

Democratic Consolidation or One Party Domination? Romania post-1996: from
Democratic Illusions to Democratic Survival

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Abstract

November 1996 seemed to have finally brought for Romanian politics a much expected event that could represent a breakthrough with both the country's communist past and the six years of "original democracy" practiced by the former communists and the Romanian president Ion Iliescu. This was the coming into power of a democratic opposition and of a new president whose past was not associated with the former communist nomenklatura. However, four years later the unimaginable had occurred and Iliescu and his party won the elections for the third time, though, ironically enough, their return was not thought of as a post-communist restoration, but rather as fortunate for the country's democratic future. How this was possible and the causes, which led to this situation, will be examined in this paper. To lay the groundwork for this analysis, I will present in the first place the larger project to which this undertaking belongs, and, secondly, I will briefly present the Romanian communist regime and the transitional period of democratic transformation that occurred between 1990 and 1996.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND MAIN QUESTIONS

My dissertation project, which is entitled *Legitimacy, Revolution and Transition: Romania/Central Europe* represents an analysis of the three distinctive stages of the process of political legitimation that Eastern European communist and post-communist states underwent since the end of WW II until the present. Romania will be analyzed as a central case with different and often contrasting features when compared to Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia¹. The three stages I will study are: the communist (1947-1989), the ‘revolutions’ of 1989, and the post-1989 transitional period of democratic transformation.

The main question will address the specific ways in which post-communist societies underwent the process of transition from a ‘negative type of legitimacy’² – passive acceptance of the authority as a result of fear or in exchange for certain benefits- to a democratic type of legitimacy. I will explore both legal processes and ideological claims, that the new post-1989 political authorities are making on behalf of various groups in order to legitimize their rule.

Since the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe is closely connected with transition to the market economy, the next important task will be to explore how various political actors justify as legitimate the economic and social disparities generated by the unequal distribution of wealth and other benefits. One of my major hypotheses is that the degree of openness to economic and political opportunities, which the former communist regimes allowed in varying degrees, and the extent to which civil societies managed to negotiate for themselves, determined a more or less smooth transition to democracy. When the ruling party and the democratic opposition were divided over the issue of legitimacy in 1989, the political groups that had the capacity to control societal

¹ Although there are differences among Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia insofar as the nature of the communist regime, the type of change that occurred in 1989 and the post-1989 transition, they share an important similarity, namely a relatively fast and successful democratization of the political regime and a much more efficient economic reform in comparison to Romania.

mobilization did not consider revolution as a valid option but instead designed strategies for a compromise solution. It is relevant to say that while Hungary and Poland went through round table negotiations in 1989, and Czechoslovakia went through the so-called ‘velvet revolution’, Romania experienced a revolutionary situation, a legal rupture.

COMMUNIST REGIMES, NEGATIVE LEGITIMACY, AND ROMANIAN COMMUNISM

When analyzing Eastern European communist regimes, it is crucial to make a distinction between those countries that become communist as a result of an indigenous movement (former Soviet Union, ex-Yugoslavia) and those that became communist as a result of foreign intervention (such as Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria) and to examine the types of relationships that these countries had with the former Soviet Union.

Communist societies base their authority on the political power of the communist party, whose official ideology is the Marxist-Leninist ideology that is based on the doctrine of scientific socialism, and claims to embody the interests of the working class (the new ruling class of the society). So, socialist societies are one party-state societies or mono-organizational societies³ in which unification between upper level bureaucrats and the state is assured. This bureaucratic class becomes a corporate ruling class⁴ whose existence contradicts a fundamental principle of the socialist system, namely the idea of classless society.

An equally important type of legitimation of the communist states discussed by Ferenc

² The notion of negative legitimacy is widely used in sociological literature to describe a lack of political alternatives, which is mostly typical for non-democratic regimes.

³ In the introduction to Political Legitimation in Communist States, Rigby describes the soviet type of society as a mono-organizational system in which small bureaucracies are bound together by the machinery of the communist party whose orientation is towards goal attainment and not towards the application of rules.

⁴ In Dictatorship over Needs, Ferenc Feher, Agnes Heller and Gyorgy Markus, New York, 1983, this bureaucratic ruling class of the socialist societies is described as the class that controls corporate property in a command economy.

Feher is paternalism, where the state's role is to provide a guaranteed system of life strategies for individual such as education, health care, employment, and housing. At the same time a depoliticization of daily life occurs and the citizenry is not required to express its support to the party-state as strongly as was required in the Stalinist regime⁵, but tacit consent and consensus is accepted in exchange for the kinds of privileges and benefits mentioned above. However, there are two categories – intellectuals and technocrats- which, because of their skills and talents can not easily be absorbed by a system that dismisses meritocracy. Here it is important to note the contrast between Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, countries in which the intellectuals played a key role in the opposition movements against the communist regime, and countries like Romania or the former Soviet Union where intellectuals engaged in a type of singular or private dissidence.

As far as the Romanian communist regime is concerned, three distinctive stages can be distinguished: 1) 1944-1958 when Soviet troops were stationed in Romania and, as a result, the constitutional monarchic regime was replaced by the Popular Republic of Romania led by a General Assembly that abrogated the Constitution of 1923 and annulled the separation of powers and the autonomy of the judiciary; 2) 1958-1974, a period that covers the time between the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1958 and the final act which led to the consolidation of Nicolae Ceausescu's regime in 1974⁶. Ceausescu's predecessor, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej had initiated the struggle of the Romanian faction of the Romanian Communist Party against the foreign faction led by Anna Pauker⁷ which culminated in the 1964 declaration of independence.

⁵ For the periodization of the Soviet system I found very useful Agnes Heller's account of the three stages of the Soviet communist regime in Dictatorship over Needs, Ferenc Feher, Agnes Heller and Gyorgy Markus, New York, 1983. These stages are: 1) the 1920's after the Bolshevik revolution when Lenin and the other communist leaders did not show any concern about legitimation; 2) Stalin's era that was dominated by the cult of personality and his charismatic figure and 3) the stage that began with Khrushchev and was continued into the 1960's and whose end result was the creation of a traditional type of legitimacy which based its authority on gerontocracy, on the authoritarian family and on the international context in which the Soviet Union achieved the status of a superpower.

⁶ This was the year when Ceausescu became the president of the country.

⁷ It is important to mention that one of the most difficult tasks for the Romanian Communist Party was to legitimize itself as a national party because of its insignificant role played before WW II. In the interwar period the RCP had a very small membership and was banned by the authorities after its third congress in 1924 when it expressed its approval to return Bessarabia (the northern part of Romania that was acquired in

After Gheorghiu-Dej's death a collective leadership was put in place. Ceausescu undermined this collective leadership by using various strategies to enhance his own power such as personnel manipulation, an attempt to ensure stronger constitutionality, an appearance of cultural liberalization and a more independent foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and 3) 1974-1989, a period in which dramatic changes occurred for the country. These changes affected the economy, which was heavily industrialized through forced economic policies and where agriculture was centralized. The end result was that in the 1980's the economy was pulled back into the Soviet orbit and a severe shortage of food and electricity dramatically decreased the standard of living⁸. At the same time, Romania remained a closed country resulting from a harsh regime of passport control and legislation aimed at discouraging contact with foreigners. Ceausescu's family members and the Romanian secret police, known as the Securitate, ensured Ceausescu's personnel rule, dominated the higher echelon of the RCP⁹. At the same time he attempted to create an appearance of expressed consent through propaganda¹⁰ and fabricated meetings which culminated in the 1980's with the myth of the multicompetent leader who has expertise in everything and who gives "precious indications" to everybody (to miners, to peasants, industrial workers, school teachers and artists). The national festival "Cintarea Romaniei", launched in 1976, which was meant to bring together workers of the best performing factories, the best students and best scientists to perform on the stage, was transformed one year later into a homage dedicated to the beloved leader of the country. The end consisted of songs and poems in praise of Ceausescu. The official language used by the party's propaganda, as well as Ceausescu's public speeches, abounded in nationalist appeals and slogans. Moreover, Ceausescu chose to present himself as a

1917) to the Soviet Union. For a detailed history of the RCP see Robert King, [A History of the Romanian Communist Party](#), 1980 as well as the insightful analysis of Vladimir Tismaneanu, "The Tragicomedy of Romanian Communism", in [Eastern European Politics and Societies](#), Vol. 3, No. 2, Spring 1989.

⁸ For the economic policies of the 1980's see Vlad Georgescu, "Romania in the 1980's: The Legacy of Dynastic Socialism", [Eastern European Politics and Societies](#), 1988.

⁹ Even the secret services in the former Democratic Republic of Germany, Stasi, which was well known for its repressive nature, was under the subordination of the party's collective leadership and the secret police chief, Erich Mielke, while Securitate was directly subordinated to Ceausescu.

¹⁰ According to Sorin Serban (Sorin Serban, "Ilegalistii" in Lucian Boia, *Miturile comunismului romanesc*, Bucharest, 1988), if between 1974-1979 a third of the biographies about the communists who illegally operated before WWII were dedicated to Ceausescu; between 1879-1984 this was raised to more than half.

traditional leader and the successor to historic heroic figures who had fought against various foreign invasions.

Under these circumstances of fear that characterized Romania in the 1980's, it was extremely difficult for an organized opposition movement to develop against the communist regime and against Ceausescu. Any attempts at protest were immediately silenced and their initiators eliminated from the public arena, regardless of whether they were party leaders (like Constantin Pirvulescu who at the Eleventh RCP Congress in 1979 accused Ceausescu of establishing a personal dictatorship), dissidents (like the writer Paul Goma who organized a movement of solidarity with Czechoslovakia's Charter 77, and was forced to emigrate to France), or social protest leaders (such as the leaders of the coal miners from Jiu Valley who organized a strike in 1977). So, the Romanian opposition can be characterized as being rather sporadic, disorganized and to a certain extent apolitical. Very significant in this sense is the type of dissidence that was organized around the philosopher Constantin Noica¹¹ whose young intellectual followers chose to isolate themselves at Paltinis and practice "survival through culture" and study Plato.

The Hungarian post-1956 mechanisms of legitimacy of the communist system presented a sharp contrast to the Romanian case. If Ceausescu chose isolationism, terror and nationalism, Janos Kadar turned from repression of the Hungarian revolution of 1956 into a reformer. From the early 1960's, he introduced a degree of cultural liberalism and opened the economy towards the West. Moreover, as a result of the New Economic Mechanism from 1968, which shifted economic strategy from the extensive growth of large-scale industry towards an intensive development of light industry and the production of consumer goods, a secondary economy and a partial middle class revival

¹¹ Constantin Noica is one of the very few survivors of the "generation of 1927", an interwar intellectual movement which shared certain features of fascism such as a "revolt against liberalism, socialism in any of its internationalist versions, rationalism, individualism, and parliamentarism...nostalgic for the romanticized values of ethnic community...the incorporation of Orthodox theology...spiritual regeneration through sacrifice, faith, and mystical ardor" (Vladimir Tismaneanu and Dan Pavel, "Romania's Mystical Revolutionaries: The generation of Angst and Adventure Revisited", Eastern European Politics and Societies, Vol. 8, No. 3, Fall 1994.

occurred. Kadar knew how to turn one of the weakest points of his regime –its dependency on the Soviet Union – into an advantage, by minimizing it. At the same time, an independent public sphere consisting of circles of intellectuals, which voiced their opinions and even pursued a dialogue with authorities, developed. Before 1988, a wide range of elements of civil society developed which become legal in January 1989 when the government legalized free association.

In Poland, civil society was a project carried from below by the Catholic church and the Solidarity movement, a union labor movement that on the one hand contained some revolutionary elements because it aimed at structural change of the Soviet-style regime, but on the other was limited by the fact that it did not question the one party system in consequence of accepting Poland's geopolitical place in the Soviet bloc¹². In December 1981, Poland's martial law regime defeated Solidarity. However, in 1989, Solidarity sat at the bargaining table with the communists just as the opposition forces did in Hungary.

Communism in Czechoslovakia had a different history because the Communist Czechoslovak Party benefited from a large industrial base and did not entirely rely on forced Stalinist industrialization¹³. The reforms introduced by the reformist wing of the CCP led by Alexander Dubcek collapsed as a result of August 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact countries. Afterwards, the Czechoslovak regime relied on Stalinist methods of control to retain power. If in 1968 the CCP was gaining some domestic legitimacy¹⁴, after the invasion the communist ideology collapsed. The majority of the Czech population withdrew into the private sphere¹⁵ but a small, active group of intellectuals, writers, scientists and former members of the reformist wing of the

¹² In Civil Society, Constitutionalism and Legitimacy, Andrew Arato argues that the idea of “self-limiting revolution” can be applied to the Solidarity movement.

¹³ It is relevant that in 1946 elections the CCP obtained 38% of the votes.

¹⁴ According to a survey done in 1968 while 89% of the respondents wanted the socialist development to continue; only 5% expressed preference to capitalism (Amanda Wendy Kate Hollis, Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe. The influence of the Communist Legacy in Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Romania, New York, 1999).

¹⁵ Unlike Czechs and Slovaks, Romanians did not even have the luxury of retreating into family life because of the harsh politics of reproduction initiated by Ceausescu in 1969. As a result of this politics, the State intruded in the most intimate aspects of people's lives.

party decided to “live in truth”. They became one of the most important samizdat in Eastern Europe, Charter 77, whose most prominent leader was Vaclav Havel.

After presenting these cases, it is obvious that the communist parties in Eastern Europe were caught in between choosing policies which would offer them some popular support and independence from Moscow, and policies which were acceptable to the Soviet Union, but would mean a loss of domestic support. While the Hungarian, Polish and Czechoslovakian regimes managed to depart more or less from the Soviet model, the Romanian communist regime transformed the country into a replica of the Soviet Union. Ironically enough, Ceausescu did this in the name of independence and for the sake of “the Romanian nation”.

THE REVOLUTIONS OF 1989

The Eastern European revolutions of 1989 could be described as the result of the failure of the indigenous communist parties to fulfill their promises and to generate satisfactory economic and social policies for its citizens. Added to this was the Soviet Union’s removal of security guarantees and economic subsidies. It was mainly Mikhail Gorbachev’s liberalization of the machinery of the Soviet regime, which showed the fragility of other Eastern European communist regimes.

But, as was mentioned at the beginning of this paper, there was a sharp contrast between the ways in which the revolutions were carried through: round table negotiations in Hungary and Poland, the ‘velvet’ revolution in Czechoslovakia, and the Romanian popular uprising in December 1989.

In December 1989, Romania, along with Albania, remained the last communist bastions in Eastern Europe. The events that took place between 16-22 of December and led to the overthrow of Nicolae Ceausescu and his government were violent and involved bloodshed. It is not the object of this paper to provide a detailed account of the Romanian revolution, but three main elements should be noted: 1) the popular uprising resulted

from dissatisfaction with the continuous deterioration of life¹⁶; 2) the existence of a few people prepared to act in case of any political change (army men such as Militaru, former communist activists such as Ion Iliescu, Silviu Brucan, and dissidents) and 3) the international context. The revolution was shown live on television and ended with the execution of Ceausescu and his wife after a “trial” the legality of which was dubious and contested.

The Romanian revolution swept away all political institutions, those directly associated with the communist party, and those that formally at least, were autonomous state institutions: the State Council, the Grand National Assembly and the Council of Ministers. The new political power, the National Council of the Salvation Front established on the evening of December 22, and its leader Ion Iliescu,¹⁷ claimed revolutionary legitimacy. Iliescu attempted to engineer some consensus and a return to normality. Because of a power vacuum, and because the majority of Romanians felt some need to identify with the revolution and take part in it, the declaration of the NSF enjoyed substantial expressed consent among the public. Moreover, until January 1990 new local councils of the NSF were established in the counties, cities, and other institutions and enterprises, replacing the former popular councils. This also increased public support.

Because of the different type of support that the opposition organized, a different degree of compromise was achieved at the Polish and Hungarian roundtables¹⁸. In the Polish case, Solidarity accepted that 65% of the Parliamentary seats would be given to communists, that the pre-war office of presidency would control the military, security apparatus and foreign affairs. In exchange, the power-holders agreed to legalize Solidarity and to compete for the remaining 35% of the seats.

In Hungary, the two negotiating parties agreed upon freedom of political association, free

¹⁶ After 1988, Ceausescu did not lift the restrictions regarding consumption even though he announced that the external debt was paid.

¹⁷ Ion Iliescu was an ex Central Committee secretary in charge of ideology from 1970-1971 who opposed Ceausescu’s “mini cultural revolution”, and who from 1984, was the director of the Technical Publishing House in Bucharest.

elections and a government responsible to the legislature, as well as to two new institutions: the Constitutional Court and the State Audit Office. They did not, however, agree on the institution of The Presidency. This led to a crisis that was only resolved by the results of the November 1989 referendum.

In Czechoslovakia, the ‘velvet revolution’ was essentially determined by the student demonstration of November 17 and preceding other actions of protest such as the 1988 open letter “Just a few sentences” that called for democracy and gathered almost 40,000 signatures. The 1988 demonstrations, which led to the arrest of 13 members of Charter 77, including Vaclav Havel also played a major role. Former communists dominated the coalition that was formed on November 28, and on December 10, following a new demonstration, the coalition was replaced by the Government of National Understanding led by the new Prime Minister, Marian Calfa. Only seven, out of 21 ministers, were nominal members of the communist party¹⁹. The police were temporarily placed under the jurisdiction of a committee of ministers, and the independent Civic Forum, an umbrella group of civic organizations made up of former signatories of Charter 77, undertook the task of coordinating the various movements in the Czech lands.

ROMANIA’S DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION: 1990-1996

This period of Romania’s democratic transition covers two stages: 1) 1990-1992 which was politically dominated by the National Salvation Front and ended with the ratification of the new Constitution; and 2) 1992-1996 when the political arena reflected a more balanced equilibrium of forces and a more diverse spectrum of views.

As was previously stated, the NSF claimed revolutionary legitimacy. Based on this claim it managed to rally large popular support around it. The type of social policies that NSF implemented between December 1990-June 1991 also strengthened its support. It is

¹⁸ For the Polish and the Hungarian roundtables, see the already cited works of Andrew Arato and Janos Kiss ‘Between Reform and Revolution’, Eastern European Politics and Societies, vol. 12, no. 2, 1998.

¹⁹ In contrast, the National Front of Salvation of Romania was dominated by ex communists. The former dissidents did not have the same power to influence the course of events.

relevant that Silviu Brucan, one of the important figures in the NSF in 1990 declared: “Our ideology consists of five points: more food, more heat, more electricity and light, better transportation and better health care”²⁰ As a result of some compensatory measures such as the reduction of prices for electric and thermal energy, the granting of some wage compensations, an increase in peasant land holdings and others, average income increased by 25.1% in 1991 in comparison to 1989²¹. Moreover, after enduring the regime of Ceausescu, Romanians were ready to give credit to the new political power. It is not surprising that the survey made in April 1990 by CURS showed that the Government had the highest degree of popularity after the revolution since 79% of the respondents expressed trust in the Government.

However, there were groups in society that refused to accept the authority of the new political regime: dissidents, students, intellectuals, as well as the newly reemerged pre-WWII historical parties (National Liberal Party and the National Peasant Christian Democratic Party). These various groups were dissatisfied with both the public statements and appearances of the new political leaders. They were reminders of old practices and of the ties that these leaders had with the communist regime.

These groups of intellectuals and the historical parties, contesting the legitimacy of the new political authority, were not able to diminish NSF’s popularity and enhance their influence in Romanian society. This was due both to a lack of cooperation and the type of agenda that they carried. Some of the leaders of the historical parties expressed monarchical preferences and nominated as presidential candidates émigrés who had belonged to these parties before 1947. While the NLP subscribed to the ideas of economic and political pluralism, the NPP embraced a program based on traditional ideas, in particular the belief that the rural peasantry embodies the moral and spiritual values of the Romanian nation. They also proclaimed a strong Christian identity. As for the former dissidents, they left the NSF in the first months. They lost much of their

²⁰ Grigore Pop-Eleches in “Separated at Birth or Separated by Birth? The Communist Successor Parties in Romania and Hungary”, East European Politics and Societies, vol. 13, no.1 Winter 1999, points out that this agenda was carried by the Hungarian communists fifteen years previously.

credibility, especially after interview for a French journal where Doina Cornea said that because the ex communists were still in power any foreign aid for Romania should be cut.

The international context, along with the pressure exerted by these groups, did not permit the NSF to monopolize political life either. As a response NCNSF was transformed into the Provisory National Unity Council incorporating the opposition. 50% of these seats were given to the other parties. But for the reasons described above the new opposition had little influence at the time. On March 14, 1990, this Council issued an electoral law stating that a bicameral parliament would meet after elections. Its main tasks would be to adopt economic reform legislation and a new constitution. The date of the elections was set for May, 20.

The electoral campaign was dominated by violent demonstrations and aggressive and manipulative propaganda led by Iliescu and his party who had access to the media. He adopted a populist rhetoric during the campaign and propagated such ideas as a return of the old landowners and the desires of “greedy” western investors to monopolize the national economy. He also argued that pursuing an economic policy of privatization would generate unemployment. Such rhetoric appealed to a population that was not prepared to give up the privileges that a paternalist system guarantees, and it also generated nationalistic and anti-intellectualist feelings²².

Despite the opposition’s claim of the NSF’s and Iliescu’s lack of legitimacy to participate in the elections²³, the NSF and Ion Iliescu won the elections of 20 May with a large majority. The two historical parties entered the Parliament with only tiny representation.

²¹ Catalin Zamfir, “Politica sociala in Romania in tranzitie”, in Starea societatii romanesti dupa 10 ani de tranzitie, Bucharest, 2000.

²² It is very relevant that in 1990 one could hear at NSF meetings slogans such as “Death to intellectuals!”, “We are laborers not thinkers!”, “We will not sell our country on \$!” and even slogans which were reminders of Ceausescu’s cult of personality: “The sun is rising when Iliescu shows up!”

²³ This protest, which took place in the University Square for a few months, culminated with the Proclamation of Timisoara. Its eighth point stated that any person associated with the communist nomenklatura should not be permitted political office.

They were behind the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania that became the second political force in Romania and won almost 7% of the votes.

Meanwhile, the protest in University Square continued until June 13 when the demonstration was violently smashed by the police. The miners, who came for the second time to Bucharest also brutally attacked students, journalists and members of the political opposition. After this violent episode the European Union declared Romania ineligible for its PHARE program. Prime minister Roman's attempt to pursue a more radical economic policy was opposed by the conservative wing of the NSF and in September 1991, he was forced to resign after another miner's uprising in Bucharest.

The discussions concerning economic reforms, as well as the debates about the June 1990 events, overshadowed discussions of the constitution. But as a result of the referendum of 9 December 1991, the Constitution was approved by 77% of the participants in the referendum. This was despite the criticism of the Hungarian party regarding the declaration that Romania was a national unitary state. Criticism by some leaders of the historical parties reflected their concern of the constitutional impossibility of returning to monarchy. But the ratification represented a crucial turning point in the Romanian revolution, and for the NSF, which accomplished the legal rupture with the communist regime.

Despite these shortcomings and disagreements, it could be argued that at this point the minimal criteria for establishing a democratic regime: - the establishment of democratic institutions, free elections, basic rights and liberties guaranteed by a constitution - were fulfilled²⁴.

What was characteristic of this stage of democratic transition in Romania was that various political forces claimed entitlement to political authority not on the basis of

²⁴ I follow the paradigm of democratic transition elaborated by Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan in Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America, and Post Communist Europe, 1996 and Peter A. Ulram and Harald Waldrauch, Democratic Consolidation in East-Central Europe, 1998.

political doctrines or programs, but on the basis of their presumed moral authority. This moral authority was presented as being embodied in party leaders who represented competing values of the historical traditions and the struggle against communism (Corneliu Coposu, the president of NPP spent 18 years in communist jails); the good people of the former regime (Ion Iliescu); and the Westernized technocrats, adepts at economic liberalism (the young liberals and later, Petre Roman).

In the first six years after the revolution, former second rank former activist communists had the dominant political voice in Romanian society. In contrast the former dissidents and returnees from abroad, whose claim to legitimacy was linked to criticism of the communist regime, the former communist elites became the new administrators. In the beginning, this was achieved through a complicated system of administrative and political privileges. After political institutions became more stable, a result of new legislation passed in the name of “reform”, corruption increasingly became a mechanism of enhancing their position in society. So, these old managerial and political elites became the dispensers of wealth and privileges, the so-called fake milliardaires, receiving huge credits from banks under largely mysterious circumstances.

This was possible because of the emergence of a relatively homogenized society that the communist regime had managed to create as a result of forced industrialization.²⁵ This had been based on the socio-industrial complex the main core of which was the socialist enterprise that was the provider of a wide range of social services in education, health, housing etc. The politics of national consensus, promoted between 1990-1991 by the NSF²⁶, made the industrial working class to believe that its interests were well protected by this political party rather than by the historical parties, which were discussing integral restitution to former owners. Despite the budgetary efforts that the NSF made to protect industrial jobs, by 1997 a third of the population that were employed in the socio-industrial complex, had left it. However, this weakening of the industrial sector did not

²⁵ In 1991, 48% of the entire Romanian workforce was occupied in industry.

²⁶ This politics of consensus materialized in the creation of a partnership between government and the labor unions that resulted in the issuing of important laws such as the law of labor conflict, and unions, laws regarding salaries, unemployment benefits and others.

lead to the emergence of a post-industrial occupational structure. On the contrary, after 1996 rural migration increased and one year later it was higher than the migration from rural to urban. As Vladimir Pasti²⁷ points out, this migration meant a reduction in individual life style and needs, which became more focused on simple needs of consumption. It created a conservative and traditional social typology that was in contradiction to the transition's purpose of modernization. It is significant here that two archaic social actors, the head of the agricultural household and the non remunerated family worker, began to reappear. So, the dismantling of this socio-industrial complex began to affect the process of political legitimation. Political competition pursued in the name of various groups of interests began to reflect a wider spectrum of claims to legitimacy.

This differentiation of the political system was reflected in the results of the 1992 elections, which although won by the Party of Romanian Social Democracy (the former FSN) with 27.72%, and by Ilescu, did not give them a monopoly of power. The Romanian Democratic Convention (a new alliance made of historical parties and other democratic groups) won 20.01% of the vote. New political actors appeared on the political stage, the two nationalist parties (Party of Great Romania and Party of Romanian National Unity), which received together almost 11% of the vote and the Democratic Union of the Left that won a little over 10% of the vote. This was a political group gathered around the former Prime Minister Petre Roman. This was a different picture of the political spectrum than the one resulting from the 1990 elections. It reflected in a more dynamic and competitive fashion of various claims to legitimacy made by political actors on behalf of groups with distinctive interests. It also led to a more volatile acceptance or rejection of these claims of legitimation.²⁸ The NSF and Ion Ilescu could no longer appeal to that part of the Romanian population that had consented to its populist and nationalist rhetoric two years previously. It is significant in this sense that the appearance of the two nationalist parties, the Party of Great Romania led by Corneliu

²⁷ Vladimir Pasti, "Un deceniu de transformari sociale", in Situatia copilului si a familiei in Romania, coordinated by Ioan Mihailescu, UNICEF, Bucharest, 2000.

²⁸ This type of legitimation process is analyzed by Habermas in Legitimation Crisis, and it is linked by what he called the creation of a new group identity, which is specific for each social formation.

Vadim Tudor, a journalist and poet who once praised Ceausescu in his writings and had strong ties with the former Securitate, and the Party of National Unity of Romania that mainly operated in Transylvania and focused its agenda on the demands of the UDMR made on behalf of the Hungarian minority. Ion Iliescu and his party chose to form an alliance with these two nationalist parties and with the Socialist Party of Labor, a party that won only 3% of the vote and was controlled by former hard line communists. This alliance reflected the diverse composition of the former communist ruling class. It included former second rank activists, members of the former industrial elite made of enterprise managers, former Stalinists, former Securitate members, phrotocronist intellectuals, and nationalists. At the opposite poll, the historical parties, under the umbrella of the Democratic Convention, along with liberal intellectuals, claimed to embody a democratic past along with European values. A group of young Western educated technocrats occupied the middle of the political spectrum. Their ties with the former regime were rather family ties²⁹. They claimed a democratic left orientation and an affiliation with European socialist traditions. Many of them became the new entrepreneurial class. It is obvious at this point that the new political arena was shaped by three elements: tradition, communist past and the European “space” embodying the values of democracy and economic liberalism. This was represented by actors from abroad in international organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, European Community, and NATO. The process of transition to democratic legitimacy reflects the negotiations and tensions of the first two elements with the third. These ongoing negotiations between the past and present, between historical traditions and what was called “Romania’s return to Europe”, were characterized by a reconstruction of social memory, attempting to erase the communist past and replace it with new symbols. Almost 250 streets in Bucharest changed their names³⁰. The new names are reminders of the December 1989 revolution, names of members of the former royal family, of cultural and political personalities oppressed by the communist regime, of saints or former churches demolished by Ceausescu, and names that reflect the pre

²⁹ This is the case of Petre Roman, whose father Walter Roman fought in Spain during the civil war or Adrian Severin –key figure in the Democratic Party and later on member of the government- son of a former communist nomenklatura of a local county.

WWII Romanian political map. The content of the new history textbooks was also altered and was of particular significance in the process of manufacturing a new national identity.

In sum, it was mainly Iliescu's inability to establish relations with the outside world, along with the corruption scandals in which his party members were involved and the continuous deterioration of standards of living, which led to his defeat in the 1996 elections.

NOVEMBER 1996: DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION OR DEMOCRATIC ILLUSIONS?

The 1996 elections were won by the RDC with 30.17% of the votes against the RPSD led by Iliescu who won 21.52% of the votes. The UDS (made of Petre Roman's DP and the Romanian Social Democrat Party) had almost 13% of the votes, while the two nationalist parties and the DMH stayed at roughly the same level as they were four years before. The interesting aspect of the elections was the two rounds of the presidential vote. The first reflected a very divided electorate between the government and the opposition and within the opposition itself: while Iliescu gained 32.25% of the votes, the candidate of DCR, Emil Constantinescu won 28%, and Petre Roman 20%. Constantinescu needed the votes of Roman's supporters to win in the second round with a fragile majority of 54% to 45%.

As a result of the elections a new government led by former Union leader and Bucharest's elected mayor, Victor Ciorbea, which reflected the new alliance between CDR, USD and UDMR, was installed. The results of a Gallup opinion poll conducted in January 1997 showed that Romania was the most optimistic society in Eastern Europe

³⁰ Septimiu Chelcea, "Reorganizarea memoriei sociale in tranzitia postcomunista din Romania", in Starea Societatii romanesti dupa 10 ani de tranzitie, Bucharst, 2000

and that 61% of Romanians believed that 1997 would be better than 1996. In comparison to September 1995, the popularity of the government and of the parliament had doubled by December 1996 (from 31% to 62% for the government and from 24% to 57% for the parliament). It was actually the first time in the last sixty years of the country's history that alternating governments were put in place. But four years later, the polls showed a dramatic decrease in the public's trust in institutions. More than 80% of the population distrusted the government, the parliament and the political parties. 77% distrusted the president and 75% distrusted the judicial system. It is obvious that these polls reflect a growing crisis of democratic institutions, but do they also reflect a drastic decrease in the democratic legitimacy? Before answering this question, I will try to examine the causes underlying this situation.

From the beginning, the new ruling coalition did not have the necessary political will to act as a unified body and support the Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea. Ciorbea embarked on a program of "shock therapy" that had as its objective the privatization of more than 3,000 enterprises and was supported by a \$400 million IMF loan to compensate for the social losses of this shock therapy. Caught between the social protests of the unions, protests that sometimes took violent forms³¹, the DP's withdrew support in January 1997. President Constantinescu's inability to cope with pressures from various members of the coalition resulted in a new cabinet led by Radu Vasile which was endorsed in January 1998. The new cabinet, which lasted less than two years, was as fragile as the previous one and did not contribute to the strengthening of the coalition. More than that, it created internal struggles within the main party of the ruling coalition itself. Nor did it handle better the pressures of the unions. In this sense, the miner's riot of January 1999, in which the miners defeated the police in the beginning, illustrates the weakness of political power and of state institutions. The conflict ended with a mixture of threats and promises, and the patriarch of the Orthodox Church, Teoctist, ultimately reconciled it. Meanwhile, the population was becoming more impoverished. Thousands who lost their savings as a result of the collapse of the National Investment Fund were given no compensation and

unemployment rose to 11.5% at the end of 1999. At the end of the year, Mugur Isarescu, the governor of the Romanian National Bank, was named prime minister. But in less than a year he could not guarantee IMF support and could not save the DC's image.

Besides the tensions within the NPP and between the DP and the PNTCD, the misunderstandings between PNTCD and UDMR over the amendment of the 1994 education law also weakened the coalition. This required national minorities to study such subjects as history and geography in the state language³². The issue of establishing a Hungarian language state university was a further contributing factor.

The ruling coalition's poor performance was paralleled by an equally disappointing performance by president Constantinescu. He had no realistic assessment of his own potential and he did not understand that "he was brought to power not because of his personal charisma or past merits but rather as an expression of the discontent with the ineffectiveness and political scandals of the preceding Iliescu governments"³³. Nor he did recruit his advisers on the basis of their competence, but instead through personal friendships. Constantinescu failed to win that battle against corruption that brought him so much popular support. The actions he undertook were not able to reach the real networks they were intended for and it gave the opposition (Iliescu and his party) the opportunity to claim that these were in effect political purges. Among these actions could be mentioned the replacement of the Romanian Army Chief of the General Staff, the dismissal of Romanian police officials, and of some 20 generals and other high police officers. Moreover, he did not address low-level corruption, something much more resented by the population. Bankrupting the state-owned railway by train inspectors or corruption in the hospitals, for example. The results of his foreign policy did not contribute to his popularity and it did not fulfill the hopes of Romanians. In June 1997 Romania was not nominated among the countries to join NATO. This came as a great

³¹ In August, after Ciorbea announced the closing of 17 enterprises that would result in the loss of 30,000 jobs, around 5,000 workers at a petrol refinery broke the windows of the company's headquarters. Traffic was stopped between Bucharest and major cities.

³² Although the amendment was approved in July 1997 through government ordinance, because of Constantinescu's intervention, UDMR did not leave the coalition.

disappointment after an intensive diplomatic offensive in 1997, which was supported by France, Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal. It was regarded as an offense to national pride, particularly after Hungary's admission. This feeling was amplified in June 1999, when US Defense Secretary William Cohen, although acknowledging Romania's help to NATO during the Kosovo war expressed reluctance about the standards of the Romanian military. The rejection of admission to the European Community in June 1997, as well as the European Union's refusal to grant visa-free travel in Europe to Romanians, was additional strikes against Constantinescu. These added to the frustrations for a population that felt rejected by the democratic world and betrayed in its expectations of a better life. At the end of his mandate, Constantinescu appeared as a loser. He refused to run in the next elections and blamed everybody for his failure – the media, secret services, and the mafia.

However, it has to be mentioned that during these four years some important bills were passed in the Parliament. Among these were the land restitution bill, which gave up to 50 hectares of farmland and 10 hectares of forest to those whose land was taken by the communist regime, an education bill designed to increase teaching in minority languages, and a moral reparation bill. This required the opening of Securitate files permitting access to personal files and required candidates for public office to declare whether they had had any links with Securitate. These bills had some textual shortcomings in the way they were implemented. For example, the law on the restitution of forests was sabotaged by government agencies and, in particular, the Environmental agency. The Council in charge of Securitate files did not prove to be very efficient either.³⁴

Iliescu's party, which had won 37% of the seats in the Parliament, won the November 2000 elections in coalition with the Romanian Social Democratic Party as the Social Democratic Alliance. The nationalist party PRM with 20% and UDMR with 7% followed it. PNTCD, the former main ruling party, did not succeed in gaining any seats, and PNL

³³ Vladimir Tismaneanu and Gail Kligman, "Romania's First Postcommunist Decade: From Iliescu to Iliescu", East European Constitutional Review, Winter 2001. Vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 3.

³⁴ See Alina Mungiu-Pipidi and Sorin Ionita, "Interpreting an electoral setback-Romania 2000", Eastern European Constitutional Review, Winter 2001, Vol. 10, no. 1.

and PD won about 7% of the votes. Since the CDR, which broke apart during the electoral campaign, and was not able to present a unique candidate for presidency, the contest was decided in the second round between Iliescu and Corneliu Vadim Tudor. Iliescu, supported by the historical parties, UDMR, DP and even former dissidents who had strongly opposed him in the early 1990's, received 66.8% of the votes, while Tudor received 33.2%.

How can these results lead to an assessment of the level of democratic consolidation in general, and the extent to which democracy became a generalized system of beliefs in Romania in particular?

The literature on democratic transition emphasizes that the stage of democratic consolidation involves the behavioral and attitudinal dimensions of democratization among both leadership and public. As Leonardo Morlino and Jose R. Montero emphasize, the two main behavioral indicators of legitimacy are civil order and the absence of electorally significant anti-system or semi-loyal parties. As far as civil order is concerned, it is evident that the frequency of certain types of events occurring between 1990-2000 in Romania, the violent means some labor unions chose in order to press their demands; the regular threats that various governments experienced from the miners riots; the inability of the institutions of civil order (police and justice) to fulfill their functions; and the corruption scandals in which some of leaders were involved do not show that this indicator of democratic consolidation was met. As for "semi loyal" actors,³⁵ a closer look at the Party of Great Romania, occupying one fifth of the seats in the Parliament, and its leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor, is needed. PRM's electoral campaign was abundant in nationalist and anti-corruption slogans. One of its election flyers³⁶ represented the 12 apostles of the nation who lost their lives on the altar of the fatherland. It showed the portraits of Ceausescu, General Ion Antonescu (Hitler's war ally) and of the medieval king Vlad the Impaler. Tudor promised a ruthless campaign of punishment against the

³⁵ Linz and Stepan in op. cit. define semi loyal actors as those theoretically convinced of the advantages of democracy but whose concrete reactions to political crises are hard to predict and who represent various obstacles for democratization.

newly rich (“I will rule the country with the machine gun”). Tudor and his followers in the journal Great Romania, whose vulgar language mocks Gypsies, Hungarians and Jews, have propagated these nationalist and xenophobic messages since 1990. PRM claims a national doctrine based on a Christian orthodox religion and the ideas of liberty, justice and independence with emphasis on the great national heroes, a strange ideological hybrid that combines Christian democratic with social democratic values³⁷. Its strategic objective is the reestablishment of Great Romania³⁸. As Tismaneanu and Kligman³⁹ describe it, GRP “locates itself in an elusive amalgamation of nostalgia for communist and fascist ideals, hostility to modernity and diversity, and a militaristic, some will say, phallogocentric cult of nation...associated with a greater Romania movement and with a supreme leader”.

After examining the profile and actions of PRM, it becomes evident that in the context of the November 2000 elections were won by the post-communist forces, the political system faced a situation of “inverse legitimation”. This means that the winning party received a ‘bonus’ of legitimacy from the democratic segments from within and from abroad because of the absence of any other acceptable democratic alternative, i.e., the threat to democracy evident in the xenophobic ideology of the Great Romania Party.

It has to be said that there are other groups in Romanian society that flirt with right wing ideologies, even if they are not involved in the political game. The ideas that revive the “triangle” on which the Iron Guard interwar movement based its ideology – the Generation, the Mentor and the Guard – can also be found among the followers of Constantin Noica who, while not enjoying good relations with Tudor and his party, are obsessed with the philosophical works of the right wing interwar thinkers and writers. Moreover, the conflict between prothocronists and modernists did not come to an end after December 1989. One of the main figures among pre-1989 prothocronists is

³⁶ This flyer is reproduced by Toni Judt, in the November 1 2001 issue of, *The New York Review of Books*.

³⁷ www.romare.ro/partid

³⁸ By “Great Romania”, Tudor and his party refer to the return of Bessarabia and Bukovina to the Romanian state, territories that belonged to Romania before WWII and became part of Soviet Union after the Ribbentrop-Molotov treaty of 1938.

sociologist Ilie Badescu, mentor of the former student leader Marian Munteanu, who had a leading role in the University Square protest and later established a right wing political movement. Badescu criticizes what he calls “the new internationalist ideocratic elites”, made up of the consumerist class, which legitimizes itself, by making use of general formulations such as Europeanism, as opposed to ethnic and religious identities. This elite constitutes the parliamentary majority and is accused of being totally subordinated to the interests of the IMF and World Bank. It is alienated from its people and its religion⁴⁰.

So, could the November 2000 elections constitute an indicator that for one fifth of the Romanian population, which voted for the GRP and Tudor, democracy does not matter⁴¹? This issue is complex and reveals a situation in which the electorate negatively sanctioned the former government’s perceived inefficiency in implementing social and economic reforms. It is relevant in this sense too, that the former support of the CDR, the middle class entrepreneurial sector gave their votes to Iliescu and his party, not because they were attracted by a collectivist ideology⁴², but because they were disappointed by the policy of over taxation of small and medium businesses between 1997-1999, a policy enforced by the IMF as means of repayment of debts contracted in 1995-1996.

Moreover, looking at the polls measuring the confidence that people invest in various institutions in the last 10 years, one can see that while democratic institutions (government, parliament, political parties) experience different levels of trust both before and after elections, the army and the church benefited from a consistent and high degree of trust. From 1993 on the Church enjoyed an over 80% approval rating and the Army’s varied between 70-88%. For anyone knowing the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church during communism, these numbers appear surprising. As traditional and

³⁹ Vladimir Tismaneanu and Gail Kligman, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ Ilie Badescu, *Oligarhia politica si statul demagogic*, in *Starea societatii romanesti dupa 10 ani de tranzitie*, Elena Zamfir, Ilie Badescu, Catalin Zamfir, Bucharest 2000.

⁴¹ This question raises the issue of diffuse legitimacy elaborated by Morlino, Montero, Plasser, Ulram and Waldrauch, already quoted, where diffuse legitimacy is defined as a preference for democracy to any other kind of political regime.

⁴² However, the majority of the electorate was collectivist as the polls indicated. 68% thought that communism was a good idea badly put in practice, and 78% thought that the state should support loss-making state industry.

unrepresentative institutions, the high degree of confidence that people express in them can perhaps only be explained as a result of the need for identification with stable and enduring institutions under conditions where political institutions prove to be fragile and unstable.

In the final section of this paper I will analyze the political spectrum that resulted from November 2000 elections as well as the new claims to legitimacy that the winning party has been pursuing in the last year.

The statements and public appearances of President Iliescu and his prime minister, Adrian Nastase show an attempt at reaching those segments of the population that did not support him previously, to justify previous mistakes, and to assert a commitment to European integration. Various public speeches address different audiences with different interests.

In the beginning, Iliescu avoided any alliance with GRP and assured its majority through an alliance with the Hungarian party. Despite some misunderstandings generated by a new Hungarian law regarding the status of Hungarians living outside Hungary, which that government is attempting to endorse, the alliance proved to be quite stable. The UDMR cooperates with the governmental party regarding voting ordinary legislation in the parliament, in particular economic legislation. Moreover, the right to use languages of ethnic minorities in public administration represented a step further for this alliance.

PSDR also succeeded in bringing under its control one of the most important confederation of unions in Romania, Fratia, a result of a pact signed between the two parties on April 2, 2001. This pact gives the governmental party the right to participate at the meetings of the union's councils, while Fratia's leaders are invited to the Executive Bureau of PSDR on a weekly basis.

But perhaps the most unexpected move that Iliescu and his party made was a change of party name and the party's claim to different historical legacies that resulted from this

change of name. Following a June 15, 2001 conference, PSDR merged with the Social Democratic Party and became the Romanian Social Democratic Party. The new party considers itself the direct descendent of the Social Democratic Party of the Workers of Romania, established in 1893 in Bucharest, which six years later became part of the International Socialist League. It became an important parliamentary party before WWII but in the end was destroyed and absorbed by the RCP⁴³. In other words, this is no longer a party that is a direct emanation of the December 1989 Romanian revolution, as Iliescu liked to claim in the early 90's, but is a party that claims historical legitimacy, European affiliation and even more a history of its earlier communist oppression. The new leader of PD, (PD is a full member of the International Socialist League and an associate member of the European Socialist Party) Traian Basescu, was quick to react in an open letter addressed to Adrian Nastase on June 17 2001, in which he stated: "You do not govern as true social democrats because you do not govern at all... You are not social democrats because the European social-democratic family does not recognize you!"⁴⁴. This struggle over the monopoly of social-democratic doctrine reflects the need of Romanian political actors to justify their existence as equally acceptable for the outside world and for the country's links to a democratic past.

At the same time, Iliescu attempts to justify and correct past actions that shaped his image as a rigid politician trained in the old communist school. He has made public appearances with the former king Michael whose merits he is ready to praise⁴⁵ and even more to restore properties that belonging to the royal family. The former king cannot represent a threat after the republican system has become routinized. His main supporters, old members of the historical parties, are either dead (Corneliu Coposu), or invisible figures on the political stage (former NPP leaders). Iliescu knows that an icon of the past could symbolize and legitimize his own claim for reconciliation and could enhance his image as a democratic leader. Within the same logic of propaganda, Iliescu does not speak the

⁴³ See www.psd.ro

⁴⁴ See www.pd.ro

⁴⁵ In a meeting held on September 18 2001 at the presidential residency with some journalists, Iliescu said that he was not the one who decided to deny the former king's right to visit Romania in 1990, but there were representatives of the historical parties and of UDMR who opposed this, and he, Iliescu, appreciates

language of perestroika any more, but the language of globalization and civic education⁴⁶. Moreover, the events of September 11, gave him the opportunity to detach himself from Tudor⁴⁷, the nationalist leader of GRP, and to reach out to the electorate that had supported GRP and Tudor. On October 27, the president of the PSD, Cluj, presented a social democratic program for Transylvania, a manifest that seeks to combine nationalism and Europeanism, by claiming a special European status to be gained by Transylvania⁴⁸.

One year after the elections, the popularity of the government and of the ruling party does not seem to diminish. The last polls taken in October the New Europe Barometer indicate that 52% of the population is still pro PSDR and almost half of the population believes in the government's capacity to improve the economy and the social state of the country. It is a rather exceptional situation for the Romanian transition, since all previous polls showed that one year after elections the government's popularity was drastically diminished. At the same time, there is no evidence that any other political actors present serious competition for Iliescu and his party: UDMR is pursuing its specific agenda, the NLP is struggling to create a liberal coalition with other groups, the DP, through its president Basescu, who is mayor of Bucharest is more aggressive on local affairs, the NPP presents a sad image because of its internal struggles, and the GRP lost almost two thirds of its supporters as a result of Tudor's hysterical, dangerous and irrational public statements.

Students of democratic transition acknowledge the crucial role that a multi party system has to play insofar as it reflects the diversity of views and interests of different parts of

the positive role that the former king played on December 23 1944 when Romania turned its arms against Nazi Germany. For the entire interview see www.presidency.ro

⁴⁶ On September 24 2001, on one of the most popular talk shows in Romania, hosted by journalist Marius Tuca, Iliescu explained that Romania's participation to the anti-terrorist struggle after the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York does not mean that Romania is conforming with American interests. Instead, Romania is taking its place in a coalition of free societies, fighting terrorism in globalized world.

⁴⁷ After the September 11 terrorist attacks, Tudor declared that in the mid 1990's, when Iliescu and his party were in power, some of Bin Laden's terrorists were trained in Romania. Iliescu was quick to explain that these were Palestinians sent by the state of Israel and were sponsored by Russia and the United States as part of an antiterrorist program. Even more, Tudor was denied an invitation to the presidential palace along with the other party leaders. He was not allowed to represent Romania in an international delegation in Asia, and the Parliament agreed that the judiciary system pursue the legal steps to strip him of his parliamentary immunity.

society. Is PSDR able to fulfill this task on its own and represent distinctive views in the Romania society? It is clear that PSDR and its leaders are doing a good propaganda job in claiming that they represent a plurality of interests. However, one should not forget that a large part of Romanian society is inclined towards conflict and its perception as potential. As a recent study shows,⁴⁹ 60% of Romanians believe that there is conflict between rich and poor, and among them more than 50% believe that there is conflict between Romanians and Gypsies, between Romanians and Hungarians, and between Romanians and the political class. Moreover, a country that is characterized by deep social disparities, where two out of five people live on less than \$30 a month, where only one fifth of the population are exposed to the outside world⁵⁰, is quite prone to unpredictable political behavior. Depending upon the efficiency of the actual government to pursue economic and social reforms, and of its ability to negotiate the country's future in the international arena, as well as the ability of liberal forces to organize themselves in a strong coalition, democracy will either achieve consolidation or not. The most that can be said for the present is that it lies in the balance.

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⁴⁸ Adevarul, October 29 2001, no. 3536.

⁴⁹ Cristian Ghinea in Dilema, no. 440, 3-9 August 2001, analyzed the study made by the Academic Society of Romania, a study that examines the potential for crisis within Romanian society.

⁵⁰ Statistics show that in 1997, only 20% of Romanians traveled abroad at least once.

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Index to Romanian political parties:

NSF = National Salvation Front (the newly created political body after the revolution, which was dominated by ex-communists).

PNL = National Liberal Party (historical party).

NPP = National Peasant Party (historical party); later on became National Peasant Christian-Democratic Party (PNTCD)

DP = Democratic Party (emerged from the dissident faction of FSN led by Petre Roman and it became a social-democratic party made of technocrats).

GRP = Party of Great Romania (nationalist and xenophobic party led by Corneliu Vadim Tudor).

PUNR = National Romanian Party of Unity (nationalist party, which operates mainly in Transylvania).

UDMR = Democratic Union of Hungarians from Romania (ethnic party).

PSM = Socialist Party of Labor (the continuator of Romanian Communist Party).

PSDR = Romanian Social-Democratic Party (a historical party that in 2001 merged with NSF).

DC = Democratic Convention

