be turned by the PRM into one of its main foes.¹¹⁹

But once the alliance broke down in 1996, Tudor launched ferocious attacks on Iliescu, accusing him of being a Gypsy, a former KGB agent, one who had been put in power and kept there by Jews, and an atheist who did not hesitate to order Ceausescu's execution on the "Holy day of Christmas" 1989. Tudor became his party's candidate in the 1996 presidential elections (which was one reason for his unrestrained attacks on Iliescu), obtaining 4.72% of the votes, and he was again elected a senator in the parliamentary contest held at the same time. PRM as a whole did better in 1996 than in 1992, getting 4.46% of the votes (and 19 seats) in the Chamber of Deputies, and 4.54% in the Senate (eight senators).¹²⁰ From March 1993, the date of the first PRM congress, to the March 2000 gathering of the party's

National Council, the number of card-carrying party members increased more than tenfold - from 15,000 to 155,000.¹²¹ Yet, as Tudor admitted in his speech at the second PRM congress in November 1997, the party was not doing very well in rural areas. It was, however, doing particularly well among uprooted peasantry. The party's social make-up was overwhelmingly male (83%), with most members in the over 50 age bracket (47%, as against 15% aged 30 and under and 38% in the medium group) and with as many as 39% being graduates of higher education institutes, followed by 34% who finished high school and 27% with an elementary education.¹²²

But the recent success of the PRM in Romania's politics, and especially in the November 2000 general elections, cannot be explained without bearing in mind the legacy of Ceausescu's exacerbated "national communism". This is not only a legacy that left its imprint on the country's superstructure (to use Marxist terminology), but, above all, one that has affected its infrastructure. Ceausescu's policy of engineering the migration of peasantry to urban settlements determined the "ruralisation" of Romanian towns. A very large segment of the urban population, uprooted from its village culture and failing to undergo fully fledged urban education, created a semi-urban political culture, one of whose main features is vulgarity. It is into this culture that Tudor, the son of peasants who migrated to Bucharest, was born and grew up in the Rahova proletariat sector in the outskirts of Bucharest.¹²³ And indeed, Romanian-born foreigners who have visited their country of origin after 1990 have reported that the language has undergone an evolution that far exceeds the natural change that idiom undergoes everywhere. To some extent, this can be traced to the former communist leadership itself, whom the new aspiring elites were consciously trying to emulate in a display of "fidelity" towards the "ruling family," and others were unconsciously picking up. It is this combination of vulgarity and nationalism that the PRM excels in. Articles published in PRM's weekly *Romania Mare* by Tudor, while to some extent witty in their manipulation of the language, are full of what Romanians used to call *mahalagisme* ("shantytown" dialect). Indeed, a quick look at the latest issues of *Politica* (also a PRM weekly) or *Romania Mare* is fully sufficient to illustrate this combination: the two weeklies have hardly changed since they were first published in 1992 and 1990 respectively. Hatred directed at "the Other" and embracing ethnocratic principles, "externalisation of guilt," and the vilification of Tudor's political and personal adversaries in foul language is the secret of the formula's apparent success.¹²⁴

Indeed, Tudor's capacity to urge hatred and destruction of everything that was foreign or an obstacle to his success was unlimited. Probably one of the most important aspects of CV Tudor's personality that contributed to his success was his belief that he was "born to be a *Conducator*" (Leader). In order to make sure that everybody was aware of his in-born qualities, he added the name "Vadim" to what his parents had given him at birth. Vadim, he claimed, had Slavic roots, deriving from *rukovoditel* (leader).¹²⁵ In reality, Tudor's models for *Conducator* came rather from Romania's past. They are Marshal Antonescu and President Ceausescu, both of whom carried that title, though figures from the more remote past, such as Vlad the Impaler (himself a Ceausescu favourite) are sometimes also added to the gallery of the PRM leader's model heroes. This gives an additional perspective to "the Righteous" self-description of Tudor, to his habit of being surrounded by former high-ranking officers, but also to his solutions to Romania's political and economic problems. Shortly before launching his party in 1990, addressing a meeting of "Vatra Romaneasca" sympathisers on Romania's national day, the would-be *Conducator*, commenting on the alleged dangers posed to Romania by Hungary and

the Hungarian minority in the country, said that "if the present serious situation continues to be ignored", the "patriotic writers" who had gathered around the weekly *Romania Mare*, in order to save Romania, will ask for "a military, serious national governance to be established for at least two years". "Military councils", he said, "would then take over day-to-day management in all administrative counties", which would end "economic sabotage" and "make people work".¹²⁶ When the miners descended for the second time on Bucharest in September 1991, causing the dismissal of the Petre Roman cabinet, Tudor again said that "the only solution for overcoming the crisis and safeguarding the nation is to set up a transitional, predominantly military government".¹²⁷

By 1995, when he decided to run for president in the 1996 elections, Tudor had also donned the mantle of the "people's tribune." In the column signed by Tudor in *Romania Mare* under the pseudonym "Alcibiade," he now referred to himself alternatively as "the Righteous" and "the Tribune", but both postures were obviously intended to pave the way for his becoming the country's *Conducator*. And, as had his predecessors to that title, he made it clear that unlike Ion Iliescu, his ally-turned-rival in the presidential contest, once elected he would not be surrounded by "reddish-bearded", that is to say Jewish, counsellors.¹²⁸ Moreover, an article in *Politica* singing Tudor's praise in terminology that was a carbon-copy of the "cult of personality" dictionary used under Ceausescu, compared him with the 1848 hero of the Romanian uprising in Transylvania, Avram Iancu, as well as with Antonescu. Tudor, the author wrote, was "the Righteous, the only one able to be tomorrow's Marshal Antonescu, and to make order in Romania".¹²⁹

One of Tudor's favourite topics was the alleged "Hungarian threat". Indeed, when the Tisa (Tisza) river was polluted by cyanide in February 2000, leading to (mainly, but not only) Hungarian protests, Tudor, addressing an audience celebrating the 10th anniversary of the founding of the anti-Hungarian "Vatra Romaneasca" "cultural" organisation, blamed the incident on the rapacious "sell-out" of Romanian assets to foreign (in this particular case, Australian) investors, in one of his many attacks on "globalisation". But in doing so, he added that the incident was minor when compared with the "Millennium-long poisoning of the Romanian soul's wells by Hungarian cyanide". Hungarian politics towards Romania, he said using rhyme, has always evolved between "hate and cyanide" (*intre ura si cianura*). History, he went on to say, has taught Romanians a bitter lesson and they now know that there is little difference between "The Admiral without a Sea" (Miklos Horthy, Hungary's wartime leader) and that "modern version of Popeye the Sailor Man, who is called Viktor Orban". He also labelled the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania leadership and its cabinet ministers as "impostors".¹³⁰

Not that things were developing differently on the other side of the border in Hungary, where Justice and Life Party leader Istvan Csurka grabbed the opportunity of the river's pollution by the Romanians both to chastise the "Rothschilds" - who had financed the Australian Esmeralda Exploration company, the majority-share holder in the gold-extracting mine that had caused the pollution - and to call for border revisions. "The Rothschilds" (synonymous in Hungarian for Jews and their alleged international financing power) according to Csurka "are financing, for just a little gold, the cruellest destruction of the environment on the territory of the former Greater Hungary". "Trianon [the treaty that brought about Greater Hungary's dismemberment after World War I], is flowing in the Tisza with unbounded eastern indifference", he remarked a few days later, when he used the occasion of the 15 March 2000 celebrations of the 1848 revolution to call for "an independent Transylvania" in order to avoid further pollution of Hungarian rivers.

Speaking in the parliament on 20 March 2000, Csurka described the pollution as "an offensive war without the crack of rifles" aimed at the Hungarian "living space", once again making use of Nazi-like terminology. He said the act was aimed at the "extermination" of the Hungarian nation (the implicit denigration of the Holocaust was not accidental) and urged military, economic, and ecological measures to protect it from further pollution.¹³¹

The alleged "Hungarian threat" was always combined with another favourite target of the PRM's ideology: the Roma. To give only one example, the front page of *Romania Mare* of 25 February 2000 carried a parody on the highly popular nationalistic song "We are Romanians" under the title "We are Gypsies". Using colloquial vocabulary, the parody described the Roma as thieves, Mafia criminals, pimps, drug peddlers, assassins, and violators of women, who are "spreading like a plague all over Romania". In 1998, addressing a public gathering marking 440 years since the birth of Michael the Brave (who briefly unified the three future Romanian provinces in 1600), Tudor said that "this country could only be governed through the mouth of a machine gun", and promised that when the PRM came to power it would pursue the "integration of Gypsies into Romanian society for their own, and society's benefit". Those who refuse to do so, however, those who "do not want to work, living only off plunder" must be "interned in special camps, where they will not lack anything - let them steal from one another and let them knock each other out". Expecting international protest for his statement, Tudor warned the "international community" that if Romania will "not be allowed to make order in its own house" it would expel the Roma "to those countries that put up a face of being terribly worried about them". Those countries, he commented, would then "have the whole benefit of living under the permanent threat of primitive brutes" who "wave axes and swords, attack trains, schools, and the homes of the elderly, leaving a pool of blood behind them, throwing thousands of families into bereavement year after year". He considered himself "no racist, as I have helped a great number of needy Gypsies, but it is our duty to stop Romania's transformation into a Gypsy camp".¹³²

It was a norm for Tudor and his *Romania Mare* newspaper to attack all politicians of all colours most of the time, but the uncivilised attacks to which President Emil Constantinescu was subjected during his 1996-2000 administration have not been matched by those on other politicians. For instance, the weekly carried on its front page an attack on President Constantinescu¹³³ whose colloquial vulgarities can be translated only in part. Among other things, the president was deemed to be a "bootlicker of western politicians, hooligan, rascal, uncultured, Hungarian, Stalinist, Hitlerite, Satanist, terrorist, out of his mind, impostor, political corpse, pimp, PCR activist", as well as "Securitate informer, spy, vagabond, bandy-legged, castrated," but also a "mongoloid, a depressed crocodile, ... a black-marketeer", not to mention "anti-reformist, populist, paedophile, and transsexual". Also in the same issue, an alleged group of "High-Ranking Officers from a Secret Service" attested that Constantinescu had indeed spied for the US, as well as having been recruited as a Securitate informer in exchange for dropping the prosecution against him after the communist secret police had allegedly uncovered his spy activities.¹³⁴

The allegations about Constantinescu led to Tudor being sued by the Prosecutor-General's Office for "insulting authority". Earlier, he had also accused the president of high treason in connection with the signing of the basic treaty with Ukraine, in which Romania renounced any territorial claims on that country, as well as of cigarette trafficking (the latter accusation being also directed at Constantinescu's son) and of having an extra-marital affair with a Jewish actress.¹³⁵ By 2000, Tudor

had nearly 50 libel suits running against him, and the total damages demanded by the victims of his "character assassinations" by early 2000 was some 400 billion lei (about \$20 million). In one case, the tribunal ruled that Tudor must pay Justice Minister Valeriu Stoica 440 million lei in compensation.¹³⁶

To make Tudor's summons to justice possible, the ruling coalition changed the law making it possible in 1999 for the Senate, of which he was a member, to lift parliamentary immunity with a simple majority instead of the two-thirds majority earlier stipulated by house regulations.¹³⁷ This was the second time that the PRM leader had lost his immunity. Back in 1996, the Senate lifted it for his having insulted Iliescu and SRI chief Magureanu. But the case against him was dropped after he regained immunity as a result of his re-election in 1996. Efforts by the CDR coalition to enlist PDSR support for either considering the Senate's 1996 decision as still valid or for forging the two-thirds majority for a renewed lifting (Tudor had also insulted many leaders of the new coalition, as well as libelled many intellectuals) were blocked by the now main opposition party. That was because the PDSR was obviously willing to "forgive" Tudor, having an eye on renewed collaboration with him, this time around in the opposition. It was only when the regulations were changed that prosecution became possible, but notably, Tudor has never been called by the Prosecutor-General's Office to account for his repeated anti-Hungarian, anti-Romany and anti-Semitic incitements.¹³⁸

However, the "pollution" of political discourse appealing to Romanians disoriented by economic and political upheaval and to tribal instincts only partly explains the electoral success of the PRM in the November 2000 elections. Francisco Veiga, a Spanish historian who is the author of one of the best histories of the Iron Guard¹³⁹ showed in 1997 that the party's appeal was particularly strong among the communist-made "technical/professional middle class". The PRM's social structure seems to corroborate Veiga's conclusions. Out of the 454 candidates running on the PRM lists in the 1992 elections, he shows that the "technical intelligentsia" was in the majority (53.3%, including 149 engineers and 93 "technical specialists"), followed by primary and secondary school teachers (69 persons). Retired military officers (28 candidates), skilled and unskilled workers (28) and lawyers (24) were in the minority. He concludes that the figures "indicate to what extent the growth of the extreme right-wing nationalist and neo-communist parties was a response to the early 1990s circumstances. The technical/professional sectors shaped by the previous regime were the ones that most feared unemployment and the consequential loss of social power".¹⁴⁰

There is, however, more that met Veiga's eye in his otherwise excellent study. There might have been only 28 candidates representing retired military officers on the PRM lists, but their preponderance in the party's leadership (and at the grassroot level) was much higher and would become even more so in the following years. The PRM Steering Committee elected at the November 1997 congress¹⁴¹ included six colonels and generals (out of 25 members), some of whom (such as Ilie Merce, elected Senator in November 2000) were obviously linked to intelligence and military activity under the former regime. Merce, a deputy director of the former Securitate counter-espionage division, was said on the PRM website to be a "lawyer" by profession, while former Army colonels Ion Carciumaru and Ioan Marinescu were "medical doctors". Out of the 42 PRM candidates for the Senate in 1996, two were retired colonels, while the proportion was much higher among aspirants to a seat in the Chamber of Deputies: out of the same number of candidates, two were retired generals, three were retired colonels, and one (Constantin Bucur) was a former captain in the SRI whom Tudor unsuccessfully attempted to save from prosecution

by having him gain parliamentary immunity.¹⁴² The story of Captain Bucur, elected a PRM senator in 2000, is interesting. In May 1996, Bucur had revealed that after the break between Tudor and the Iliescu-Magureanu team, the SRI had tapped the phones of the PRM and as a result he was put on trial for having disclosed "professional secrets".¹⁴³ Among PRM's parliamentarians elected in 1996 was also Tudor's elder brother, Colonel Marcu Tudor, who represented the Prahova county in the Chamber of Deputies. Former Defence Minister Nicolae Spiroiu lost his job in March 1994 because he refused to promote Marcu to the rank of general, which triggered a flood of vulgar attacks on him in the PRM weeklies, accusing Spiroiu of, among other things, corruption and undermining the military. Iliescu eventually gave in to his then semi-official ally and dismissed Spiroiu, but the minister's successors were not more eager to oblige. This led Tudor to remark in an interview that "from Iliescu to Constantinescu", Marcu had failed to be promoted "just because he is my brother".¹⁴⁴

Nevertheless, it was an open secret to anyone following the repeated leaks of information on political adversaries by the PRM, whose sources could not be doubted, that this party has gradually been transformed into a haven for those embittered military and particularly Securitate officers who were either not re-installed in the new Romanian Intelligence Service or were later eliminated from it, as well as from the armed forces. The secret, however, was well-guarded by PRM's political allies for as long as their alliance lasted. Once the conflict between Tudor and the then-President Ion Iliescu broke out, Iliescu's cronies suddenly "discovered" that the PRM included, as Dumitru Iliescu (not related to the president) - a former chief of the Romanian Protection and Guard Services - put it in 1995, "compromised elements" who, under Tudor's protection, "were repeating their earlier performance of stirring up social tension in Romanian society."¹⁴⁵

Similarly, according to then SRI chief Virgil Magureanu, "some officers who are today on reserve and who had belonged to our structures of the Romanian Intelligence Service" had "placed themselves in conservative, I would say ultraconservative positions, being incapable of overcoming old mentalities, which led to their dismissal". The fact that these elements had joined Tudor's party, Magureanu added, was "not accidental". Obviously, these people were "old ties" dating back to Tudor's activity as a Securitate informer. Making the unlikely claim that he had only recently learned about Tudor's past, Magureanu further commented that while dictator Nicolae Ceausescu had ruled over a "party state", Tudor's links with these formerly high-ranking military and intelligence officers justified PRM's description as being "a party that is a state within an existing state", based on a "paramilitary" structure. This situation, Magureanu said, was a danger to democracy and the PRM leader had taken advantage of the "too lenient attitude" that had been displayed toward him by the authorities.¹⁴⁶

In January and February 1999, the miners once again started marching on Bucharest and were stopped only after clashes with the forces of order. Tudor's party was suspected of being directly involved in the clashes, as well as in undermining, through its sympathisers in the Interior Ministry, the initial attempt of the forces of order to stop the miners' march. According to some newspapers, the PRM was directly and indirectly implicated in inciting and in organising those marches. The suspicions were never proved, but Tudor was suspended for 30 days from the Senate, from whose podium he had read out an open letter addressed to the miners, in which he said, among other things, that Constantinescu would "soon be behind the same bars" as miners' leader Miron Cozma, who had served an 18 month initial sentence for the role he played in bringing down the Petre Roman

government in September 1991. Tudor had recruited Cozma to join the PRM in 1997, in an obvious attempt to increase his own and the party's popularity among those working in this hard-hit sector of the Romanian economy. He has often incited the miners (as well as other workers) to strike and protest using violent means. But in early 1999, Cozma initially announced he was "temporarily suspending" his membership in the PRM to preclude rumours that the miners were being manipulated by Tudor's party. By then, however, Cozma had become more of a burden than a bonus, and the PRM leader serenely expelled him from the formation for "bringing the party into disrepute". Tudor's pragmatic decision helped his party to remain untainted by this event, as after the 1999 clashes Miron Cozma's old sentence was turned into 18 years in prison.¹⁴⁷

Tudor's *liaisons dangereuses* however, have extended beyond Romania's borders. In late March 1997, alongside Hungarian Justice and Life Party leader Istvan Csurka and Slovak National Party leader Jan Slota, he attended a Strasbourg congress of the French National Front, where he stated that his party "adheres without hesitation" to the Front's programmes and ideas and called for a "brotherhood alliance" between the two formations. The birth of a "Nationalist International", he said on that occasion, was now "imminent". Le Pen's then deputy, Dominique Chaboche, visited Bucharest in early 1997 and said the Front and the PRM were "ideologically tied" to each other in the struggle against a united Europe and "the idea of globalisation dictated by the US". In Strasbourg, Tudor invited Jean-Marie Le Pen to visit Romania, and the French leader attended a PRM congress in November 1997, telling the gathering that nationalism was the only doctrine that could successfully oppose the US "hegemonic plans for a New World Order".¹⁴⁸

Based on this nationalist doctrine, Tudor addressed his party's National Council in September 1999 and said that in the 2000 elections the PRM would run under the slogans of "Unity in Abundance" and "Two years of Authoritarian Rule". Giving vent to his favourite "anti-globalisation" and anti-foreign theme that he shares with many other "radicals", from Zhirinovskiy to Le Pen, he insisted that Romania was "humiliated" and turned into a "colony" by "traitors" and "gangsters" serving foreign interests who were forcing the country to "endlessly mime a so-called democracy, copied in parrot-like manner from the West". The proposed "two years of authoritarian rule" (Zhirinovskiy's inspiration was unmistakable) were to create the premise for the "abundance". During those two years, he would mercilessly hunt down "the impostors and the traitors". Once he was elected president, they would be given one week to "pack off and leave", and failure to comply would turn the new president into "a second Vlad the Impaler", the 15th century Wallach prince better known in the West as "Count Dracula".¹⁴⁹

Asked by a journalist in October 1999 what would happen if in the presidential contest there was a runoff that he did not make, Tudor replied that in that case he would ask his supporters to "vote for Marshal Antonescu".¹⁵⁰ As a matter of fact, the marshal's figure loomed large over the initial announcement of the PRM's electoral slogans. On that occasion Tudor again denied that Antonescu was in any way responsible for ordering the massacre of Jews. On the contrary, he said, "hundreds of thousands of Jews ... owe their lives to the marshal" and hastened to add that it was "outrageous" for Jews to "claim from Romania restitution or compensation of billion of dollars" (which has never been the case) "for an invented Holocaust". A "genuine Holocaust", on the other hand, was currently under way in Yugoslavia, he said, where NATO strikes had transformed that organisation, as well as the UN, into "executioners of the Serbian people and into murderers of children".

In view of these developments, he added, a referendum should ask the Romanian people whether they still wished to join NATO, "whose hands are stained with the blood of Iraqi and Serbian infants".¹⁵¹

Yet by March 2000, when he officially announced his presidential candidacy, Tudor appeared to have changed his mind on EU and NATO integration. He explained the change of heart by making reference to international reaction to Iraq, Yugoslavia, and Austria after Joerg Haider's Freedom Party had joined the coalition headed by Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel. One cannot "swim against the stream", he admitted, but the "river" described by Tudor on the occasion was one whose natural course had been diverted by "conspiracies". The world was facing an attempt to impose "globalisation" by "brutality". A "World Government" possessing "all access to political, financial, and monetary power has come into being in the last 10 years". The "cabal" was mercilessly dealing with anyone who dared to oppose it, and its first victims, according to Tudor, had been not only Ceausescu, but also Panamanian President Manuel Noriega, who, "under a flood of lies" had been turned by the US into a "drug trafficker". And to make sure that his political stature was well recognised, Tudor acknowledged that he was also receiving death threats.¹⁵²

He also pointed out that it was too early to tell where "globalisation" would lead, since there seemed to be different powers at work among its supporters. Some of its proponents "from the US and Israel" believed that globalisation would enable them to "monitor Europe". European proponents, on the other hand, believe that the unification of the continent would make it possible for them to "successfully oppose the danger of enforced Americanisation and loss of identity". His heart, he went on to say, told him that Romania's interests would have been best served by joining the bloc of "Non-Aligned States", but as that bloc "has disappeared", a small country like Romania had no other choice but to accept European integration. This is no capitulation, but 'realpolitik', the more so as Romania would be unable to emulate Yugoslavia's "sublime, but futile 79-day long resistance". Romania "would not resist even 79 minutes, not because we lack the courage, not even because of its 'traitors' who would have immediately betrayed it", but because of its "ancient political instinct". That instinct, "which some call Byzantinism", the PRM leader said, had always enabled Romanians "not to ruin the Country for the sake of illusions". They had survived as an independent nation because they had accepted historic vicissitudes, unlike Hungary, which had twice been "wiped off the map", or Poland, which had suffered that fate three times. What was now important was for Romanian politicians to "negotiate conditions for joining the EU to their last drop of blood". And the PRM, he said, "remains opposed to any integration that would not respect its specific conditions". The EU has to understand that Romania is "a Latin country that is still bleeding territorially", whose "brethren in Bessarabia and Bukovina" had "reached the limit of endurance." As such, Romania had "the moral right to have a modern, peaceful, luminous national movement" - that is to say his own movement. Furthermore, it was the Europeans' duty to aid Romania to "save" its brethren in Bessarabia [ie Moldova] and Bukovina [ie Ukraine], as Europe's borders, he said, "must move from River Prut [the border with the Republic of Moldova] to River Dniester" [Moldova's border with Ukraine].¹⁵³

What brought about the sudden change was not difficult to see. As a Romanian sociologist accurately diagnosed the metamorphosis, it was the united front the EU had displayed towards the "Haider phenomenon" in Austria. The sociologist Cristian Ghinea pointed out that after the Haider precedent no political party would dare to offer the PRM a coalition partnership and risk being outcast as Schuessel has been. And to understand this metamorphosis it is interesting to note that only

two days before he decided to "swim with the stream", Tudor criticised the international community's "disregard" of the Austrian electorate's vote that would amount to an "infringement of Austrian sovereignty". Austria, he said, is the "country of Mozart, an angel, a god", and cannot be treated as if it were "a schoolgirl who did not do her homework". He added that Haider was right to speak up against his country's being turned into a "transit hotel" just as Le Pen was right when he complained that in France, a catholic country, there are more mosques than in Libya.¹⁵⁴

In his "portrait of the PRM", Ghinea pointed out that the party is often perceived as a formation dominated by its leader. But he also noted that it is wrong to reduce the PRM to just the domineering posture of its leader. In what is possibly the best x-ray of the PRM as a radical continuity party that has ever been produced, he wrote that the PRM "is more than a party, it is a group of the former cadres of the PCR [Romanian Communist Party] and the Securitate at its apex, combined with a state of mind at its base". The party "channels the frustration of part of the population" into "a stream that is destructive for the entire democratic system in Romania." The PRM does not merely attract the "people marginalised by society", but also all Romanians who share the perception that their country is "marching on a wrong path". As no less than 80% of Tudor's supporters share this opinion, one could legitimately conclude that the PRM is the party of the losers in post-communist Romania, those who "mistrust their fellow countrymen and their neighbours," and who are persuaded that "the majority of those who have money are profiteers who exploit the rest".¹⁵⁵

The Morning After ... the November 2000 Elections

With the help of many democratic forces scared of a possible revival of nationalism, the PDSR chairman Ion Iliescu managed to secure a new term as head of state in the runoff presidential elections. Responding to exit polls on 10 December 2000, Iliescu called on Romanians to display unity in an effort of "economic and social reconstruction and struggle against poverty, corruption and crime". He said he would strive to "accelerate Romania's dignified integration into the EU and NATO" and pledged to punish those who "plundered national wealth [and] infringed on the constitution and the country's law". The president-elect also said he hoped international lenders would display "understanding" of Romania's difficult situation and "back its reforms blueprint". Meanwhile, not unexpectedly, Tudor accused the PDSR of having bribed both pollsters and the Central Election Commission, saying this was "the greatest fraud in this century's Romanian history". He also said he would appeal to the International Tribunal in The Hague and to the OSCE because the falsified election results signified "the victory of atheism and the victory of the Antichrist".¹⁵⁶

In the end, the Constitutional Court ruled on 13 December against Tudor's appeal. Meanwhile, realising that Iliescu's party, now in government, was going to implement a new strategy against his party, Tudor started to uncover compromising stories about PDSR leaders. The PRM weekly *Romania Mare* wrote in its December 2000 issue that Nastase is a Freemason (which the weekly often associates with an alleged "Judeo-Masonic", anti-Romanian conspiracy) and an informer of the Securitate. In this situation, Prime Minister Adrian Nastase was forced to say on 29 December that he "had no intention of engaging in polemics" with the Greater Romania Party concerning allegations that he served as an informer of the former communist secret services. Nastase also said that the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives had verified the personal files of all members of the parliament, adding that he might ask the council to verify again the files of all

cabinet members.¹⁵⁷ But Premier Nastase's mild rejection of his alleged cooperation with the former Securitate did not satisfy Tudor, who said on 1 February 2001 that Premier Adrian Nastase "cannot save the country from disaster". Tudor, speaking after a meeting with other political party leaders hosted by President Ion Iliescu, said Nastase was "very weak", noting that he could not stand up to international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF which were "blackmailing" Romania.¹⁵⁸

Moreover, at Tudor's incitement, several organisations representing ethnic Romanians in the Harghita and Covasna counties, the majority of whose population is Magyar, started to complain that they were worried by the "consequences" of the agreement recently reached between the ruling PDSR and the Hungarian Democratic Federation of Romania. In a letter addressed on 11 January 2001 to President Ion Iliescu, as well as to the government and the parliament, they warned against "the danger" of transforming "the two counties in the heart of Romania into a new Kosovo". The organisations objected to the intention to pass in the Chamber of Deputies the Public Administration Law previously approved by the Senate. They claimed that the new legislation gave the Hungarian language in areas inhabited by Magyars the status of "a [second] official language". They said this would "intensify separatism" and the "de facto setting up of a Hungarian border inside the country".¹⁵⁹

Following this local Transylvanian complaint, the parliamentary group of the Greater Romania Party in the Chamber of Deputies on 17 January 2001 walked out in protest against the approval of the Local Public Administration Law granting minorities the right to use their mother tongue in contacts with the authorities and to post bilingual street signs. PRM deputy Anghel Stanciu said the article was unconstitutional as it introduced Hungarian as a "second official language." He added that the PRM would contest the law in the Constitutional Court. However, in the absence of the boycotting deputies, the Chamber of Deputies on 18 January approved the Local Public Administration Law. On 17 January, UDMR deputy Ervin Szekely expressed approval of the way the PDSR had promoted the law in the legislature. He praised the act as "a gain for democracy" and "a PDSR contribution to the respect of minority rights".¹⁶⁰

But following the approval of this new legislation by the Romanian parliament, the Greater Romania Party and the Cluj mayor's office of Gheorghe Funar organised a mass rally in Avram Iancu Square in Cluj Napoca. Cluj citizens and people from other Transylvanian counties attended the rally where PRM president Senator Tudor, several legislators of that party, as well as representatives of several cultural-patriotic associations and groupings were also present. Tudor called for the release of Ilie Ilascu [a Moldovan/Romanian citizen elected a member of Romania's Senate on the PRM list while imprisoned in Transnistria] and of other political prisoners punished for their patriotic and democratic views. Tudor also called on the current leadership and all those who are in charge of administering the country's interests "to put an end to the policy of submission to foreign forces, whose goal is to turn Romania and the Romanians into an annex to the monopolies that are ruling the world". During the rally, the speakers drew attention to the fact that making Hungarian an official language in Romania would lead to the destabilisation of the country, as the first step of this move would be the country's regionalisation.¹⁶¹

Meanwhile, feeling the mood in the country, and realising that the PRM boat could run out of steam sooner rather than later, some of its leaders started to jump.

Bucharest Deputy Mayor Ioan Radu was the first to announce on 17 December 2000 that he was resigning from the PRM. Radu acknowledged that his party chairman, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, had pressed him during the election campaign to produce "so-called evidence" on corruption among Bucharest borough mayors and deputy mayors representing the PDSR. When he refused to do so, Tudor accused Radu of being involved in corruption as well. "I am not ready to be involved in 'Vadim's wars'", Radu quickly replied, "I am neither the PRM's spy [on the city council] nor Vadim's puppet".¹⁶² On 13 February 2001, PRM deputy Luca Stefanoiu announced he was resigning from the party and intended to join a new political formation, to be called the Socialist Party of National Revival (PSRN). Stefanoiu also said that Ioan Radu would join PSRN together with other PRM and PDSR deputies. The intention to set up the new formation had been announced by Radu on 12 February when he said "at least 15" PRM and PDSR parliamentarians would resign their membership and become PSRN members. He said the main policy of the new party would be economic and social, but added that "it is strictly necessary to promote those activities from a position that safeguards the Romanian people's national identity" from "moderate, non-extremist positions."¹⁶³

Obviously, the phenomenon of the "dissidents" leading new parties is not unknown in the period following a general election, and so far this trend does not seem to have the magnitude of that immediately after the 1996 elections. The most targeted party in this respect, as then, is the most consistent opposition party, now the PRM. Indeed, the establishment of a new political party has several explanations, but also a number of inconsistencies. On the one hand, the newly recruited members seem to be from the area of interference of the two parties of origin, ie nationalism and social welfare, thus giving birth to a socialist party of national unity. The protagonists are PRM members displeased with the aggressive, excessively nationalist policy and with Corneliu Vadim Tudor's "dictatorship", while the PDSR members are unhappy with the attitude the party has displayed lately by cooperating with the ethnic Hungarians' UDMR and making compromises in sensible matters, such as the Local Public Administration Law.

On the other hand, bearing in mind the history of manipulations in post-communist Romania's politics, one cannot rule out the possibility of yet another Iliescu attempt to control the whole political spectrum in the country. Viewed from this angle, one could note Tudor's remarks on 13 February, that the setting up of "the so-called Socialist Party of National Revival by PRM defectors is a PDSR manoeuvre to create in the parliament a new majority". Tudor also said that the PSRN was "nothing but a politically aborted foetus moulded in the likeness of similar provocations conceived by Iliescu's advisors. ... Shame on you, Mr Iliescu! Isn't it sufficient that you stole the elections from me, do you now want to also steal my party from me?"¹⁶⁴

No doubt, beyond the fact that the new party will fill a void in the Romanian political scene of mild nationalism mingled with social requirements, its formation marks a sensible decrease of the PRM's power. Beyond the initial break away of a number of deputies or senators, this new party could be seen in Parliament as a refuge for those opposing or increasingly displeased with the attitude and position within the PRM of its absolutist leader. If they increase in number, the parliamentary power of the main opposition party would lessen, prompting PDSR to find an important ally and together to build up in time a more comfortable majority in the Parliament. Beyond the social and political implications of the configuration of the political spectrum, this is the most important consequence of the new party. Ioan Radu is likely to settle into a more centrist position on the political scene,

closer to the PDSR faction and will definitely not look for associates in the vicinity of the more reformed-minded Prime Minister Adrian Nastase. The changes so far could indicate an imminent political balance during Iliescu's four year presidency.

Conclusions

During the 1990s, many argued that with the collapse of communism, the downfall of the Soviet empire, and the break-up of the Soviet Union, the danger of another world war had disappeared. According to this view, the Soviet military threat to the West no longer exists as, unlike in the past, Moscow is now mainly preoccupied with its own domestic problems. But the propulsion of Putin as successor to President Yeltsin and his reinvigorated political and military interests in the Russian Federation's near abroad and in the former communist countries, to enumerate only a few, could once again destabilise Europe and the world. This change of political priorities in Moscow has created a fertile soil for extreme nationalism not only in the former Soviet empire, but also in those countries unable so far to meet NATO and EU conditions for enlargement.

Recent elections in Romania have caused anxiety well beyond the borders of the country itself. Both the United States and the European Union have raised concerns about the country's development. However, the significance of the elections might go beyond that. A "Romanian scenario" could follow in other Central and Eastern European countries as well. In Slovakia, Croatia, and most likely Serbia, large coalitions of pro-Western parties have recently ousted authoritarian leaders and are struggling to meet great public expectations. As in Romania, they might fail and be succeeded by their authoritarian predecessors.

Trying to draw a conclusion on post-communist Romania's radical politics, it would be fair to assess that the existing parties of radical return, voicing fascism and ultra-nationalism, no longer play an important political role in current and future Romanian developments. Without ruling them out completely, mainly as a state of mind, one has instead to be aware of the revival of radical continuity, with all its communist, anti-Hungarian and anti-Semitism connotations. From this perspective, the Greater Romania Party and its leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, are the most dangerous for future democratic development in Romania, and their success in the November 2000 general election is a witness to what a radical party could do in a country oppressed by 50 years of communism and endemic nationalism. Moreover, this extreme nationalist formation could still play an important role in defining Romania's future perspectives, especially its genuine interest in becoming a full member of civilised Europe, of NATO and the EU.

And indeed, many analysts in the West have interpreted the Romanian parliamentary and presidential elections as the success of radical politics' continuity extremism. However, rather than expressing support for the extreme right PMR and Tudor, voters have rejected the "democratic project" of the former government and, at first sight, for good reason. The coalition of the CDR, the Democratic Party, and the UDMR won the 1996 elections on a pro-Western and pro-democratic platform, ousting the corrupt ex-communist clique of Iliescu's PDSR, the not-so-reformed former communist party that had adopted a national-authoritarian rhetoric. Chief among the coalition's promises was restructuring the economy in such a way that everyone would get richer and accession to the European Union would become possible within the foreseeable future. Obviously, they failed. Like all opposition parties in Eastern Europe, and most in the West as

well, they promised too much to too many people. Worse than that, they failed to present a decent alternative to the nationalist-authoritarian projects of former (and new) President Ion Iliescu. Claiming to represent Western-style democracy, the coalition soon turned governance into continuous bickering over personal and financial feuds. Having been held together mainly by the struggle against Iliescu, the different parties and coalitions started to fall apart as soon as they were in government. Parties split and merged at a rate with which even academic specialists could hardly keep up, let alone the public. After a while, the elite did not even try to conceal the lack of fundamental differences among the parties, and the party names became endless variations of the same key words: party, Romania, and national.

Not surprisingly, most of these parties failed to top the threshold in the recent elections needed to retain seats in parliament. They represented elites rather than issues or subcultures and had no grassroots links whatsoever, mainly serving to give certain leaders a larger share of power. At the same time, the opposition parties profited from the government's failures by closing ranks and mobilising grassroots support. That strategy was rewarded in the parliamentary elections, where the "ex-communist" PDSR and the extreme-right PRM were the only truly united parties to contest the elections. Though both parties pay lip service to the term "democracy," they are at best sceptical of the West and of true liberal democracy.

The results of Romania's parliamentary and presidential elections represent not only a return to a past ex-communist regime but also the revival of an endemic radical nationalism which was ultimately stopped from having a larger say in the running of the country by a strategic vote by the electorate. Voting to prevent a man who declared that "NATO is nothing but a satanist organisation, a malignant tumour on the brain of mankind"¹⁶⁵ was not such a bad thing. But irrespective of this anti-nationalism vote, it should be pointed out that ten years after the Romanians fought to destroy Ceausescu's restrictions on human rights and freedoms, the Romanians voted in November 2000 to reinstate CV Tudor's ethnic hatred and Iliescu's neo-communism. Eighty percent of parliament is made up of ex-communists. The "Romanian scenario" has already been taken as a model by the Republic of Moldova, where they voted on 25 February 2001 for the return to power, for the first time in post-communist Europe, of a communist pro-Russia party.

But how can one explain the large support in the election campaign for a party that is anti-Hungarian, anti-Roma, anti-Semitic, and overtly populist when in the run-up to the parliamentary and presidential elections, Iliescu and the PDSR consistently led the opinion polls? First, the PRM benefited from disillusion with the outgoing coalition which proved to be disunited and dysfunctional. In the electoral campaign, Tudor seemed to be little threat to the likes of Iliescu and Prime Minister Mugur Isarescu (standing as an independent presidential candidate) and waited on the sideline as the other presidential and parliamentary candidates battled it out in an attempt to discredit each other. Meanwhile, Tudor promoted himself as "righteous" and his party as untainted by Romania's rampant corruption; his promises to save the country through a "dictatorship of the law" were attractive to an unsophisticated, impoverished and desperate electorate.

Second, Tudor managed to attract large segments of the younger electorate who see its future as bleak and for whom his past as a Ceausescu court poet and radical politician was irrelevant. Moreover, Tudor's radical and simplistic "solutions",

particularly those blaming the current situation on Romania's foreign "enemies" (among whom Tudor counts the IMF, the World Bank, and an undefined, but obviously Jewish-led globalisation drive) and their domestic "puppets" formed by central-right parties met with the approval of a electorate disillusioned with the West's lack of sustainable support to Romania's democratic credentials. Furthermore, the PRM success in Transylvania in the first round, especially among the young electorate, which helped Tudor to more than double the votes cast for it and the PUNR together in 1996, has another explanation. Through a very well organised campaign of disinformation, Tudor managed to "scare" the Romanian electorate just days before the elections that a secret alliance between Iliescu and the ethnic Hungarians was in the making. In the runoff, the same electorate overwhelmingly backed Iliescu, and the younger voters no longer supported Tudor. Third, Tudor did exceptionally well in Transylvania, the country's economically most developed region, which indicates that poverty and other economic grounds do not tell the whole story. The party benefited from the disintegration in Transylvania of the Party of Romanian National Unity, whose former leader, Gheorghe Funar, is now PRM secretary general. Support for the PUNR, which failed to reach parliamentary representation in alliance with another party, has clearly been transferred to the PRM. However, Tudor's success indicates that his party's appeal has gained ground even among former supporters of the more democratic CDR. Perhaps those CDR-supporters among Romania's intellectuals, whose defence of interwar extreme nationalism indirectly legitimised Tudor, would be well advised to start asking themselves some questions.

Finally, it is by now clear that Tudor's influence in the next four years of Romania's political life is going to be diminished. Not only is Tudor's party likely to be split by internal rivalries and political manipulations, but also the unanimous criticism, internal and external, of his electoral success has produced a shock to Romania's political system. In this situation, even if Iliescu's government proves unable to develop the country's young democracy, there is a huge question mark over whether the PRM and its leader will have the same success in opposition, and ultimately in the 2004 elections. Whether or not the Iliescu government pursues democratic economic and social reform, the electorate, particularly the more liberal centre-right parties, have learned a hard lesson from the cold shower of November 2000.

ENDNOTES

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⁷ Nichifor Crainic was considered one of the ideologists of the Legion of Archangels movement in Romania. The "movement" was set up by Corneliu Codreanu and a few close friends in 1927, becoming the Iron Guard in 1930, with its members continuing to call themselves "legionnaires". The Iron Guard did not abolish, but encompassed the Legion, the change in denomination being prompted by Codreanu's aim to strengthen the mass character of his organisation. For more details see Braun, A, "The Incomplete Revolutions: The Rise of Extremism in East-Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union," in Braun, A,

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- ²¹ See the interview with Zamfirescu in *Adevarul Literar si Artistic*, 9 May 1993.
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