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The Dynamics of Media Independence in Post-Ceaușescu Romania

RICHARD A. HALL

The development of the mass media in post-Ceaușescu Romania has displayed an alarming tendency to revert to communist methods of control and subservience. This is demonstrated by a detailed examination of how the various media have construed the events of the revolution of 1989. There is certainly a variety of opinion now expressed, including 'Ceaușescu-nostalgic' views, but even formally oppositionist newspapers have adopted the 'official' version of key features of those events, notably the role of the Securitate and its former director, General Vlad, and of the Soviet Union in the overthrow of the former regime. These factors suggest that the concept of media independence has been interpreted far too narrowly in Romania.

The Romanian media are both product and cause of the tainted and fragile character of Romania's young democracy. Undoubtedly, the most significant accomplishment in the post-Ceaușescu media has been the establishment of a sizeable component of the press that is free of state control. The importance of this accomplishment cannot be overestimated: these privately-owned publications routinely and vigorously criticize government officials and inform the public of present and past wrongdoing by them. Because of the pervasive and extremely repressive role played by the secret police apparatus of the Ceaușescu era (known as the Securitate), their reporting on the activities of the Securitate's institutional successors is particularly crucial to the cause of democracy.

On the basis of this information, most analysts use terms such as 'free' or 'independent' to describe this part of the press. They draw a sharp contrast between the independent press and the 'regime media' which are politically biased, anti-democratic and xenophobic, and which consistently engage in the disinformation and slander characteristic of the Ceaușescu media apparatus.¹ At the most fundamental level, Romania clearly suffers from the same problems in state-media relations as are seen elsewhere in Eastern Europe. But is independence from the state and its institutions enough in the political context of post-Ceaușescu Romania? Is it even the most pressing challenge facing the post-Ceaușescu media? This article

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argues 'no' to both these questions. Because of the state's complete control of political and civil society institutions under communist rule and the consensus on the need for such institutions to be independent in order for democracy to survive and thrive, most analysts have considered the question of ending the state's control over these spheres as paramount. Critical as this development is, it is not the same thing as purging the media of the institutional legacy of the previous authoritarian regime. The 'independent' Romanian press is a good example of this.²

Because of the Securitate's role during the Ceașescu era and its convoluted fate after the transition of December 1989, the generic concept of 'independence' employed in the analysis of post-communist change is inadequate in the Romanian case. The 'independent' press has generally been successful in achieving independence from the post-1989 regime of President Ion Iliescu and from the Securitate's institutional successors within the regime (no small feat considering that the regime has consistently and deviously tried to stifle these moves towards independence). In Romania, however, this is only half the battle. The problem is that the 'independent' press has not been able – nor apparently has it completely wanted – to establish the same degree of autonomy from all elements of the former Securitate. It is simply mistaken to assume that independence from the post-Ceașescu state implies independence from the former Securitate. The tremendous fragmentation and competition within the former Securitate after December 1989 has ensured that these are not the same thing.

The result is that the former Securitate's influence on political behaviour is a *systemic* condition affecting all media sources regardless of ownership type (state or private), ideological orientation, or relationship to the regime. Although establishing media independence from the state is important and has not been easy in Romania because of the Iliescu regime's anti-democratic mentalities and tactics, this has not been the most intractable problem besetting the Romanian media since the transition. Instead, that problem has been the degree to which the remnants of the former Securitate continue both directly and indirectly to influence how and what those in the media report.

The extensive and enduring press coverage of the most fundamental event in recent Romanian history – the revolution of December 1989 – is our window to the incomplete independence of the 'independent' press. The independent press has reported relatively honestly and accurately about actions *against* the political opposition and independent media *since* December 1989 by the Iliescu regime and the Securitate's institutional successors within the regime. But when it comes to covering the critical events of December 1989 and their institutional consequences, the

independent press has failed miserably.

In terms of ideological rhetoric, accounts of the December events vary greatly depending upon the political orientation of the publication in which they appear. This reflects the genuine and sharp ideological differences which divide the Romanian political spectrum. A closer look at these accounts, however, reveals a remarkable and unexpected consensus (even identity) across the entire Romanian press regarding the *details* of exactly what happened in December 1989. These details serve to defend the overriding institutional interests of the former Securitate. They serve to revise the history of December 1989 and conveniently minimize and erase the role of the Securitate (particularly of specific directorates and units) in bloodily suppressing the uprising and resisting the ouster of Ceaușescu. They are at odds with what we understood to have happened at the time and they are demonstrably false.

It was the moralizing stance of the independent press itself which in many ways established reporting on the events of December 1989 as the 'litmus test' by which to judge the good faith of the post-Ceaușescu media. Many analysts assume that ideological rhetoric is an accurate guide to where the institutional interests of the former Securitate are being defended. Praise of the Ceaușescu era and praise of the former Securitate is evidence that a particular publication defends the institutional interests of the former Securitate out of ideological conviction. The men and women of Romania's independent press clearly do not defend the institutional interests of the former Securitate out of ideological conviction, however, but rather for reasons of personal and political practicality.

Political Context and the Post-Ceaușescu Media

Why would the journalists of the independent press who routinely criticize the former Securitate, expose the illegal actions of its successor institutions in the regime of President Ion Iliescu, and clearly hate both old and new manifestations of this institution, defend the institutional interests of the former Securitate in the December 1989 events? Because, owing to the particular context of those events, the same story which exculpates much of the former Securitate from the bloodshed of that time succeeds in laying blame for the deaths at the door of the Iliescu regime – a regime which two general parliamentary and presidential elections since 1989 have not succeeded in removing and which those in the independent press deeply dislike. The chronic and seemingly insurmountable political weakness of the opposition to the Iliescu regime over the past six years and the financial difficulties of the independent press have left these journalists vulnerable.

Perhaps the critical factor, however, is that, although many new, young

faces have entered the independent press since 1989, many of the editors and political reporters and commentators at major independent publications – in other words, those setting the agenda for the coverage of the events of December 1989 – worked in the Ceașescu media apparatus. Given the highly totalitarian character of Ceașescu's regime and the ubiquity of Ceașescu's personality cult, the very act of working in the media apparatus in that era required complicitous behaviour. Constant compromise was the price of practising one's intellectual craft – the art of communication. A former high-ranking party-official-turned-dissident in the late Ceașescu era, Silviu Brucan, has described the stifling pressures of the Ceașescu era as follows:

A large number of Romanian intellectuals were forced by the dictatorship to make moral compromises, therefore political ones. This totalitarian dictatorship of Ceașescu's was so perfectly organized such that you could not publish a book, earn a doctorate, receive a promotion at the university, attend a conference, or publish an article without engaging in adulation of these two Ceașescus, expressing one's loyalty to them, and praising them. And many Romanian intellectuals had to do this – very many.³

The potential opportunity given by a position in the media for providing a base from which to spread subversive ideas against the regime, and the emphasis the Securitate placed upon maintaining total control in this critical sphere, ensured that such compromise frequently involved collaboration with the Securitate. Per capita, the size of the Securitate's network of societal collaborators may have been as large as two-and-a-half times that of the infamous and ubiquitous East German Stasi.⁴ Inevitably, the political sensitivity of a media position and the relatively small number of people who were employed in the Ceașescu media meant that many media employees probably numbered among the Securitate's 700,000 collaborators in society at large.

As has been admitted by one journalist, whose status as a Securitate collaborator was revealed after 1989, the value of one's collaboration to the Securitate lay not in the information that collaborator could supply to the Securitate – the Securitate was swimming in such information – but in the very fact of that person's complicity.⁵ Such complicity may not prevent dissident behaviour – then or now – but it can place bounds on it and encourage the alteration of its scope and direction. Pavel Campeanu, a Romanian sociologist and observer of the Romanian media, has perhaps summed it up best: 'Although the press is free in its relations to the authorities, it is not free from its past.'⁶

The issue of past collaboration would be as irrelevant to the current

behaviour of media employees and inappropriate to an analysis of the media as it is in most of the rest of Eastern Europe, were it not for the peculiar fate of the Securitate after December 1989. Revealing their limited conception of change and their unwillingness and inability to dismantle the former Securitate completely, the leaders of the Iliescu regime avoided doing what almost every other new regime in Eastern Europe considered imperative: establishing public control over, and access to, the files of the former secret police to prevent their political use in the post-communist era. Serious as this failure to act was, the situation has been made infinitely more complex by the fragmentation of the Securitate since the fall of the Ceauşescu regime. Although the Romanian Information Service (the SRI) set up in March 1990 was the official heir to the Securitate and legally inherited the files of its predecessor, there have been many indications that it is not in control of all the files of the former Securitate or all the copies of those files.

The Iliescu regime reintegrated the bulk of the former Securitate into the structures of the new regime. Significantly, however, the events of December 1989 had produced a small but bitter cast of 'losers' among the former Securitate, who were angry at the new Iliescu regime for depriving them of their position, job and, in a few cases, liberty. Even though they had worked for the same institution; they were not necessarily all cut from the same ideological cloth. The nationalist, autonomous and anti-Russian components of Nicolae Ceauşescu's rule had appealed to Romanians who had little use for socialism and some of them had taken up positions in the former Securitate, especially in those directorates whose activities were most directly tied to issues of national security. This appears to have applied especially to those who worked in the Securitate's Fourth Directorate (its counter-military intelligence branch) which – because Ceauşescu feared that his opponents within the regime would attract Soviet support – had spent much of its time attempting to root out from the Romanian Army those suspected of having contacts with the KGB. Thus, former Securitate officers from various branches of the old institution found themselves outside the new regime's control just as Romania's nascent and extremely weak political and civil society institutions were taking shape. Many of these people had an axe to grind with the Iliescu regime.

Among the former Securitate who were reintegrated into the Iliescu regime, extensive formal and informal factionalization emerged. By 1996, there were as many as nine intelligence services within the Iliescu regime which had evolved out of the former Securitate and which were staffed largely by former Securitate officers.⁷ The duplication of functions by these intelligence services and the rivalry among them has occasionally bubbled to the surface and has clearly contributed to much of the instability of the post-Ceauşescu period.⁸ As power struggles have ensued in the new regime

and former Securitate officers have been dismissed or have defected from it, the number of former Securitate officers not directly subordinate to organized control has increased.⁹ While many former Securitate officers have little use for the individuals and democratic ideals of those in the political opposition or the independent press, they have recognized that the opposition of these groups to the Iliescu regime provides them with a vehicle through which they can settle their scores with the regime. The political and economic desperation and compromised past of many of those in the forefront of the political opposition and independent press has ensured their use as such a vehicle.

How has this fragmentation of the former Securitate affected the handling of the files of the former Securitate? The SRI maintains that between the official announcement of the disbanding of the former Securitate at the end of December 1989 and the founding of the SRI in March 1990, up to 100,000 files of the former Securitate disappeared from the Securitate's archives.¹⁰ The Romanian press of all political colours has been flooded with documents and information over the past six years which could only have come from the archives of the former Securitate. Nicolae Ulieru, the official spokesman for the SRI (himself a former journalist during the Ceaușescu era), stated in January 1996:

These files which are circulating through the press do not come from the SRI. There exist other possibilities for why the files of the former Securitate should circulate freely, although illegally. ... In the days of 22, 23, 24 December 1989, waves of revolutionaries poured into the headquarters of the former Securitate – you put the quotation marks where you want! From many of the Securitate's headquarters ... entire deposits disappeared from the archives, tens, hundreds and thousands of files, which later turned up you can guess where and in whose possession. Secondly, don't forget that between 24 December 1989 and 26 March 1990, the archives of the Securitate were in the custody of the Army ... Thirdly, some former employees of the Securitate exited the whirlwind of December 1989 with some files ... Fourthly, it is known with certainty that in the first months of the new regime, some among the potentates of that time profited from their position and the fact that they had access to the archives of the former Securitate and made copies of some files, which it can be presumed they use when they see fit.¹¹

While Ulieru's claim that the SRI has played no role in circulating the files of the former Securitate to the press is undoubtedly false, there are strong reasons to believe he may not be lying when he claims that the SRI is not in charge of all the former Securitate's archive. Twice in the past six

years, the SRI Director himself, Virgil Magureanu, has had to respond to attempts to print files showing his service as a Securitate collaborator and officer. In spring 1992, two independent weeklies, *Tinerama* and *Expres Magazin*, published documents showing Magureanu's service in the foreign intelligence branch of the Securitate between 1969 and 1972.¹² It is commonly believed that the document was given to the independent press by the former deputy prime minister and former senator Gelu Voican Voiculescu, who had headed a rival intelligence service to the SRI (Interior Ministry unit UM 0215; also staffed by former Securitate officers) until Magureanu had manoeuvred to remove him from that position of influence.¹³

In late 1995, the Ceauşescu-nostalgic publication of Corneliu Vadim Tudor, *România Mare*, which had only recently turned critical of the SRI Director, threatened to publish Securitate documents showing that Magureanu had been a Securitate informer as a student. Magureanu took the threat sufficiently seriously to preempt Vadim Tudor and released this section of his file for publication in the independent press.¹⁴ Vadim Tudor maintained that he had been given the SRI Director's file by 'active duty and reserve generals' of the former Securitate; Magureanu himself suggested that officers of the former Securitate and those marginalized from the SRI were behind Tudor's actions.¹⁵ After this second episode, Magureanu admitted:

... I can state that there is a greater possibility of people using various data, various documents, for the purpose of blackmail in extremely sensitive times such as the electoral period. This type of information has probably been stored somewhere and will be used.¹⁶

Magureanu is not alone in these views. Lucian Pintilie, Romania's acclaimed film-maker, argued in October 1992 that, while some of the former Securitate had gone into business or had remained in the new regime, 'others were excluded and it is these people who hold the most important files and who exercise a powerful blackmail in order to take power. All these rivalries among the diverse wings of the Securitate have a grotesque dimension to them.'¹⁷ If even the SRI Director can be threatened with documents showing his former collaboration and is forced to take actions he would not otherwise have taken, then how is the professional behaviour of the average Romanian journalist affected by the possibility of such revelation?

New Publications, Old Faces and 'Personnel Continuity'

Both foreign and domestic observers argue that 'personnel continuity'

among staff in the regime media has a detrimental effect on reporting. Yet these same observers largely ignore the issue of 'personnel continuity' in the independent media. A look at the boards of directors, editorial boards and staff of political reporters and commentators at most major independent publications reveals that many of these people worked in the Ceașescu media apparatus. Of course, the real issue here is not what an individual did in the past, but whether or not what a person did has affected his or her reporting or professional actions since December 1989. Let us examine the cases of two of the most prominent personalities in the Romanian independent press: Ion Cristoiu and Sorin Rosca Stanescu.

Ion Cristoiu is the media mogul of post-Ceașescu Romania. He founded or played a major role at some of the most important opposition weeklies of the post-Ceașescu era – *Expres*, *Expres Magazin*, and *Zig-Zag* – and is editor-in-chief of *Evenimentul Zilei*, the Romanian daily with the highest circulation since its creation in 1992. His front-page editorial each morning in *Evenimentul Zilei* captures the pulse of the opposition's views. He has been a sharp and unrelenting critic of the Iliescu regime and the SRI. *Evenimentul Zilei* has opened its doors to young people with little previous experience in journalism. Because of his criticism of the Iliescu regime and his status and influence within the independent media, foreign journalists frequently go to him for comment when they are investigating a story on Romanian politics. He is often presented as a shining symbol of the democratic media in Romania.

Cristoiu is hardly a newcomer to the world of journalism, however. Prior to December 1989, he was an important writer for a number of publications and was in charge of the 'Literary and Artistic Supplement' of the Communist Youth League daily *Scînteia Tineretului*. Why does this have relevance today? Because Cristoiu's actions since December 1989 raise questions. While his publications are filled with articles critical of the Iliescu regime and the SRI, there have been many articles which have whitewashed the role of the former Securitate in the events of December 1989. Cristoiu's publications shed light on the fact that these two trends are not mutually exclusive, but instead reflect the convoluted fate of the former Securitate and its continued influence on Romanian society.

For example, one would expect somebody of Cristoiu's democratic reputation to be highly critical of Ceașescu's last Securitate director, General Iulian Vlad. Yet during Vlad's trial in early 1991, Cristoiu wrote articles which were surprisingly sympathetic to and supportive of General Vlad.¹⁸ In 1993, Cristoiu stated unashamedly:

From Westerners to Romanian dissidents, with the exception of [Silviu] Brucan, I haven't heard of people who hate Iulian Vlad. He is

a great intellectual, a refined intellectual ... I believe his arrest [in December 1989] was part of the KGB scenario. The Soviets realized that an anti-communist movement was beginning. And that it could be accelerated by the Securitate.¹⁹

Cristoiu's comments are unambiguous. According to him, the Securitate was a revolutionary force in December 1989 and Vlad was arrested not because of anything he had done but solely because a foreign power had wished it. 'A great intellectual, a refined intellectual', whom even dissidents do not hate, is how he describes the person Silviu Brucan has termed 'the man who headed the most brutal and monstrous repressive machinery in Eastern Europe' and – conjuring up the image of Stalin's bloody secret police director – 'our Beria'.²⁰

Cristoiu's publications have also served as a haven for journalists who, after they left working for Cristoiu, have gone on to 'switch camps', so to speak, and revealed their true Ceauşescuist colours. During 1990, Angela Băcescu wrote for Cristoiu at *Zig-Zag*; since 1990, as a journalist for the Ceauşescu-nostalgic publication *Europa*, she has gained a reputation as one of the most xenophobic, anti-democratic and pro-Securitate journalists in post-Ceauşescu Romania.

Another good example is Pavel Corut, who has gained notoriety even outside Romania for the seemingly endless series of semi-fictional spy novels he has written since 1992.²¹ These novels seek to rehabilitate the Securitate's reputation and rewrite the story of December 1989. They have sold surprisingly well. Forgotten now is the fact that during 1991 and 1992, Pavel Corut wrote weekly columns for Cristoiu's *Expres Magazin*, under either his given name or his acknowledged alias of Paul Cernescu. Corut was a high-ranking officer of the Securitate's counter-military intelligence directorate until the events of December 1989 and he even served in one of the intelligence agencies of the Iliescu regime for a short time in 1990.²² During the summer and autumn of 1990, Corut wrote for *Naţiunea*, an ultra-nationalist publication that was financed by Iosif Constantin Dragan, a Romanian émigré living in Italy and well known for his neo-fascist views.²³ It is virtually unimaginable that Cristoiu did not learn of these facts before or during the two years Corut published in *Expres Magazin*.

Moreover, a comparison of what Băcescu and Corut wrote while working at Cristoiu's publications, and what they have written since they left, shows that the details of their stories – especially with regard to the Securitate's role in the December 1989 events – are virtually identical. The only real difference is that their nostalgia for the Ceauşescu era and xenophobia are now more open than they were in the pages of Cristoiu's publications. Cristoiu has been asked specifically about the Băcescu case.

His answer is enlightening: he argues that he realized from the beginning that Băcescu was writing to defend the interests of the former Securitate, but that, because in 1990 the Iliescu regime was claiming for itself what he maintains were unwarranted and false revolutionary merits and 'there was something true in what the Securitate was saying', he allowed her to publish.²⁴

Another good example of the link between past and present can be seen in the case of Sorin Rosca Stanescu. Prior to December 1989, he wrote at *Viața Studențească* and *Informația Bucureștiului*. The latter became *Libertateă* on 22 December 1989 and Rosca Stanescu remained there for several months before transferring to the increasingly oppositional *România Liberă* in the spring of 1990.²⁵ Until 1994, Rosca Stanescu spent the majority of his time at *România Liberă*, where he wrote many investigative articles critical of the Iliescu regime and the SRI. He has served as the Chairman of the Romanian Journalists' Association (AZR), which groups journalists from Romania's independent press. His reputation for taking on the regime and for being the target of the regime's displeasure with his reporting encouraged foreign observers to follow his efforts to set up independent newspapers under his own direction – *Ultimul Cuvînt* and *Ziua*.²⁶

During 1995, he gained attention abroad when his daily, *Ziua*, published allegations that President Ion Iliescu had been recruited by the KGB while a student in Moscow during the 1950s.²⁷ The General Prosecutor's Office threatened to take legal action against Stanescu's paper, prompting the organization *Reportères sans frontières* to denounce this step as an attempt at 'censorship in disguise'.²⁸

Why does Stanescu's reporting merit closer scrutiny? In late April 1992, documents arrived at *România Liberă*, several other publications and foreign embassies which suggested that Stanescu and another journalist at *România Liberă* (Florin Gabriel Marculescu) had collaborated with the former Securitate. The timing was probably not accidental. Although Rosca Stanescu had been writing detailed allegations against the Iliescu regime and the SRI for over two years, the release of his file came right on the heels of an article he had written which was witheringly critical of SRI Director, Virgil Magureanu. Part of Magureanu's Securitate file had just been published in the independent press and Rosca Stanescu accused Magureanu of having lied about his past. Magureanu had apparently exacted his revenge.²⁹

On 9 May 1992, Stanescu and Marculescu admitted in the pages of *România Liberă* that this information was correct. A month later, the paper's editorial board decided to release the two journalists. The editorial board claimed that the regime had pursued these two journalists specifically

because they had been so critical of the regime and the SRI. Nevertheless, they had little choice but to dismiss them since otherwise the regime would use the presence of the two journalists at the daily to manipulate public opinion against *România Liberă*. The incident was so important that *The Economist* deemed it worthy of comment, presenting this as yet another example of the anti-democratic behaviour of the Iliescu regime, which was willing to use the files of the former Securitate to silence its present critics.³⁰

Nevertheless, the marginalization of these journalists did not last long. After a brief stay at Cristoiu's publication, Stanescu was hired back by *România Liberă*, a little more than a year after the incident and in spite of their original rationale for having dismissed him (that his presence would damage the daily's reputation). Even though these journalists had suggested that after December 1989 the SRI had tried to contact them, virtually no one in the independent press questioned whether Stanescu's compromised background might have influenced his reporting prior to its public revelation. Certainly, few have questioned his reporting since the revelation. One Romanian political analyst, Alina Mungiu, has castigated the political opposition and independent press for their response in cases such as that of Rosca Stanescu.³¹ Mungiu suggests that an opportunistic double standard leads those opposed to the Iliescu regime to 'draw an illogical difference between the "bad *securisti*" of those on the other side, whose head they demand, and those [*securisti*] who are "ours", those of the "good" world, like F.G. Marculescu, Sorin Rosca Stanescu, rehabilitated by Petre Mihai Bacanu [*România Liberă*'s senior editor] ...'³²

It should be mentioned that Rosca Stanescu was not just any type of Securitate informant: he had collaborated for a decade (1975–85) with the Securitate's elite anti-terrorist unit (the so-called USLA) and his collaboration ended under ambiguous circumstances.³³ Ironically, in articles critical of supporters of the Iliescu regime, *România Liberă* has considered collaboration with the USLA worthy of comment and serious complicity.³⁴ One cannot help but conclude that one of the reasons for Rosca Stanescu's differential treatment lies solely in the fact that he opposes the Iliescu regime.

The relevance of past ties lies in whether and how they have affected reporting since the transition. In February 1991, Securitate General Iulian Vlad proposed the following scenario to explain the events which propelled Ceauşescu's ouster:

Halfway through December 1989 massive groups of Soviet tourists began to enter the country. They entered coming directly from the USSR or from Yugoslavia or Hungary. The majority were men and – in a coordinated fashion – they deployed in a convoy of brand-new

'LADA' automobiles. In the night of 16–17 December '89 such a column attempted to enter Timișoara. Some of these cars were forced to make a detour around the town, others managed to enter it ...³⁵

This 'Soviet tourist' scenario is standard fare among the former Securitate and shows up routinely in the pages of the publications of the Ceaușescu-nostalgics. Two months after Vlad's statement, however, Rosca Stanescu presented an interview in *România Liberă* in which an anonymous KGB officer residing in Paris spoke of a similar scenario.³⁶ In the article, Stanescu reminded his audience of 'the persistent rumours circulating referring to the existence on Romanian territory of 2,000 "LADA" automobiles with Soviet tags and two men inside each car.'³⁷

He closed by asking his readers: 'Why is General Vlad being held in such an interminable checkmate? ... Is Iliescu protected or not by the KGB?'³⁸ In late 1994 – that is, after the revelation of his Ceaușescu-era collaboration – Stanescu published the viewpoint of a former Securitate officer which clearly implied that the Securitate could not have been responsible for the December 1989 bloodshed since at a secret meeting in November 1989 General Vlad had ordered his Securitate commanders to refrain from intervening in any street protests.³⁹ It is difficult to argue that in either of these cases Stanescu did not realize the dubious, if not absurd, character of these arguments and how they served the interests of the former Securitate.

'Solving the Mystery of December 1989': A Study in the Politics of Investigative Journalism

These examples of Sorin Rosca Stanescu's reporting suggest both the enduring interest among journalists of the independent press in the events of December 1989 and how this coverage reveals the limits of independent press autonomy. The interest of the independent press in establishing what happened during the confusing transition of December 1989 initially served a social cause. Over a thousand people had died in those events and the nation had been traumatized by the upheaval for two full weeks. The population wished to know who was responsible for the bloodshed, how the new political elite had come to power, and whether their claim to rule was legitimate. Thus, in 1990 the Romanian press was filled with constant revelations about the December events.

It can be argued that since 1990, however, the independent press's continued interest in the events of December 1989 has been a predominantly elite-driven phenomenon, something fuelled by the journalists themselves. By late 1990, the population had been so saturated by media coverage that

they were confused about what to believe and cynical about whether or not the events would ever be clarified. Although coverage has dropped off steadily since 1990, the number of articles which continue to appear – more than six years after the events took place – and the attention devoted to the most minute details remains astounding. The interest of the independent press has undoubtedly been sustained by the fact that two general presidential and parliamentary elections have not dislodged the officials of the Iliescu regime who came to power during the events of December 1989. What one argues about what happened in December 1989 is thus considered to have implications for the legitimacy of the Iliescu regime throughout the entire post-Ceauşescu era.

Most analyses of the Romanian historiography of the December events suggest that there could not be a greater difference between the presentation in the independent press and accounts in regime-supportive publications. In accordance with this dichotomy, the independent press claims that Ceauşescu was ousted from power by a genuine, spontaneous popular uprising, but a coterie of *nomenklaturists* ‘hijacked the revolution’ – launched a pre-planned *coup d’état* – to halt the process of radical change. On the other hand, the regime-supportive press (in particular, its Ceauşescu-nostalgic component) denies or at least casts doubt upon the genuine, spontaneous and popular character of this uprising. Its journalists insinuate that the Ceauşescu regime was toppled by an international conspiracy, including a coalition of any of the following: the KGB, CIA, Hungarian intelligence, and MOSSAD (Israeli Intelligence). Some of those who came to power in December 1989 were working for this conspiracy, others (such as Iliescu) saved Romania from the conspiracy’s achieving its ultimate goal: the destruction of Romania’s independence.

On a rhetorical level such accounts appear very different, but a closer look at the details argued in these competing accounts reveals a surprising degree of consensus. This becomes clear when we examine the most important controversy of the December events: the question of the so-called ‘terrorists’. ‘Terrorists’ was the name given to those who opened fire on the evening of 22 December after Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu had been forced to flee the capital in the face of huge demonstrations. They caused great confusion and death during the following few days. During that period, approximately 22–27 December, about 900 people died, almost a third of them army personnel. Who were the terrorists? Whose side were they fighting on? Did they exist at all? What happened to them? Silviu Brucan, who played a critical role in the December events, has described the bizarre disappearance of the ‘terrorists’ as follows:

The question of who the terrorists were sums up the most incredible

and queer facet of the Romanian revolution. Even more bewildering is the fact that not even historians of the future will ever be able to clear it up. All traces have disappeared for all practical purposes, and not one single terrorist is available for questioning or trial ... Everybody knows the terrorists in Romania were shooting and killing people, but not a single one of them can now plead guilty or not guilty. They are simply missing as such, although as living persons they might function as respectable entrepreneurs or businessmen, superior officers or cabinet ministers.⁴⁰

At the time of the events, there was little debate about whether the 'terrorists' existed. They were Securitate officers fighting to gain the release of the Ceaușescu (who had been captured after trying to flee the capital). A high-level Securitate defector living in the United States and Western diplomats based in Bucharest pointed the finger in one direction: at the men of the Securitate's Fifth Directorate (charged with the protection of the Ceaușescu) and, more specifically, those of its closely affiliated 'special unit for anti-terrorist warfare' – the USLA.⁴¹ Since December 1989, several key officials who were part of the first post-Ceaușescu government but were marginalized from power during early 1990 – including Silviu Brucan and Army General Nicolae Militaru – have corroborated this account.⁴² Nevertheless, more than six years after those events, the independent press consistently maintains that the 'terrorists' were an 'invention' of those who took power in order to give their seizure of power revolutionary legitimacy. The members of the USLA have long since disappeared from the picture as suspects in the December bloodshed. The problem is that this also depicts the views expressed by journalists in the pro-regime and pro-Ceaușescu press, by former Securitate officers and by the SRI. The case study of a single, much-commented-upon incident from the December events will illustrate this unnatural and questionable consensus.

'The Defence Ministry Incident': What a Single Case Can Tell Us

One of the most frequently cited and controversial incidents of the Romanian Revolution occurred on the night of 23–24 December 1989 in front of the defence ministry in the capital, Bucharest. Ion Iliescu and the other officials who seized power after the Ceaușescu fled the capital on 22 December were at this hour using the ministry as the headquarters of the new National Salvation Front government. The gunfire which had erupted nation-wide from the evening of 22 December reached its peak on this night. In the midst of the chaos, seven USLA officers were gunned down as their armoured vehicles arrived at the heavily fortified defence ministry.

Among the seven dead were two of the USLA's highest-ranking officers, Lieutenant-Colonel Gheorghe Trosca, Chief-of-Staff of the USLA, and Major Eugen Cotuna, Commander of the USLA's Special 'Intervention' sub-unit.

At the time, the Romanian media reported this incident as a 'terrorist attack' – a desperate attempt by drugged, fanatical Ceauşescu loyalists to eliminate the political and military leaders of the new government gathered inside the building.⁴³ The media coverage of this event since December 1989 prompts three observations: (1) there has been widespread and persistent revisionism in the reporting of this incident; (2) the interpretation of this incident by former Securitate officers, by journalists of the pro-Ceauşescu press, and by journalists of the independent media is virtually identical; and (3) there exists sufficient evidence that we can reasonably disprove the revisionist explanation.

Even President Ion Iliescu pauses to discuss this incident in his 1993 book entitled *Revoluție și Reforma*.⁴⁴ Despite the original explanation of these events supplied by spokesmen for Iliescu's government, Iliescu has reconsidered and suggests an otherwise very plausible scenario: the army opened fire accidentally upon the USLA officers because of a breakdown in communication and the great confusion of those days. Yet at least two facts seem to suggest that at the time Front leaders and the army did not consider that an accident had occurred. Ceauşescu-nostalgics have complained bitterly since December 1989 that the bodies of the dead USLA officers were left out in the street for almost a week and profaned by the populace as 'terrorists' until finally Army General Victor Stanculescu ordered that they be collected and buried.⁴⁵ Moreover, those USLA officers who survived the incident maintain that they were arrested, beaten, given drug tests and interrogated inside the defence ministry after the incident by members of the Front.⁴⁶

The official revision of the defence ministry incident began in late February 1990 when General Victor Stanculescu replaced General Nicolae Militaru as defence minister. General Stanculescu maintained that, far from being 'terrorists', the USLA had actually fought alongside the army in defence of the revolution. He argued that the USLA had not been involved in the repression of demonstrators in Timișoara and Bucharest in the week which led up to the flight of the Ceauşescus. The USLA officers killed at the defence ministry had come to aid in the defence of that building and tragically had been shot by the (still unknown) terrorists. Even at the time, this sudden about-face in the new regime's treatment of the USLA struck some foreign observers as a suspicious attempt at rehabilitating the reputation of the former Securitate.⁴⁷

A collective letter sent in late 1990 to the pro-Ceauşescu *Democratia* by

former Securitate officers proclaimed what has subsequently become the standard Securitate view of this incident: Army General Nicolae Militaru (located in the defence ministry at the time of the incident) had lured the USLA officers into an ambush and had ensured that the group was led by Colonel Gheorghe Trosca and Major Eugen Cotuna since, as former counter-military intelligence officers charged with Militaru's case, they had compromising information on Militaru's (alleged) links with the KGB.⁴⁸

The head of the Securitate's counter-military intelligence directorate, General Vasile Gheorghe, who was arrested and imprisoned as a result of the December events, outlines an identical scenario.⁴⁹ Dumitru Popescu, a former Fourth Directorate officer, wrote to the pro-Ceaușescu *Europa* that

Colonel Trosca was expressly solicited by General Militaru to intervene at the defence ministry on Drumul Taberei with a group of fighters to annihilate the terrorists ... [Trosca was killed] because he had worked effectively in unmasking the activities of Militaru as a KGB spy.⁵⁰

Other former Securitate officers of various ranks and from various directorates parrot a similar story. Thus, even though the former Securitate may no longer exist as an institution, there is little question about what the institutional view of this incident is.

The independent press's coverage of this same incident is surprising. As a journalist for two publications at the heart of the independent press – *Expres* and *Tinerama* – Ilie Stoian ranks among those who have written most extensively about the 1989 events. Yet Stoian presents a familiar interpretation of the defence ministry incident: 'Militaru expressly requested that among the USLA personnel Colonel Trosca be sent ... Their murders were a consequence of the fact that Trosca possessed data about Militaru's links to the KGB.'⁵¹ In his work, Stoian has cleared the USLA of any responsibility for the 'terrorism' of December 1989 and instead suggests that army and Front leaders were the real culprits.

Even Petre Mihai Bacanu, executive director of *România Liberă* – considered by many to be the 'conscience' of the Romanian media because of his tenacious criticism of the former Securitate and its successor institutions – has disseminated similar accounts. There is no denying that much of what Bacanu has written since 1989 has required courage or that prior to 1989 as a journalist at *România Liberă* he had suffered at the hands of the Ceașescu regime (he was imprisoned in early 1989 for attempting to publish an illegal underground newspaper). Nevertheless, as early as March 1990, Bacanu was arguing that the USLA officers had been killed at the defence ministry by accident and he stridently denied that the USLA had taken part in the repression in Bucharest on the night before Ceașescu

fled.⁵² Eyewitness accounts published immediately after the events suggest that this second claim is simply false.⁵³ Bacanu, who was already critical of almost any regime action, curiously was in almost total agreement with General Stanculescu's assertions.⁵⁴

Since then Bacanu's view of this incident has only become more questionable. In December 1992, he suggested explicitly that General Militaru had appealed for the USLA to come to protect the defence ministry from the terrorists and that it was not accidental that 'Lt. Col. Trosca who had worked on the dossiers "Corbii", "Igor", and "Olga" [all relating to the KGB ties of Militaru and other Front leaders]' had been among them.⁵⁵ Significantly, Bacanu's statement came a day after *România Liberă's* first ever interview – a full three years after the events – with Army General Nicolae Militaru. In that interview, Militaru maintained with certainty that the USLA had been the 'terrorists' and that those who had been killed in the defence ministry incident had come in attack.⁵⁶

Since 1992, Bacanu has continued to insinuate that Colonel Trosca and the USLA officers who came to the defence ministry were lured into a trap and killed unjustly.⁵⁷ Coming as this claim does from the pen of one of Romania's most respected journalists this myth has gained a credibility with the population which it could not have attained in the pro-Ceaușescu press alone.

But is it possible that in this case the former Securitate is telling the truth and that this explains the odd convergence of accounts in the independent and pro-Ceaușescu press? This seems highly unlikely. In June 1990, in the pages of the army daily, Army Major Mihai Floca attacked what he considered to be the growing wave of revisionism in the civilian press.⁵⁸

According to Floca,

The fact that ever since the Revolution the Army has been the target of well-directed attacks which have become more and more insistent can be seen by anyone. Far too few of the journalists who sign such slanderous articles which appear in certain publications are still interested in what happened to the army during the Revolution. The sacrifice of 267 officers, recruits and soldiers now has little importance! All that these 'well-intentioned people' [*oameni de bine*], a term which can imply people with Securitate ties] wish to show is how the army contributed to genocide, with the eventual goal of demonstrating that the army made the greatest contribution.⁵⁹

Floca targeted one article in particular: an article in Ion Cristoiu's *Zig-Zag* by the above-mentioned Angela Băcescu.⁶⁰ In that article, Băcescu interviewed USLA officers who had survived the gunfight and proposed a by now familiar scenario: the USLA had been cynically lured into an

ambush in order that they could be killed as 'terrorists'; in reality they had not been 'terrorists', and they were not involved in the repression prior to 22 December (they could not have been as it was not part of their duties).

Army Major Floca challenged what he considered the revisionism of the civilian press with interviews of army soldiers who had participated in the incident and of civilians who had witnessed the events of those days from the nearby apartment blocs. The comments of one army officer are telling:

Until now I have not said much even though I was aware of the attempts of certain journalists to make the USLA into heroes. I kept quiet because I thought about those left behind by those who had fallen, wives and children who bear no responsibility for what happened. But now, since we have been accused of a crime, and since *in not a single civilian newspaper has our point of view been presented* I have the obligation to say what I saw.⁶¹

The interviewees supplied information which is devastating for the revisionist argument: the armoured vehicles bearing the USLA members had approached in the middle of the night with their headlights dimmed, had manoeuvred between tanks at a distance for 30 minutes without making contact with anyone, and had opened fire. Although their arrival was expected, they did not approach by the agreed route, and one of the original three armoured vehicles stopped en route. Captain Victor Stoica asks: 'If they had come with such innocent intentions, why did they stop in between the tanks rather than head straight for the ministry? Probably because – as we discovered the next morning – none of the USLA officers had on his person any identity papers ...'.⁶² Reinforcing the idea that the USLA officers had arrived as if on a wartime mission was the fact that they were wearing army uniforms over their USLA insignia.

Writing in August 1990, Floca and a group of Army officers maintained that those who had related what they had seen 'have been warned to think long and hard since they have families and to stay on their own turf if they do not want to have problems'.⁶³ Several residents of the nearby apartment blocs have claimed that in May 1990 they were visited by former Securitate officers who informed them of the 'correct' understanding of the incidents which had taken place outside the defence ministry in December 1989.⁶⁴ Floca suggested in August 1990 that the physical 'terrorism' of December had been replaced by 'verbal terrorism' – a charge which apparently extended to the journalists of the civilian press who were making heroes of the USLA officers.⁶⁵

These accounts suggest a great irony. At least initially, the army's victorious role in the Revolution and its ability to maintain its institutional coherence allowed it to free itself of the pervasive infiltration and

manipulation of the former Securitate. Thus, when it came to covering the actions of the former Securitate in the December events, journalists in the army press performed far better than those in the civilian press – where the former Securitate was able to exert influence much more effectively.⁶⁶ The great misfortune was that few civilians read the army press.

Conclusions: Constrained Media

How do we explain this strange consensus in erroneous reporting and interpretation to which even the independent press is a party? Silviu Brucan argues that the views expressed by former Securitate General Vlad in early 1991 – according to which no ‘terrorists’ had existed in December 1989 and the deaths that had occurred had been the result of army units firing into other regime forces and civilians – have come to dominate throughout the post-Ceaușescu press. According to Brucan,

That line of argument became the favourite thesis of the entire media apparatus that used to be controlled by the famous Disinformation Department of the Securitate. There is no need for a list of informers and disinformers to be published: anyone who looks through a collection of 1991 newspapers and notes the names of those who argued and documented most aggressively the theses of General Vlad will discover the network of journalists on the take of the Disinformation Department!

Much has been said and written about the ingenious procedures and methods used by the Disinformation Department in the service of Ceaușescu. However, that department’s greatest performance by far has been achieved since the revolution because it has succeeded in creating such total confusion around the terrorists that nobody knows anything about who they were and what they did.⁶⁷

Brucan has perhaps identified the most crucial factor at work here. Nevertheless, we should not ignore the degree to which latent fear of the former Securitate (even – perhaps especially – among its former collaborators) and the chronic weakness of political opposition to the Iliescu regime and the capital dependence of the independent press have contributed to the complicitous behaviour of these journalists. There is little doubt that these same compromised journalists of the independent press wish to be rid of the past and to see Romania’s democratic experiment succeed, but their journalistic behaviour indicates that current reality is a lot more complex. More than six years after the collapse of the Ceaușescu regime, two of the principles at the heart of the democratic process –

freedom of expression and access to alternative sources of accurate information – remain constrained in Romania.

The example of the Romanian independent press suggests that the emphasis in post-communist studies upon establishing independent media free of state political and economic control and willing to criticize and investigate regime officials has been far too exclusive. One can understand the importance accorded to this goal in view of the state's dominance of the media during the communist era and given the importance of an independent media to the construction and functioning of a healthy democracy. Nevertheless, this exclusive emphasis has led to the neglect of other serious concerns and defined what 'independence' means much too narrowly.

NOTES

1. See Dan Ionescu, 'Romania's Media Independence Struggles', *Transition*, 6 Oct. 1995, pp.52–4; Liviu Man, 'The Independent Press in Romania: Against the Grain', *Uncaptive Minds*, Vol.6, No.2 (Summer 1993), pp.89–96; Peter Gross, 'Restricting the Free Press in Romania', *Orbis*, Vol.35, No.3 (Summer 1991), pp.365–75.
2. The state's near monopoly control over television until only very recently (things are better in radio where there has been an explosion of independent local FM stations in recent years), and the Iliescu regime's heavy politicization of both state television and state radio, are not in dispute here. This situation is clearly a problem and unfortunate. The reporting by state television and radio is frequently abysmal; but this is a surprise to virtually no one. The real test of establishing free media is ultimately in that section of the media which makes claims to independence. This is where the importance of the independent press lies in Romania: if the removal of the state has still left major problems in its wake in the independent press, then the same is likely to happen in radio and television.
3. Silviu Brucan, interview by Nestor Rates, in Silviu Brucan, *Piață și Democrație* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1990), p.55.
4. The Stasi had approximately 190,000 collaborators out of a population of 17 million; the Securitate 700,000 out of a population of 23 million. The number 700,000 is frequently cited: see, for example, Silviu Brucan, *The Wasted Generation* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1993), p.158; or former chairman of the Liberal Party, Radu Campeanu, in 'Parlamentarii despre dosarele Securității', *România Liberă*, 15 May 1992, p.3.
5. Florin Gabriel Marculescu, interview by Andreea Pora, 'Nu am avut curajul să refuz colaborarea', 22, 15–21 May 1992, p.12.
6. Quoted in the Human Rights Watch/Helsinki Report, 'Romania: Restrictions on Freedom of the Press in Romania', Vol.6, No.10 (June 1994), p.5.
7. See Dennis Deletant, 'The Securitate Legacy in Romania: Who Is in Control?', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.42, No.6 (Nov.–Dec. 1995), pp.23–8.
8. Paul Stefanescu, *Istoria Serviciilor Secrete Românești* (Bucharest: Editura Divers Press, 1994), pp.292–4.
9. For an idea of the waves of dismissals which have occurred at the SRI see Mihail Galatanu, 'Virgil Magureanu a câștigat batalia pentru SRI', *Expres*, 17–23 May 1994, pp.8–9.
10. Ibid.
11. Nicolae Ulrieru, interview by Dana Balint, 'Războiul dosarelor nu e declansat de SRI', *Cotidianul*, 17 Jan. 1996, pp.1; 3.
12. Ioan Itu, 'Dosarul de securitate al domnului Magureanu', *Tinerama*, 27 March–2 April 1992, pp.8–9.

13. On the conflict between the SRI and UM 0215, see Deletant, op. cit., p.27. Magureanu himself believed that Voiculescu was behind the release of his file: see Sorin Rosca Stanescu, 'Securea lui Magureanu', *România Liberă*, 17 April 1992, pp.1, 3.
14. Virgil Magureanu sent his file to the independent daily *Evenimentul Zilei* on 29 December 1995.
15. L.G., 'Înainte publicării dosarului, Magureanu îl consultase pe Iliescu', *Cotidianul*, 10 Jan. 1996, p.1.
16. Virgil Magureanu, interview in *Adevărul*, 8 Jan. 1996, p.1.
17. Lucian Pintilie, interview in *România Liberă*, 21 Oct. 1992, p.5.
18. Ion Cristoiu, 'Iulian Vlad stîrnește invidii', *Expres Magazin*, 30 Jan.-5 Feb. 1991, p.1.
19. Constantin Iftime, *Cu ION CRISTOIU prin infernul contemporan* (Bucharest: Editura Contraria, 1993), p.31.
20. Brucan, *The Wasted Generation*, p.194; Silviu Brucan, 'Cine și de ce nu vrea 'sa-l supere pe Generalul Vlad', *Adevărul*, 29 Jan. 1991, p.2.
21. See Michael Shafir, 'Best Selling Spy Novels Seek to Rehabilitate Romanian Securitate', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 12 Nov. 1993, pp.14-18.
22. Dan Badea, 'Secretele Revoluției', *Expres*, 7-13 June 1994, pp.8-9.
23. See, for example, Pavel Corut, 'Dacii liberi', *Națiunea*, August 1990, p.6.
24. Iftime, *Cu ION CRISTOIU prin infernul contemporan*, p.126.
25. *România Liberă* had existed during the communist era and its staff decided to keep the paper's name after December 1989. Although initially supportive of the Iliescu regime, by February 1990 it began distancing itself and by March 1990 it was sharply critical of it.
26. *IPI Report* (Oct.-Nov. 1993) p.18.
27. See Dan Ionescu, 'The President, the Journalists, and the KGB', *Transition*, 8 Sept. 1995, pp.36-9.
28. Ibid.
29. See Sorin Rosca Stanescu, 'Securea lui Magureanu', *România Liberă*, 17 April 1992, p.1, 3; Anton Uncu, 'Opriti-l pe Arturo Ui', *România Liberă*, 30 April 1992, p.1, 3.
30. Rosca Stanescu, 'Sint H-15', *România Libera*, 9 May 1992, p.5; 'Catre SRI', *România Liberă*, 9 June 1992, 1; 'Goodbye Magureanu', *The Economist*, 18 June 1992, cited in *Tinerama*, 10-17 July 1992, p.3.
31. Alina Mungiu, *România după '89* (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 1995), p.259.
32. Ibid.
33. Sorin Rosca Stanescu, interview by Andreea Pora, "'H-15" în slujba patriei', 22, 15-21 May 1992, p.13.
34. See the case of Jamal Kurbissa in *România Libera*, 23 Aug. 1995, p.16.
35. See Vlad's testimony in Mircea Bunea, 'Da sau Ba?', *Adevărul*, 16 Feb. 1991, reprinted in Mircea Bunea, *Prăf în Ochi* (Bucharest: Editura Scripta, 1994), pp.460-61.
36. Sorin Rosca Stanescu, 'Iliescu aparat de K.G.B.?', *România Liberă*, 18 April 1991, p.8.
37. Ibid.
38. Stanescu's intentions are drawn further into question by the fact that Romania's supposed 'master spy', Securitate Colonel Filip Teodorescu (arrested and sentenced for his actions in Timișoară), favourably cites this very article extensively in a book on the December events: see Filip Teodorescu, *Un Risc Asumat* (Bucharest: Editura Viitorul Românesc, 1992), pp.93-4.
39. Rosca Stanescu's article from a December 1994 issue of *Ziua* was reprinted in Cornel Dumitrescu, 'Dezvaluiri senzationale despre decembrie '89', *Lumea Liberă*, 17 Dec. 1994, p.16.
40. Silviu Brucan, *The Wasted Generation*, p.183.
41. David Binder, 'Ceașescu's "Private Army": A Force of Unabated Cruelty', *New York Times*, 25 Dec. 1989, p.A12; Blaine Harden, 'Doors Unlocked on Romania's Secret Police', *The Washington Post*, 30 Dec. 1989, p.A1, A14.
42. Brucan, *The Wasted Generation*, pp.183-6; Nicolae Militaru, interview by Corneliu Antim, 'Ordinul 2600', *România Liberă*, 17 Dec. 1992, pp.1-2.
43. Victor Dinu, 'Nimicirea Gorilelor Mercenare', *România Liberă*, 25 Dec. 1989, cited in Angela Bacescu, *România 1989: Din nou în calea navalirilor barbare* (Cluj-Napoca:

- Editura 'Zalmoxis', 1994), p.151; Mihai Floca, 'Apararea Patriei', *România Liberă*, 26 Dec. 1989, cited in Dan Badea, 'Cine au fost teroristii?' *Expres*, 15–21 Oct. 1991, p.10.
44. Ion Iliescu, *Revoluție și Reforma* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedica, 1994), pp.72–3.
 45. Bacescu, *România 1989*, pp.147–8; this book is a compendium of articles which first appeared in the pro-Ceaușescu weekly *Europa*.
 46. *Ibid.*, pp.151–63.
 47. Mihai Sturdza, 'How Dead is Ceaușescu's Secret Police Force?', *RFE/RL Report on Eastern Europe*, 13 April 1990, pp.33–4.
 48. Group of former Securitate officers, 'Asa va place Revolutia! Asa a gost!', *Democratia*, No.36 (24–30 Sept. 1990), p.4.
 49. Bacescu, *România 1989*, p.106.
 50. See 'Generalul Militaru trebuie să platească', in Bacescu, *România 1989*, pp.111–12.
 51. Ilie Stoian, *Decembrie '89. Arta diversiunii* (Bucharest: Editura Colaj, 1993), 37–8; this book is a collection of articles Stoian wrote for *Expres* between 1991 and 1993.
 52. Petre Mihai Bacanu, 'Intercontinental 21/22', *România Liberă*, 17 March 1990, p.1.
 53. Emilian David, 'Dreptate și adevăr pentru ziua întâi', *Libertatea*, 12 Jan. 1990, pp.1–2.
 54. It is interesting to note that in January 1990 – before *România Liberă* had broken with the Front, and when the USLA officers killed at the defence ministry were still officially branded as 'terrorists' – Bacanu's newspaper had printed the obituaries of these fallen USLA officers under the caption 'revolutionary heroes': *România Liberă*, 9 Jan. 1990, p.4a.
 55. Petre Mihai Bacanu, 'Cine a tras?', *România Liberă*, 18 Dec. 1992, pp.1–2.
 56. Militaru, 'Ordinul 2600'.
 57. Petre Mihai Bacanu, 'Responsabilitatea sangelui vărsat', *România Libera*, 22 Dec. 1993, p.2.
 58. Major Mihai Floca, 'Crima?!', *Armata Poporului*, 6 June 1990, p.3.
 59. *Ibid.*
 60. Angela Bacescu, 'O crima ce trebuie neaparat dezvaluita', *Zig-Zag*, 23–9 April 1990, p.10.
 61. Floca, 'Crima?!'; emphasis added.
 62. *Ibid.*
 63. Mihai Floca, 'Eroi, victime sau teroristi?', *Adevărul*, 29 Aug. 1990, pp.1–2.
 64. Major Mihai Floca and Captain Victor Stoica, 'Unde sînt teroristii? Pe Strada, Printre Noi', *Armata Poporului*, 13 June 1990, p.3. It is unclear for whom these former Securitate officers were working.
 65. Floca, 'Eroi, victime sau teroristi?'.
 66. It should also be stated, however, that when it came to owning up to its role in the bloody repression of the demonstrators prior to 22 December, the army press (including Major Mihai Floca) was unable to admit the truth.
 67. Brucan, *The Wasted Generation*, pp.194–5.