

ROMUNIJA

Jeseni 1989 se je Romunija priključila ostali vzhodni Evropi pri odcepitvi od hlapčevstva komunistične vladavine. Komunistična vladavina je bila posebno problematična na primeru Romunije, zato je bilo pričakovati, da bo odcepitev tudi nasilna in radikalna. Hitrost dosežene revolucije v Romuniji, je presenetila veliko opazovalcev na zahodu. Romunijo je zaznamoval kaos, politične intrige – pod vodstvom Čaušeskuja (Ceausescu), ki je vladal R. četrto stoletje. Decembra 1989 je Čaušesko in njegova diktatura padla.

KOMUNIZEM V ROMUNIJI

Avgusta 1944 padec Antonescusovega fašističnega režima. Njegov padec je izvršila opozicija s pomočjo kralja Mihaia I. in Rdeče armade. To je omogočilo Komunistični partiji Romunije (KPR), da pride na oblast.

Prva pomembnejša voditeljica KPR sta bila ANA PAUKER in GEORGHE GHEORGHIU – DEJ. Posebno veliko moč pa je imela KPR pod vodstvom NICOLA CEAUSESCUJA in njegovega klana.

Nicolae Ceausescu

Leta 1932 se je priključil KPR, ki je takrat delovala še v ilegali. Od leta 1933 do 1938 je bil zaradi aktivnega delovanja v KPR večkrat zaprt. V tem obdobju je bila Romunija pod oblastjo fašističnega režima Antonescusa. Ceausescu je veljal za nevarnega komunističnega agitatorja, ki je bil aktiven predvsem na področju komunistične in antifašistične propagande.

V zaporu je Ceausescu spoznal Georghe Gheorghiusa Deja in druge vodilne člane KPR. Po izpustitvi iz zapora leta 1939, je Ceausescu prevzel funkcijo komunističnega funkcionarja mladine. Leta 1940 ga je fašistična vlada Antonescusa zopet zaprla, poslan pa je bil tudi v koncentracijsko taborišče. Leta 1944 po padcu režima je bil Ceausescu izpuščen.

Leta 1945 je postal na pobudo Gheorghiusa- Deja član centralnega komiteja KPR. Leta 1946 pa je postal poslanec v romunskem parlamentu. To funkcijo je opravljal do svoje smrti leta 1989.

Leta 1946 je prišlo do združitve KPR z socialdemokratsko stranko v romunsko delavsko stranko (PMR).

Ceausescu je bil tudi minister za kmetijstvo. Ker pa je izvedel zemljiško reformo je bil deležen veliko kritik.

Leta 1965, ko je umrl dotedanji prvi mož KPR Gheorghiu-Dej, je njegovo vlogo prevzel Ceausescu in postal je prvi sekretar ZK KPR. Pod njegovim vodstvom se je vladna stranka iz PMR zopet preimenovala v KPR.

Ceausescu je leta 1974 postal romunski predsednik. V času svojega vladanja je razvil močno diktaturo, ki je bila podobna stalinistični diktaturi. Razvil pa je tudi svoj kult osebnosti – imenoval se je Conducator (vodja) ter tudi Izvoljeni in Zemeljski bog. Tudi njegova žena Elena Ceausescu je imela pomembno vlogo v romunski politiki.

Posebno naklonjen je bil industrializaciji, kar pa je povzročilo propadanje gospodarstva, posebno v krizi je bilo kmetijstvo: delavci niso prejeli plač, potrebno je bilo racionirati električno energijo, veliko pomanjkanje prehrabnih izdelkov, veliki pa so bili tudi dolgovi države. Namesto, da bi se Ceausescu posvetil reševanju osnovnih problemov, se je povečal izvajanju gradenj velikih objektov, kar je še bolj praznilo državni proračun (Donavski kanal, obnova Bukarešte po potresu 1977 – posebno se je posvečal obnovi palače). Njegov cilj je bila tudi sistematizacija – program uničevanja vasi (vaščani so bili prisilno preusmerjeni v industrijo). Ceausescu je imel cilj, da s tem programom uniči okrog 8000 vasi.

Leta 1989 je bankrotiralo veliko romunskih podjetij. Prebivalstvo je bilo obubožano in nejevoljno glede slabih razmer v državi. Z Ceausescujevim vodenjem države je bila nezadovoljna tudi policija in KPR. Iz njegovega časa so poznani tudi Gulagi (domovi za prizadete osebe – nečloveške razmere).

16. decembra 1989 je prišlo do vstaje v zahodno romunskem mestu Timisoara. Veliko demonstrantov je bilo ubitih. Tako kot v večini držav vzhodne Evrope, so bile tudi v Romuniji glavni vzrok za izbruh nezadovoljstva reforme ter politične in narodnostne razmere. V Romuniji se je decembra 1989 začelo z demonstracijami nezadovoljne in preganjane nekaj milijonske madžarske manjšine. Eden najtrših komunističnih režimov Nicolaa Ceausescuja je posredoval s policijo in poskušal organizirati prorežimske demonstracije. Te so se prelevile v protirežimske demonstracije in na stran demonstrantov je stopila tudi vojska in policija. Oblast je prevzel Odbor za narodno rešitev, ki se je boril proti Ceausescu zvesti tajni službi Securitate.

Na hitrem sodišču so romunskega diktatorja in njegovo ženo Eleno obsodili na smrt z ustrelitvijo in obsodbo tudi izvršili. Spomladi 1990 so v Romuniji organizirali večstrankarske volitve, na katerih si je oblast zagotovila reformistična komunistična stranka.

In August 1944, Antonescu was toppled and arrested by King [Michael I of Romania](#). Romania changed sides and joined the [Allies](#), but its role in the defeat of [Nazi Germany](#) was not recognized by the [Paris Peace Conference](#) of 1947. With the [Red Army](#) forces still stationed in the country and exerting *de facto* control, [Communists](#) and their allied parties claimed 80% of the vote, through a combination of vote manipulation,^[5] elimination and forced mergers of competing parties, establishing themselves as the dominant force. In 1947, [King Michael I](#) was forced by the Communists to abdicate and leave the country. Romania was proclaimed a [republic](#), and remained under direct military and economic control of the [USSR](#) until the late 1950s. During this period, Romania's resources were drained by the "[SovRom](#)" agreements: mixed Soviet-Romanian companies established to mask the looting of Romania by the Soviet Union, in addition to excessive war reparations paid to the USSR. A large number of people were arbitrarily imprisoned for political, economic or unknown reasons: detainees in prisons or camps, deported, persons under house arrest, and administrative detainees. Political prisoners were also detained as psychiatric patients. Estimations vary, from 60,000,^[6] 80,000,^[7] up to two million.^[8] There were hundreds of thousands of abuses, deaths and incidents of torture against a large range of people, from political opponents to ordinary citizens.^[9] Most political prisoners were freed in a series of amnesties between 1962 and 1964.

After the negotiated retreat of Soviet troops, in 1958, Romania started to pursue independent policies, including the condemnation of the Soviet-led 1968 invasion of [Czechoslovakia](#) (Romania was the only [Warsaw Pact](#) country not to take part in the invasion), the continuation of diplomatic relations with [Israel](#) after the [Six-Day War](#) of 1967 (again, the only [Warsaw Pact](#) country to do so), the establishment of economic (1963) and diplomatic (1967) relations with the [Federal Republic of Germany](#), and so forth. Also, close ties with the [Arab](#) countries (and the [PLO](#)) allowed Romania to play a key role in the [Israel-Egypt](#) and Israel-PLO peace processes (intermediated the visit of Sadat in Israel.^[10]) A short-lived period of relative economic well-being and openness followed in the late 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. As Romania's foreign debt sharply increased between 1977 and 1981 (from 3 to 10 billion US dollars), the influence of international financial organisations such as the [IMF](#) or the [World Bank](#) grew, conflicting with [Nicolae Ceaușescu's](#) [autarchic](#) policies. Ceaușescu eventually initiated a project of total reimbursement of the foreign debt (completed in 1989, shortly

before his overthrow). To achieve this goal, he imposed policies that impoverished Romanians and exhausted the Romanian economy. He profoundly deepened Romania's [police state](#) and imposed a [cult of personality](#) which led to his overthrow and death in the [Romanian Revolution of 1989](#).

After the fall of Ceaușescu, the [National Salvation Front](#) (FSN), led by [Ion Iliescu](#), restored civil order and took partial democratic measures. Several major political parties of the pre-war era, such as the [National Christian Democrat Peasant's Party \(PNTCD\)](#), the [National Liberal Party \(PNL\)](#) and the [Romanian Social Democrat Party \(PSDR\)](#) were resurrected. After several major political rallies (especially in January), in April 1990, a sit-in protest contesting the results of the recently held parliamentary elections began in the [University Square, Bucharest](#). The protesters accused the FSN of being made up of former Communists and members of the [Securitate](#). The protesters did not recognize the results of the election, which they deemed undemocratic, and were asking for the exclusion from the political life of the former high-ranking Communist Party members. The protest rapidly grew to become an ongoing mass demonstration (known as the [Golaniad](#)). The peaceful demonstrations degenerated into violence. After the police failed to bring the demonstrators to order, [Ion Iliescu](#) called on the coal miners of the [Jiu Valley](#) to crush the rally ([June 14](#)). Their violent intervention is remembered as the [June 1990 Mineriad](#).

The subsequent disintegration of the FSN produced several political parties including the Romanian Democrat Social Party (PDSR, later [Social Democratic Party](#), PSD), the [Democratic Party](#) (PD) and the ApR ([Alliance for Romania](#)). The PDSR party governed Romania from 1990 until 1996 through several coalitions and governments with Ion Iliescu as head of state. Since then there have been three democratic changes of government: in 1996, the democratic-liberal opposition and its leader [Emil Constantinescu](#) acceded to power; in 2000 the Social Democrats returned to power, with [Iliescu](#) once again president; and in 2004 [Traian Băsescu](#) was elected president, with an electoral coalition called [Justice and Truth Alliance](#) (DA). The government was formed by a larger coalition which also includes the [Conservative Party](#) and the [ethnic Hungarian party](#). Post-[Cold War](#) Romania developed closer ties with [Western Europe](#), eventually joining [NATO](#) in 2004. The country applied in June 1993 for membership in the [European Union](#) (EU). It became an Associated State of the EU in 1995, an Acceding Country in 2004, and a member on [January 1, 2007](#).

Ion Victor Antonescu

[Prime Minister of Romania](#)

In office

[September 4, 1940](#) – [August 23, 1944](#)

Preceded by [Ion Gigurtu](#)

Succeeded by [Constantin Sănătescu](#)

[Conducător of Romania](#)

In office

[September 4, 1940](#) – [August 23, 1944](#)

Ion Victor Antonescu ([June 15, 1882](#), [Pitești](#) – [June 1, 1946](#), near [Jilava](#)) was the prime minister and *conducător* (Leader) of [Romania](#) during [World War II](#) from [September 4, 1940](#) to [August 23, 1944](#).

General Antonescu was appointed Prime Minister by King [Carol II](#) on [September 4, 1940](#), after Romania was forced to surrender [Bessarabia](#) and northern [Bukovina](#) to the [USSR](#) ([June 28, 1940](#)) and the northern half of [Transylvania](#) to [Hungary](#) ([August 30, 1940](#)), and three days before the [Cadrilater](#) was transferred to [Bulgaria](#) ([September 7, 1940](#)). On September 5, following Antonescu's demand, King Carol suspended the [Constitution of 1938](#), dissolved [Parliament](#), and gave Antonescu full powers. That evening, he forced King Carol to abdicate and leave the country, which he did on September 6. Carol's son, [Crown Prince Michael](#) (Mihai), was proclaimed the new King, although his powers were essentially ceremonial duties such as supreme Head of the Army. Antonescu named himself *Conducător* (*Leader*) and assumed dictatorial powers.

After the traditional, democratic, parties of Romania refused to send competent members into the Government, Antonescu approached the [Nationalist Iron Guard](#) party and offered them seats in the Government ([September 15, 1940](#)). Antonescu desired to bring the Iron Guard under his direct control, because their paramilitary activities were undermining the authority of the state. The ensuing period was known as the '[National Legionary State](#)' (*Statul național-legionar*). Eventually, after their demands for extended powers were repeatedly turned down by Antonescu, the Iron Guard [rebelled](#) ([January 21, 1941](#)). Antonescu quickly crushed the rebellion (with the consent of Germany, whose economic and military interests demanded stability in Romania), outlawed the Iron Guard and had their top leaders imprisoned or expelled from the country.

Antonescu formed an alliance with [Nazi Germany](#), thereby ensuring stability and strategic material, such as the extensive Romanian oil reserves, could be used by the Axis Powers. Further, Antonescu was delighted with the prospect of war against the [USSR](#), because of his hatred of [Bolshevism](#), and hoped this would guarantee the reconquest of [Bessarabia](#) and northern [Bukovina](#). Also, by participating in the war on the Eastern front, Antonescu hoped to persuade Hitler to give back the northern half of [Transylvania](#) to Romania after the hostilities were over. He was informed by Hitler himself about [Operation Barbarossa](#) ten days before its launch..

Iron Guard

The **Iron Guard** is the name most commonly given in English to an ultra-[nationalist anti-Semitic](#), [anti-Hungarian](#), [fascist](#) movement and political party in [Romania](#) in the period from [1927](#) into the early part of [World War II](#).

Originally founded by [Corneliu Zelea Codreanu](#) on [July 24, 1927](#) as the Legion of the [Archangel Michael](#) (*Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail*), and led by him until his death in [1938](#), adherents to the movement continued to be widely referred to as "legionnaires" (sometimes "legionaries"; [Romanian](#): *legionarii*) and the organization as the "Legion" or the "Legionary Movement" (*Mișcarea Legionară*), despite various changes of the (intermittently banned) organization's name. In March [1930](#) Codreanu formed the "Iron Guard" (*Garda de Fier*) as a [paramilitary](#) political branch of the Legion; this name eventually came to refer to the Legion itself. Later, in June [1935](#), the Legion changed its official name to the *Totul pentru Țară* party, literally "Everything for the Country", but commonly translated as "Everything for the Fatherland" or occasionally "Everything for the Motherland".^[1]

Nicolae Ceaușescu

General Secretary of the [Romanian Communist Party](#)

In office

[March 22, 1965](#) – [December 22, 1989](#)

Preceded by [Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej](#)

1st [President of Romania](#)

In office

[December 9, 1967](#) – [December 22, 1989](#)

Preceded by [Chivu Stoica](#)

Succeeded by [Ion Iliescu](#)

Born	January 26, 1918 Scornicești, Olt, Romania
Died	December 25, 1989 (aged 71) Târgoviște, Dâmbovița, Romania
Nationality	Romanian
Political party	Communist Party of Romania
Spouse	Elena Ceaușescu

Nicolae Ceaușescu ([January 26, 1918](#)–[December 25, 1989](#)) was the leader of [Romania](#) from 1965 until December 1989. That month, he was placed on trial in a [kangaroo court](#) and convicted for crimes against the state, genocide, and "undermining the national economy."^[4] His subsequent execution marked the final act of the [Revolutions of 1989](#).

Early life and career

He joined the then-illegal [Communist Party of Romania](#) in early 1932 and was first arrested, in 1933, for agitating during a [strike](#). He was arrested again, in 1934, first for collecting signatures on a petition protesting the trial of railway workers and twice more for other similar activities. These arrests earned him the description "dangerous communist agitator" and "active distributor of communist and [anti-fascist propaganda](#)" on his police record. He then went underground, but was captured and imprisoned in 1936 for two years at [Doftana Prison](#) for anti-fascist activities.

While out of jail in 1939, he met [Elena Petrescu](#) (they married in 1946)—she would play an increasing role in his political life over the decades. He was arrested and imprisoned again in 1940. In 1943, he was transferred to [Târgu Jiu internment camp](#) where he shared a cell with [Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej](#), becoming his protégé. After [World War II](#), when Romania was beginning to fall under [Soviet](#) influence, he served as secretary of the [Union of Communist Youth](#) (1944–1945).

After the Communists seized power in [Romania](#) in 1947, he headed the ministry of agriculture, then served as deputy minister of the armed forces under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's [Stalinist](#) reign. In 1952, Gheorghiu-Dej brought him onto the [Central Committee](#) months after the party's "Muscovite faction" led by [Ana Pauker](#) had been purged. In 1954, he became a full member of the [Politburo](#) and eventually rose to occupy the second-highest position in the party hierarchy.

Leadership of Romania

Three days after the death of Gheorghiu-Dej in March 1965, Ceaușescu became [first secretary](#) of the Romanian Workers' Party. One of his first acts was to rename the party, the Romanian Communist Party, and declare that the country was now the [Socialist Republic of Romania](#) rather than a [People's Republic](#). In 1967, he consolidated his power by becoming president of the State Council.

Initially, Ceaușescu was a popular figure in Romania, due to his independent foreign policy, challenging the supremacy of the Soviet Union in Romania. In the 1960s, he ended Romania's active participation in the [Warsaw Pact](#) (though Romania formally remained a member); he refused to take part in the [1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia](#) by Warsaw Pact forces, and actively and openly condemned that action. Although the Soviet Union largely tolerated Ceaușescu's recalcitrance, his seeming independence from [Moscow](#) earned Romania maverick status within the [Eastern Bloc](#).

In 1974, Ceaușescu added "President of Romania" to his titles, further consolidating his power. He followed an independent policy in foreign relations. Also, the country was the first of the Eastern Bloc to have official relations with the [European Community](#): an agreement including Romania in the Community's Generalised System of Preferences was signed in 1974 and an Agreement on Industrial Products was signed in 1980. However, Ceaușescu refused to implement any liberal reforms. The evolution of his regime followed the Stalinist path already traced by Gheorghiu-Dej. Their opposition to Soviet control was mainly determined by the unwillingness to proceed to [de-Stalinization](#). The secret police ([Securitate](#)) maintained firm control over speech and the media, and tolerated no internal opposition.

The 1966 decree

In 1966, the Ceaușescu regime reversed the [1957](#) decree permitting [abortion](#), and introduced other policies to increase [birth rate](#) and [fertility rate](#) - including a special tax amounting to between ten and twenty percent on the incomes of men and women who remained childless after the age of twenty-five, whether married or single. Abortion was permitted only in cases where the woman in question was over forty-two, or already the mother of four (later five) children. Mothers of at least five children would be entitled to significant benefits, while mothers of at least ten children were declared *heroine mothers* receiving a gold medal, a free car, free transportation on trains, etc.; few women ever sought this status, the average Romanian family having two to three children (see [Demographics of Romania](#)).^[5] Furthermore, a considerable number of women either died or were maimed during clandestine abortions.^[6]

The government also targeted rising [divorce](#) rates and made divorce much more difficult - it was decreed that a marriage could be dissolved only in exceptional cases. By the late 1960s, the population began to swell, accompanied by rising poverty and increased [homelessness](#) ([street children](#)) in the urban areas. In turn, a new problem was created by uncontrollable [child abandonment](#), which swelled the [orphanage](#) population (See [Cighid](#)) and facilitated a rampant [AIDS epidemic](#) in the late 1980s - created by the regime's refusal to acknowledge the existence of the disease, and its unwillingness to allow for any [HIV test](#) to be carried out.^[7]

The July Theses

Ceaușescu visited the [People's Republic of China](#), [North Korea](#) and [North Vietnam](#) in 1971 and was inspired by the hardline model he found there. He took great interest in the idea of

total national transformation as embodied in the programs of the [Korean Workers' Party](#) and China's [Cultural Revolution](#). Shortly after returning home, he began to emulate North Korea's system, influenced by the [Juche](#) philosophy of North Korean President [Kim Il Sung](#). Korean books on Juche were translated into Romanian and widely distributed in the country. On [July 6, 1971](#), he delivered a speech before the Executive Committee of the PCR. This quasi-[Maoist](#) speech, which came to be known as the [July Theses](#), contained seventeen proposals. Among these were: continuous growth in the "leading role" of the Party; improvement of Party education and of mass political action; youth participation on large construction projects as part of their "patriotic work"; an intensification of political-ideological education in schools and universities, as well as in children's, youth and student organisations; and an expansion of political propaganda, orienting radio and television shows to this end, as well as publishing houses, theatres and cinemas, opera, ballet, artists' unions, etc., promoting a "militant, revolutionary" character in artistic productions. The liberalisation of 1965 was condemned, and an Index of banned books and authors was re-established.

The Theses heralded the beginning of a "mini [cultural revolution](#)" in Romania, launching a [Neo-Stalinist](#) offensive against cultural autonomy, reaffirming an ideological basis for literature that, in theory, the Party had hardly abandoned. Although presented in terms of "Socialist Humanism", the Theses in fact marked a return to the strict guidelines of [Socialist Realism](#), and attacks on non-compliant [intellectuals](#). Strict ideological conformity in the humanities and social sciences was demanded. Competence and aesthetics were to be replaced by ideology; professionals were to be replaced by [agitators](#); and culture was once again to become an instrument for political-ideological [propaganda](#).

The Pacepa defection

In 1978, [Ion Mihai Pacepa](#), a senior member of the Romanian political police ([Securitate](#)), [defected](#) to the United States. A 2-star general, he was the highest ranking defector from the Soviet bloc in the history of the Cold War.^[8] His defection was a powerful blow against the regime, forcing Ceaușescu to overhaul the architecture of the Securitate. Pacepa's 1986 book, *Red Horizons: Chronicles of a Communist Spy Chief* ([ISBN 0895265702](#)), reveals details of Ceaușescu's regime, such as his collaboration with [Arab terrorists](#), his massive [espionage](#) on American industry and his elaborate efforts to rally Western political support. After Pacepa's defection, the country became more isolated and the economic growth stopped. Ceaușescu's intelligence agency became subject to heavy infiltration by foreign intelligence agencies and he started to lose control of the country. He tried several reorganisations in a bid to get rid of old collaborators of Pacepa, but to no avail. According to the official declaration made by president [Ion Iliescu](#) when Pacepa asked for the return of his properties and position, Pacepa was "a confused man" who gathered illegal properties in Romania by using his influential position. The Romanian Supreme Court disagreed (Decision No. 41/1999) cancelling his death sentences, restoring his military rank, and ordering the restoration of his properties.

Foreign debt

Despite his increasingly [totalitarian](#) rule, Ceaușescu's political independence from the Soviet Union and his protests against the invasion of [Czechoslovakia](#) in [1968](#) drew the interest of [Western](#) powers, who briefly believed he was an anti-Soviet maverick, and hoped to create a schism in the Warsaw Pact by funding him. Ceaușescu did not realise that the funding was not always very favourable. Ceaușescu was able to borrow heavily (more than \$13 billion) from the West to finance economic development programs, but these loans ultimately devastated

the country's financial situation. In an attempt to correct this situation, Ceaușescu decided to eradicate Romania's [foreign debts](#). He organised a [referendum](#) and managed to change the [constitution](#), adding a [clause](#) that barred Romania from taking foreign debts in the future. The referendum yielded a nearly unanimous "yes" vote.

In the 1980s, Ceaușescu ordered the [export](#) of much of the country's [agricultural](#) and [industrial production](#) in order to repay its debts. The resulting domestic [shortages](#) made the everyday life of Romanian citizens a fight for survival as food [rationing](#) was introduced and [heating](#), [gas](#) and [electricity](#) black-outs became the rule. There was a steady decrease in the living standard (and especially the availability of food and general goods in stores) between 1980 and 1989. The official explanation was that the country was paying its debts, and people accepted the suffering, believing it to be for a short time only and for the ultimate good.

The debt was fully paid in summer 1989, shortly before Ceaușescu was overthrown.

Tensions grow

By 1989, Ceaușescu was showing signs of complete denial of reality. While the country was going through extremely difficult times with long bread lines in front of empty food stores, he was often shown on state TV entering stores filled with food supplies and praising the "high living standard" achieved under his rule. In late 1989, daily TV broadcasts showed lists of CAPs ([kolkhozes](#)) with alleged record harvests, in blatant contradiction with the shortages experienced by the average Romanian at the time.

Some people, believing that Ceaușescu was not aware of what was going on in the country, attempted to hand him petitions and complaint letters during his many visits around the country. However, each time he got a letter, he would immediately pass it on to members of his security detail. Whether or not Ceaușescu ever read any of them will probably remain unknown. According to rumours of the time,¹ people attempting to hand letters directly to Ceaușescu risked adverse consequences, courtesy of the secret police [Securitate](#). People were strongly discouraged from addressing him and there was a general sense that things had reached an overall low.

Revolution and collapse

Revolution

Ceaușescu's regime collapsed after a series of violent events in [Timișoara](#) and [Bucharest](#) in December 1989.

In November 1989, the XIVth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR) saw Ceaușescu, now aged 71, reelected for another 5 years as leader of the PCR.

Demonstrations in the city of [Timișoara](#) were triggered by the government-sponsored attempt to evict [László Tóké](#)s, an [ethnic Hungarian church minister](#), accused by the government of inciting [ethnic hatred](#). Members of his ethnic Hungarian [congregation](#) surrounded his apartment in a show of support. Romanian [students](#) spontaneously joined the demonstration, which soon lost nearly all connection to its initial [cause](#) and became a more general anti-government demonstration. Regular [military](#) forces, [police](#) and [Securitate](#) fired on demonstrators on [December 17, 1989](#).

On [December 18, 1989](#), Ceaușescu departed for a visit to [Iran](#), leaving the duty of crushing the Timișoara revolt to his subordinates and his wife. Upon his return on the evening of [December 20](#), the situation became even more tense, and he gave a televised [speech](#) from the [TV studio](#) inside Central Committee Building (CC Building), in which he spoke about the [events](#) at Timișoara in terms of an "interference of foreign forces in Romania's internal affairs" and an "external aggression on Romania's sovereignty". The country, which had no information of the Timișoara events from the national [media](#), heard about the Timișoara revolt from western [radio](#) stations like [Voice of America](#) and [Radio Free Europe](#), and by [word of mouth](#). A mass [meeting](#) was staged for the next day, December 21, which, according to the official media, was presented as a "spontaneous movement of support for Ceaușescu", emulating the 1968 meeting in which Ceaușescu had spoken against the [invasion](#) of [Czechoslovakia](#) by the Warsaw Pact forces.

The moment when Ceaușescu loses the grip on the mass assembly, as broadcast live by [Romanian Television](#) December, 1989.

On [December 21](#), the mass meeting, held in what is now [Revolution Square](#), degenerated into chaos. The image of Ceaușescu's uncomprehending expression as the crowd began to boo him remains one of the defining moments of the collapse of Communism in [Eastern Europe](#). The stunned couple (the dictator had been joined by his wife), failing to control the crowds, finally took cover inside the CC Building, where they remained until the next day. The rest of the day saw a revolt of the Bucharest population, which had assembled in University Square and confronted the police and the army on barricades. These initial events are regarded to this day as the genuine revolution. However, the unarmed rioters were no match for the military apparatus concentrated in Bucharest, which cleared the streets by midnight and arrested hundreds of people in the process.

Although the broadcast of the "support meeting" and the subsequent events on national television had been interrupted the previous day, Ceaușescu's senile reaction to the events had already become part of the country's collective memory. By the morning of [December 22](#), the [rebellion](#) had already spread to all major cities. The suspicious death of [Vasile Milea](#), the [defense minister](#), was announced by the media. Immediately thereafter, Ceaușescu presided over the CPEX meeting and assumed the leadership of the army. He made an attempt to address the crowd gathered in front of the CC, but this desperate move was rejected by the rioters, who forced open the doors of the building, by now left unprotected by the army, police and Securitate. The Ceaușescu couple fled by [helicopter](#) from the top of the CC building in a poorly advised decision (since they would have had safer [refuge](#) using existing underground [tunnels](#)) [see [Dumitru Burlan](#)].

Overthrow

The events of December 1989 remain controversial. Many, including [Filip Teodorescu](#), a high-ranking Securitate [officer](#) at the time, allege that a group of conspiring generals in the Securitate took advantage of this opportunity to launch a [coup](#) in Bucharest. Some have made more specific claims about the nature of the [conspiracy](#). [Colonel Burlan](#) asserts that the coup had been prepared since 1982, and was originally planned to take place during the [New Year](#) celebrations, but it was spontaneously adapted to the new developments. It remains a matter of controversy whether there had been any advance conspiracy to stage a coup, and, if so, who was precisely involved. The two main alternative possibilities are that these events were simply a combination of genuine revolutionary drive and inherent confusion, or that various

figures in the military simply took opportunistic advantage of public [protests](#), in an effort to capture power for themselves or for others whom they supported.

On [December 22](#) the army found itself without a leader: Ceaușescu (the official [commander-in-chief](#) of the army) had vanished, being sent by his (possibly conspiring) adviser Stănculescu to the countryside, and defense minister [Vasile Milea](#) was dead. (Initially the "revolutionary" leaders claimed that Milea was [assassinated](#) on behalf of Ceaușescu. This is possible, but other possibilities abound, notably that he might have refused to join them and been killed on that account. The (still) official account that he committed [suicide](#) has almost no credibility.) Confused, the army leadership in Bucharest decided to avoid [conflicts](#) and ordered their [troops](#) to fraternise with the demonstrators.

Fierce fighting occurred at that time at [Bucharest Otopeni International Airport](#) between troops sent one against another under claims that they were going to meet [terrorists](#). There are various reports of other similar events. Filip Teodorescu claims that a number of instigators—possibly a small number, and probably Russians—started various incidents (including the violence in Timișoara); he also alleges that the level of violence was greatly exacerbated by elements within the military who propagated a myth of "securist-terrorists."

The end of Ceaușescu

Ceaușescu and his wife Elena fled the capital by helicopter together with [Emil Bobu](#) and [Manea Mănescu](#). They headed for Ceaușescu's [Snagov](#) residence, from where they fled again, this time for [Târgoviște](#). The presidential couple kept moving through the countryside more or less aimlessly. Near Târgoviște, they abandoned the helicopter, having been ordered to land by the army, which by that time had already declared Romania to be restricted air space. The flight included grotesque episodes: a car chase to evade citizens attempting an arrest, leaving their aides behind, a short stay in a school. The Ceaușescus were finally held in a police car for several hours, while the policemen listened to the radio, presumably in an attempt to find out which political faction was about to win. Police eventually turned over the presidential couple to the army. On [December 25](#), the two were condemned to death by a military court on charges ranging from illegal gathering of wealth to [genocide](#), and were [executed](#) in Târgoviște. Before they were shot dead, Ceaușescu sang part of "[The Internationale](#)" and proclaimed that history would judge him well. His wife was screaming at everyone to go to hell.^[9]

The Ceaușescus were executed by Captain Ionel Boeru and two other soldiers who shot them with [AK-47](#) assault rifles.

The "trial" and execution were videotaped. The footage was promptly released in France and other western countries. Several days later, footage of their trial and pictures of their corpses (but not of the execution itself) were released on television for the Romanian public.

The Ceaușescu couple's graves are located in [Ghencea cemetery](#) in Bucharest. Nicolae and Elena are buried on opposite sides of a path. The graves themselves are unassuming, but they tend to be covered in flowers and symbols of their regime. Some allege that the graves do not, in reality, contain the assassinated couple's bodies. As of April 2007, their son Valentin has lost a lawsuit asking for investigation on this matter. The elder son [Nicu Ceaușescu](#), deceased in 1996, is buried close by in the same cemetery but has a more substantial grave. According to [Jurnalul Național](#),^[10] requests were made by their daughter and supporters of their political

views to move them to [mausoleums](#) or churches built for the purpose of housing their remains, but such requests were denied by the Romanian state.

Personality and leadership

Personality cult and authoritarianism

Ceaușescu created a pervasive [personality cult](#), giving himself the titles of "[Conducător](#)" ("Leader") and "Geniul din Carpați" ("Genius of the Carpathians"), with help from [Proletarian Culture \(Proletkult\)](#) poets such as [Adrian Păunescu](#) and [Corneliu Vadim Tudor](#), and even having a [king](#)-like sceptre made for himself. Such excesses prompted the painter [Salvador Dalí](#) to send a congratulatory telegram to the "Conducător." The Communist Party daily [Scînteia](#) published the message, unaware that Dalí had written it with [tongue firmly in cheek](#). To avoid new treasons after Pacepa's defection, Ceaușescu also invested his wife [Elena](#) and other members of his family with important positions in the government.