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Serbian press and Romanian Revolution in 1989

The fall of Ceaușescu's regime in December 1989 represented the most dramatic episode of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. Being Romanian neighbor and its close ally over the decades¹, the Yugoslav regime closely observed momentous events east of Kladovo, Vršac and Kikinda. Consequently, despite the major crisis within Yugoslavia itself (the Romanian Revolution almost coincided with the dissolution of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia) the Yugoslav major media paid full attention to the fall of Ceaușescu's regime and its immediate consequences.

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¹ On Yugoslav-Romanian relations during the Cold War see, among others: Vladimir Lj. Cvetković, *Pogled iznad gvozdene zavese. Jugoslovenska politika prema zemljama narodne demokratije u susedstvu 1953-1958*, Beograd, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2013; Vladimir Lj. Cvetković, *Obnova diplomatskih odnosa Jugoslavije i Rumunije posle Drugog svetskog rata*, in "Tokovi istorije", 1(2022), p. 131-150; Vladimir Lj. Cvetković, *Ekonomski odnosi Jugoslavije i Rumunije 1945-1948. godine*, in "Tokovi istorije", 1(2021), p. 165-190; Vladimir Lj. Cvetković, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi u danima sovjetske intervencije u Čehoslovačkoj 1968. godine*, in *1968-četrdeset godina posle: zbornik radova*, Beograd, 2008, p. 163-179; Vladimir Lj. Cvetković, *Dvovlasnički režim i stanje na jugoslovensko-rumunskoj granici 1945-1948*, in "Istorija 20. veka", 1(2021), p. 99-114; Nemanja Mitrović, *Tito-Čaušesku. Godine zbližavanja. Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1968-1970*, Beograd, Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2020; Nemanja Mitrović, *Međunarodni problemi posmatrani kroz razgovore Nikolae Čaušesku i Josipa Broza Tita 1968. godine*, in "Istorija 20. veka", 1(2020), p. 129-146; Marko Miletić, *Incidenti na granicama između Jugoslavije i zemalja Informbiroa (1948-1955)*, in "Tokovi istorije", 2(2022), p. 185-208; Olivera Dragišić, *Konstituisanje komunističke vlasti na Balkanu: uporedna analiza strukture vlasti u Rumuniji, Bugarskoj i Jugoslaviji: 1944-1947. godine: doktorska disertacija*, Beograd, 2018; Milan Gulić, *Jugoslovenske diplomate i službenici na Dunavu u vrijeme sukoba Jugoslavije sa Informbiroom*, in *Jugoslovenska diplomatija: 1945-1961: zbornik radova*, ed. Slobodan Selinić, Beograd, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2012, p. 159-173; Milan Gulić, *Svaranje Đerdapske rečne uprave 1953. godine kao jedan od prvih znakova promjene u odnosima Jugoslavije i sovjetskog bloka*, in "Arhiv", 1-2(2012), p. 142-157; Slobodan Selinić, *Jugoslavija, SSSR i istočnoevropske zemlje 1944-1948*, in *Oslobođenje Beograda 1944.: zbornik radova*, ed. Aleksandar Životić, Beograd, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2010, p. 393-418; Branko Petranović, *Razgraničenje Jugoslavije prema Mađarskoj i Rumuniji i jugoslovenske manjine u Mađarskoj i Rumuniji posle Prvog i Drugog svetskog rata*, in *Istoriografske kontroverze*, ed. Branko Petranović, Beograd, 1998, p. 469-479; Leo Mates, *Međunarodni odnosi socijalističke Jugoslavije*, Beograd, Nolit, 1976; Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine 1956-1958*, Zagreb, Liber, 1977; Čedomir Štrbac, *Jugoslavija i odnosi između socijalističkih zemalja. Sukob KPJ i Informbiroa*, Beograd, Prosveta, 1984; Vladimir Dedijer, *Izgnubljena bitka J. V. Staljina*, Svjetlost/Oslobođenje, Beograd/Sarajevo, 1969.

Number of victims

Serbian media began a more detailed analysis of the dramatic events in Romania on December 19, 1989. On that day, the public in Serbia was briefly informed about the violent riots in Timișoara and Arad, which started a few days earlier. The first comments of the protests in Romania focused on the immediate cause of the protest (persecution of a Hungarian priest in Timișoara) underling the police repression against the protesters. The article also listed the main slogans of the demonstrators: “Down with Ceaușescu”, “We want freedom”, “We want free elections”, “We want democracy”². It is noticeable that the descriptions of the beginning of the unrest in Romania, i.e. in Timișoara, were quite calm and restrained. The focus was on facts and events were described without much emotion, which changed considerably in the following days. It is important to emphasize that at the very beginning of the uprising in Romania, the Serbian media collected a large part of the information at the Vatin border crossing, near Serbian town Vršac. Passengers entering Yugoslavia from Romania were questioned, and their statements were treated as a valid source for monitoring the situation in Romania.

In the following days, there were significant changes in the way the crisis in Romania was reported in Serbian press. The articles on the conflicts in Timișoara and other parts of Romania described the situation with deep emotion, with particular emphasis on the suffering of citizens who clashed with defenders of the Ceaușescu’s regime. It was written about a huge number of victims, which far exceeded the data we know today.

On December 20, at the very beginning of the protests in Romania, Serbian media reported on 2,000 victims of the conflict in Timișoara, Arad and other places in Romania. It was written that the morgues in Timișoara were full³. The very next day, the leading Belgrade daily “Politika”, in an article entitled “Thousands were killed in Timișoara”, estimated that the number of people killed in Timișoara alone was between three and four thousand, and that in only two days, on Saturday and Sunday, more than 1,000 protesters had been killed by the forces loyal to Nicolae Ceaușescu. It was stated that the protesters were also shot at from a helicopter as well as that the Romanian army was shooting at women, children, and even pregnant women. The passengers who entered Hungary from Romania were quoted as claiming that Romanian secret police agents were killing even hesitant soldiers. It was stated that the wounded protesters were also being killed and that mass graves were being dug in Timișoara⁴.

Already on December 22, the number of people killed by Ceaușescu’s forces was estimated at 4,000⁵. However, the next day it was reported that round

² *Veliki neredi u Temišvaru i Aradu*, in “Politika”, 19 December 1989.

³ *Nova pucnjava u Temišvaru*, in “Politika”, 20 December 1989.

⁴ S. Aleksandrić, *Hiljade ubijenih u Temišvaru*, in “Politika”, 21 December 1989.

⁵ Jovica Danilović, *Vlasti ne daju lekove ranjenicima*, in “Politika”, 22 December 1989.

5,000 people had been killed in Timișoara and that 36 mass graves had been discovered there⁶. On December 25 “Politika” reported that there were 12,000 victims in Timișoara by then⁷. Another Belgrade daily, “Politika ekspres”, on the same day denied this estimation reducing the number of the dead in Timișoara to 5,000⁸. Nevertheless, on its cover page “Ekspres” quoted the correspondent of the East German press agency ADN (Allgemeine Deutsche Nachrichtendienst), as claiming that only on the night between 22 and 23 December 5,000 had been killed in the clashes in Bucharest⁹. Moreover, on 28 December “Ekspres” estimated the number of casualties during the Romanian riots at even 60,000¹⁰.

The exaggerated numbers of victims of the Romanian uprising in December 1989 were also common elements of the reports of the “Večernje Novosti”, a tabloid newspaper with the largest circulation in socialist Yugoslavia. On 24 December *Novosti* reported rumors that ten thousand protesters had been killed during the attack on the Primaverii Palace. Although the reporter of *Novosti* doubted this information, the headline read “10,000 people killed”. In addition, *Novosti* underlined that the majority of victims of the Romanian revolt were young people¹¹. On the same day, “Večernje Novosti” reported on 12,000 victims of clashes between protesters and Ceaușescu’s security forces in Timișoara, most of whom were, according to the report, young people and children: “Timișoara is experiencing its most difficult days in its 720-year history. Unofficial estimates say that in the clashes with Ceaușescu’s security forces, around 12,000 people, mostly young people and children, lost their lives here in the last few days”¹².

According to the “Večernje Novosti”, during the first days of the unrest in Timișoara Ceaușescu’s regime arrested and subsequently executed 7,614 anti-Ceaușescu protesters, while 4,632 rebels were killed in the clashes with the security forces loyal to Nicolae Ceaușescu¹³.

Serbian weeklies reported in the same manner on casualties of the Romanian revolution in December 1989. In January 1990, Belgrade magazine “NIN” quoted the Red Cross which estimated the total number of victims of Ceaușescu’s regime in late December at 7,000¹⁴. The vastly popular weekly “DUGA” followed a pattern. According to its ad hoc Romanian correspondent, Dragan Barjaktarević, only in Timișoara Ceaușescu’s Securitatea massacred nearly 5,000 people¹⁵.

⁶ *Ulične borbe u Bukureštu*, in “Politika”, 23 December 1989.

⁷ Goran Kozić, Julijana Mojsilović, *Pretnja građanskog rata*, in “Politika”, 24 December 1989.

⁸ Ivica Arađanin, *Rafali obaraju novinare*, in “Politika Ekspres”, 25 December 1989.

⁹ *Provejava duh nade i slobode*, in “Politika Ekspres”, 25 December 1989.

¹⁰ *Poginulo 60 hiljada ljudi, U sutrašnjicu korak po korak*, in “Politika Ekspres”, 28 December 1989.

¹¹ Blažo Šarović, *Poginulo 10000 ljudi*, in “Večernje novosti”, 24 December 1989.

¹² Dragoslav Živojnov, *Zveri sa oružjem*, in “Večernje Novosti”, 24 December 1989.

¹³ *Borbe za svaki pedalj*, in “Večernje Novosti”, 24 December 1989.

¹⁴ Milan Milošević, *Revolucija, drugi dan*, in “NIN”, 7 January 1990.

¹⁵ Dragan Barjaktarević, *Pad voljenog tiranina. Ubice su ubijene*, in “Duga”, 6-19 January 1990.

Reports on massacres

In addition to diffusing exaggerated numbers of victims, the Belgrade media paid great attention to rumors about the extreme cruelty of the Securitate and Ceaușescu's forces in the confrontation with the protesters. These unconfirmed rumors were widely disseminated by Belgrade journalists. The reports about the alleged killings of a large number of children were particularly frequent. On 20 December, a report from Timișoara stated that a large number of children had been killed¹⁶. The following day, an anonymous German woman who crossed the Romanian-Yugoslav border near Vrșac, was quoted by Belgrade press as claiming that 36 barefoot children praying in front of a church had been killed in Timișoara a few days earlier¹⁷. On 22 December it was stressed that this information had been confirmed by a Romanian from Timișoara, who also crossed the Romanian-Yugoslav border near Vrșac. Moreover, he said that the Romanian army had killed another 45 children who had been returning from a party¹⁸. On the same day, the "Politika ekspres" reported that according to Hungarian sources, Romanian soldiers had executed a group of young people in Arad¹⁹. In addition, "Expres" quoted Serbian poet living in Romania, Slavomir Gvozdenović, as claiming that Ceaușescu's security forces had been shooting at children between four and ten years of age²⁰. In an interview with "Ekspres" an anonymous refugee from Romania stated that the troops loyal to Ceaușescu had massacred more than 50 children in the downtown of Timișoara, adding that a number of rebels had been killed in their own apartments, including a mother with her two children²¹. "Večernje Novosti" quoted a "unconfirmed but reliable information" according to which, from 16 to 18 December the forces loyal to Ceaușescu's regime had murdered in Timișoara approximately 4,600 protesters, round 800 of whom were children up to the age of 14²².

Serbian correspondents from Bucharest reported that Ceaușescu's secret agents had been rumored to be killing children in hospitals. They were unable to find evidence for these claims, but stressed they had seen armed non-uniformed men in a hospital in Bucharest²³. In addition, Belgrade press also reported that two girls had been killed and thrown into the river, as well as that in Timișoara the police were breaking into apartments, kidnapping children and then killing them in front of their parents. In a statement to the Yugoslav media, the Yugoslav consul in

¹⁶ Jovica Danilović, *Oklopna vozila na ulicama*, in "Politika", 20 December 1989.

¹⁷ B. Nikša, *Pokošena deca*, in "Večernje Novosti", 21 December 1989; I. B., *A deca su tražila hleb*, in "Politika ekspres", 21 December 1989; Jovica Danilović, *Gradovi zavijeni u crno*, in "Politika", 21 December 1989.

¹⁸ Jovica Danilović, *Vlasti ne daju lekove ranjenicima*, in "Politika" 22 December 1989.

¹⁹ *Streljanja u Aradu*, in "Politika ekspres", 22 December 1989.

²⁰ Miroslav Perišić, *Na decu rafalima*, in "Politika ekspres", 23 December 1989.

²¹ I. Babić, *Ubice su upadale u stanove*, in "Politika ekspres", 23 December 1989.

²² Dragoslav Živojnov, *Stravični zločini*, in "Večernje Novosti", 23 December 1989.

²³ Goran Kozić, Julijana Mojsilović, *Čaušesku uhapšen. Vlast preuzeo Komitet nacionalnog spasa*, in "Politika", 24 December 1989.

Timișoara said that “countless” children and young people had been killed during the December unrest in Romania²⁴. Besides, the Belgrade weekly “*Ilustrovana politika*” interviewed an anonymous retired railway guide from Vatin (Serbian village at the border with Romania) who claimed that Timișoara had been demolished by the army as well as that a lot of children had been killed there²⁵. Besides, the Serbian print media widely reported other similar unconfirmed information about violence against opponents of Ceaușescu’s regime. It was reported that the army was killing people in their houses, that some people were being stabbed with bayonets and then thrown into boiling water²⁶. Photojournalists from the Yugoslav news agency “*Tanjug*” and Zagreb’s “*Večernji list*” claimed that they heard that a man had been crucified like Jesus in a church as well as that his limbs had been cut off²⁷.

The correspondent of “*Večernje Novosti*” from Timișoara underlined in his reportage carrying the headline: “Horrible crimes (*Stravični zločini*)” that many seriously wounded protesters had been buried alive in local mass graves. Some of them, he continued, had been scalded with hot water and burned. In addition, the correspondent of “*Novosti*” reported rumors that many wounded protesters had been killed in ambulances²⁸. Similar stories were disseminated by the Belgrade weekly “*NIN*”. On 31 December 1989, the “*NIN*” reporter commenced his comprehensive and highly emotive reportage from Timișoara with the description of alleged victims of Securitate on two local graveyards: “Those who were killed in the Timișoara demonstrations and after torture were simply thrown naked into shallow pits. Some had only socks left on their feet. Some were lying there unearthed, their legs were crushed and some were tied with wire. There are traces of autopsy and torture on all of them, peeled skin, even torn entrails. A scene that neither the heart nor the liver nor the brain can withstand: a baby taken out of its mother’s womb (...) Securitate even killed people in hospitals. According to one witness, they removed the oxygen masks from the faces of the wounded. One witness says that the torturers from Securitate poured hot water into the wounds of some of the wounded. When this reporter said that he simply did not believe in it, the witness looked him in the eye and said briefly – with that regime, many incredible things were true”²⁹.

On 23 December, the article of “*Ekspres politika*” included testimonies of people who had claimed that victims of Ceaușescu’s security forces killed in Timișoara had been transferred to the mass graves by garbage trucks, then covered with whitewash and eventually buried by bulldozers. Moreover, according to these testimonies, Ceaușescu’s soldiers even killed truck drivers, thus eliminating

²⁴ Jovica Danilović, *Masovne grobnice u Temišvaru*, in “*Politika*”, 23 December 1989.

²⁵ Ognjen Janevski, *Strava u očima putnika*, in “*Ilustrovana politika*”, 26 December 1989.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ *Strava masovnih grobnica*, in “*Politika*”, 25 December 1989.

²⁸ Dragoslav Živojnov, *Stravični zločini*, in “*Večernje Novosti*”, 23 December 1989.

²⁹ Milan Milošević, *Cena slobode*, in “*NIN*”, 31 December 1989.

potential witnesses: “We also heard that there was no mercy even for the truck drivers who transported the corpses. In order not to witness this massacre, the soldiers killed them on the way out of the city (...) The inhabitants of Timișoara are still in shock about everything that happened to them in the night between Sunday and Monday. During the night, teams of Securitate agents, the Romanian secret police, visited the city's neighborhoods, broke into houses and took people to the execution ground”³⁰.

The magazine “DUGA” followed a pattern. In January 1990, its special correspondent from Romania reported on rumors about extreme cruelty of Ceaușescu’s security apparatus inflicted on protesters in Timișoara, which he described as a satanic ritual that was not characteristic even of cannibalistic tribes in Africa and Australia at the beginning of the 20th century: “According to witnesses (...), they (agents of the Securitate – author’s note) took the clothes off the corpses of the victims, burned their clothes, and the corpses that could not be processed in the city rendering plant – in meat grinders – or burned in the city crematorium, were dragged to the cemetery by trucks used for transportation of livestock meat and scalded with boiling water. At the same time, without any reason, they performed a satanic ritual of dissection of mutilated corpses and eventually set them on fire (...) Such rituals did not exist even among cannibalistic tribes in Africa and Australia at the beginning of this century”³¹.

On 24 December two journalist of the daily “Ekspres” reported on the more than 20 exhumated corpses on a potter’s field in the suburbs of Bucharest. As stated in the reportage from Timișoara, the corps had been doused with acid. Moreover, the reporters described the corpses of a baby and a woman, explaining that an unborn child was taken out of the mother and placed on her breasts³².

In comments on the events in Romania, the Belgrade media compared the regime of Nicolae Ceausescu to the fascist system. An article published in “Politika” on 23 December called Ceaușescu’s epoch a “fascist rule” and on the same day the statement of the writer Slavomir Gvozdevic was published stressing that even “Hitler did not kill German children”³³.

According to the correspondent of the magazine “DUGA”, Ceaușescu was crueller than Adolf Eichmann or Stalin: “Stalin was a tyrant, but a real gentleman compared to Dracula (Ceaușescu – author’s note). Stalin sent his son to war. And Nicu? Svetlana (Stalin’s daughter – author's note) was a pure communist gold, while Zoia was an ordinary slut”³⁴. Similarly, the political commentator of “Večernje novosti” compared in his analysis of the Romanian revolution Nicolae

³⁰ Ivan Arađanin, *Užasno visoka cena slobode*, in “Politika ekspres”, 23 December 1989.

³¹ Dragan Barjaktarević, *Pad voljenog tiranina – Ubice su ubijene*, in “Duga”, 6-19 January 1990.

³² Goran Kozić, Julijana Mojsilović, *Leševe su polovali kiselinom*, in “Politika Ekspres”, 24 December 1989.

³³ Ivan Arađanin, *Užasno visoka cena slobode*, in “Politika ekspres”, 23 December 1989; “Kraj diktature Čaušesku”, *Književnik Slavomir Gvozdenovic: Ni Hitler nije ubijao svoju decu*, in “Politika”, 23 December 1989.

³⁴ Dragan Barjaktarević, *Pad voljenog tiranina – Ubice su ubijene*, in “Duga”, 6-19 January 1990.

Ceaușescu with the most ruthless dictators of the 20th century: Stalin, Hitler, Idi Amin and Central African leader Jean-Bédél Bokassa³⁵. A well-known columnist of “DUGA”, Dragoljub Golubović, equated Ceaușescu with Hitler and Mussolini, drawing at the same time parallels between the Romanian *conducător* (leader) and a number of notorious third world autocrats: Haile Selassie (Emperor of Ethiopia), Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (the last Shah of Iran), Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku (president of Zaire) and Suharto (the than president of Indonesia)³⁶.

The position of Yugoslav regime

The Belgrade media enthusiastically welcomed the fall of the Ceaușescu’s regime, his arrest and assassination. It was also a turning point in the way the Romanian revolution was reported in Serbia. After that, articles on the situation in Romania contained less emotional facets and more objective comments on the aftermath of a December coup in Bucharest.

It would be of utmost importance to scrutinize the causes of such biased coverage of the of the Romanian revolution by Serbian media. Given that the press in Serbia was under the complete control of the communist establishment, it is clear that the Serbian press coverage of the crisis in Romania in December 1989 reflected the attitude of the Serbian and Yugoslav authorities towards the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu.

How did Ceaușescu become the enemy of Yugoslavia and Serbia? The relations between Yugoslavia and Romania during the Cold War period, with the exception of the Yugoslav conflict with Stalin, were very close. This mutual understanding was signaled, among other things, by frequent summits between Tito and Ceaușescu. In 1968, Yugoslavia and Romania had almost identical views on Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. Two large hydroelectric power plants on the Danube (Djerdap I/Portile de Fier I and Djerdap II/Portile de Fier II) were a palpable legacy from this period. However, in the late 1980s, things began to change. Eventually, already towards the end of 1989, Belgrade completely distanced itself from Bucharest.

On 24 November 1989, in comments on the 14th congresses of the Romanian Communist Party Belgrade media criticized the authoritarian style of Romanian communism and Ceaușescu’s cult of personality³⁷. A few days later, the presidency of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia underlined substantial differences between the LCY and the Romanian Communist Party. Consequently, the Yugoslav representative at the 14th congress of the Romanian Communist Party left the congress prior to its end and returned to Yugoslavia. In this regard, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of

³⁵ Mihajlo Kovač, *Pobuna na brodu represije u Istočnoj Evropi – Fitilj dogoreo*, in “Večernje novosti”, 30 December 1989.

³⁶ Dragoljub Golubović, *Pouke jednog kraja*, in “Duga”, 6-19 January 1990.

³⁷ *Čvrst oklop jednoglasja*, in “Politika”, 24 November 1989.

Yugoslavia stressed “the essential differences between the two parties in viewing the processes in modern socialism, reforms, democratization of society, the role of the party, establishing of human rights and freedoms ...”³⁸.

This position of the communist establishment in Belgrade paved the way to open and fierce criticism of Ceaușescu regime in the first half of December, i.e. prior to the upheaval in Romania. On 3 December, the prominent columnist of “NIN”, Aleksandar Tijanić, denounced the decision of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia to send its delegation to the 14th congress of the Romanian Communist Party, using it as a pretext for a passionate invective against Yugoslav eastern neighbor. In his column, Tijanić severely criticized Romanian policy towards Yugoslav minorities, describing Ceaușescu’s Romania as a rogue state and the last bastion of North Korean-style Stalinism³⁹. Similarly, two weeks later, another journalist of “NIN”, Dragoslav Marković, portrayed Romania as the last island of real socialism and orthodox Stalinism in Europe. Marković depicted the 14th congress of the Romanian Communist Party as a “proof of a misunderstanding of the historical moment”⁴⁰.

When the dramatic events in Romania began, the Yugoslav and Serbian authorities promptly declared their position on the Ceaușescu’s regime and the protests in Romania. Already on December 20, the Belgrade press published a statement of the Yugoslav government, expressing “deep concern over the innocent victims” and called on Bucharest to stop the violence⁴¹. The next day, the press reported that the League of Communists of Yugoslavia had severed all ties with the Romanian Communist Party. At the same time the Yugoslav presidency strongly condemned the “brutal repression of the people” and stressed that “changes and reforms in Eastern Europe cannot be stopped by violence”. The presidency of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia (Socijalistički savez radnih naroda Jugoslavije – Yugoslav mass organization) pointed out that the violence against the protesters was not in line with the “civilizational values of the modern world”. In addition, the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia strongly condemned “the use of violence at a time when unstoppable democratic processes are taking place around the world”⁴². The next day, a similar statement was issued by the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Serbia. The statement condemned “the brutal repression of the citizens of Romania by the Romanian regime”. On the same day, the Serbian government expressed solidarity with the

³⁸ *Između SKJ i rumunske KP postoje suštinske razlike*, in “Politika”, 28 November 1989.

³⁹ Aleksandar Tijanić, *Čaušesku, vaš najbolji prijatelj?!*, in “NIN”, 3 December 1989.

⁴⁰ Dragoslav Marković, *Trijumf naučnofantastičnog*, in “NIN”, 17 December 1989.

⁴¹ *Izjava Saveznog izvršnog veća*, in “Politika”, 20 December 1989.

⁴² *SKJ prekida vezu sa rumunskom partijom; Saopštenje predsedništva SK SSRN Jugoslavije. Brutalno upotrebljena sila*, in “Politika”, 21 December 1989; *Predsedništvo SFRJ – Zaprepašćenje i osuda*, in “Politika ekspres”, 22 December 1989; *Predsedništvo SFRJ- Osuda brutalnosti*, in “Večernje Novosti”, 22 December 1989.

Romanian people. In addition, a protest of students and citizens was held in front of the Romanian Embassy in Belgrade⁴³.

In a statement issued on 22 December the League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia (Savez socijalističke omladine Jugoslavije) followed a similar pattern: “The massacre in Timișoara and other Romanian cities is an unprecedented case of cruelty towards one’s own unarmed youth and people and will be remembered as a dark page in the history of our century and as the greatest discredit on socialism in recent times. Pools of blood and multitudes of people mercilessly trampled by tank caterpillars warn the entire world that it is illusory to expect true social progress anywhere on the globe if it does not guarantee human rights and freedoms, as well as participation of the people in the process of political decision-making about their own destiny. The bloody intervention in the name of defending socialism displays the unacceptable moral depravity of the representatives of the regime, whose only goal is to defend the principles of ideological racism in order to preserve their own privileged position in the system of non-democratically organized government”⁴⁴.

The Yugoslav authorities reacted promptly to the fall of Nicolae Ceaușescu’s regime. On 24 December, Yugoslav Foreign Minister Budimir Lončar had ordered the Yugoslav Ambassador to Bucharest to establish contact with representatives of the National Salvation Front (Frontul Salvării Naționale) and inform them of “Yugoslavia’s full support for the brave struggle of the Romanian people”⁴⁵.

Criticisms of the Ceaușescu’s policy towards the Yugoslav minorities in Romania have also begun to appear in the Belgrade press. It was written that discrimination against Serbs in Romania had been carried out since the end of the 1970s, that Serbian schools in Romania had been closed and that the Serbian language department had been disbanded. It was underlined that this problem had become obvious at the meeting of Ceaușescu with the then President of the Presidency of Yugoslavia, Raif Dizdarević, in 1988⁴⁶.

Conclusion

In coverage of the Romanian revolution in 1989 Serbian print media strongly condemned the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu and enthusiastically supported protests and overthrow of the leader. In doing so Serbian press often deviated from journalistic standards and practices. Such a position of Serbian media was conditioned by the attitude of the Yugoslav and Serbian authorities, which in the late 1980s clearly distanced themselves from Ceaușescu’s regime for

⁴³ S. Simonović, L. Avdić, *Kruške rodile i u Beogradu*, in “Politika ekspres”, 22 December 1989; *Saopštenje RK SSRN Srbije o događajima u Rumuniji. Obustaviti bezumno ubijanje nedužnih*, in “Politika”, 22 December 1989.

⁴⁴ *Pokolji umesto demokratizacije*, in “Politika ekspres”, 22 December 1989.

⁴⁵ *Čaușesku uhapšen. Vlast preuzeo Komitet nacionalnog spasa*, in “Politika”, 24 December 1989.

⁴⁶ Dragan Bujošević, Milica Stamatović, *Sloboda i za manjine*, in “Politika”, 25 December 1989; Rajko Đurić, *Moji napaćeni prijatelji*, in “Politika”, 25 December 1989.

two reasons: firstly, the Yugoslav and Serbian authorities were dissatisfied with the status of Serbian minority in Romania. Secondly, Belgrade criticized the authoritarian practice of Ceaușescu's regime, while on the other hand, changes in other countries of the former socialist bloc were welcomed. At the end of December 1989, the president of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, Milan Pančevski, reminded that the last congress of Romanian communists had a Stalinist character and underlined fundamental differences in the views of Yugoslav and Romanian communists on "the essence of change in the socialist countries..."

The overwhelming consensus on the Romanian revolution and the fall of Nicolae Ceaușescu was broke by controversial columnist of *Duga*, Dragoš Kalajić. Unlike other commentators of Romanian revolt, Kalajić commended Ceaușescu's fiscal policy, i.e. his decision to clear Romanian debts. Consequently, Kalajić expressed a great deal of skepticism about the dramatic change in Bucharest and its outcome. According to him, a "dictatorship of vodka" in Romania and all over the former eastern bloc was merely replaced by the "dictatorship of whiskey": "It is not difficult to predict the immediate future of the people who free themselves from the tyranny of the regime under the sign of vodka: they will switch to whiskey, with appropriate euphoria because the new regime compared to the previous one looks like heaven compared to hell. But, according to the rule of thumb, euphoria is followed by a hangover and painful sobering up. After all, whiskey also played a part in the tragedy of the Romanian people: while the West celebrated Ceaușescu and calculatedly kept silent about his crimes, it gave him usurious loans. In a moment of extraordinary lucidity – such as idiots can have – Ceaușescu realized the vampiric nature of the usurious economy, and forced the Romanian people to make outrageous sacrifices in order to get out of debt"⁴⁷.

Nevertheless, Kalajić's skepticism was only the exception that proves the rule, given that Serbian media enthusiastically lauded the Romanian revolution and the overthrow of the *conducător* Ceaușescu. Consequently, in reporting on the December revolution in Romania the Serbian press, extremely sharply criticized the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu, praising the anti-regime undertakings. At the same time, ethic codes and journalistic standards and practices were often neglected, i.e. Belgrade print media were often publishing sensationalist and unverified information from unreliable sources. Hence, many articles did not offer their readers an impartial and objective analysis of epochal events in Romania. In countless articles, published in Serbia in late December 1989 and early January 1990, the numbers of victims of forces loyal to Nicolae Ceausescu were wildly exaggerated.

The way in which the Serbian media reported on the crisis in Romania in December 1989 was not significantly different from reporting of many other European media on the fall of Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime, marked by conspicuous

⁴⁷ Dragoš Kalajić, *Kraj socdadaizma*, in "Duga", 6-19 January 1990.

magnification of the number of victims of anti-regime demonstrators and dissemination of unverified rumors about the violence of Ceaușescu's forces against the opposition civilian population. An example of this is the story of the Paupers' Cemetery on the outskirts of Timișoara, where numerous victims of regime forces were allegedly buried during the conflict in Romania. Later investigations showed that these stories were fake news⁴⁸. Nevertheless, Serbian and many other media reported this information uncritically and without checking. Much of the stories, often extremely illogical, that were published in Belgrade media in those days came from extremely unreliable sources. In this way, public opinion in Serbia was further radicalized, which led to the aforementioned demonstrations in front of the Romanian embassy in Belgrade.

The coverage of Romanian revolution by the mainstream Serbian print media closely corresponded to the position of the Yugoslav regime on the momentous changes in Eastern Europe in 1989. In the late 1980s, Yugoslavia enthusiastically welcomed Perestroika and its impact all over former Eastern Europe⁴⁹. Consequently, the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu was perceived as an obsolete structure and last Stalinist fortress eastern of the former Iron Curtain. This orientation of the political establishment of Yugoslavia decisively determined the covering of the tectonic changes in Romania and all over the Socialist block by Yugoslav state-controlled press.

Serbian press and Romanian Revolution in 1989

Abstract

The paper focuses on Serbian media coverage of the historic events in Romania in December 1989. It pays particular attention to Yugoslav evaluations of the Romanian upheaval and the course of events that led to the fall of the regime in Bucharest. The research included press reports and comments from the most influential Serbian daily newspapers (Politika, Ekspres politika, Večernje novosti) and magazines (Nin, Duga and Ilustrovana politika). The paper aimed at evaluating the level of impartiality and objectivity of Yugoslav press reports and comments on the revolt in Romania and overthrow of Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime in December 1989. The research puts the analysis of Yugoslav/Serbian perceptions of the revolt in Romania in the broader context of Yugoslav views on the Perestroika and its ideological and geopolitical consequences behind the Iron Curtain in 1989.

Keywords: Romania; 1989; Ceaușescu; Yugoslavia; press.

⁴⁸ <https://en.ejo.ch/ethics-quality/fakes-in-journalism>; <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1990-03-13-9001210292-story.html>; <https://www.france24.com/en/20191220-misinformation-from-the-archives-Timișoara-s-mass-graves> [30.07.2022]

⁴⁹ Petar Dragišić, *Yugoslavia and Perestroika, 1985-1991. Between Hope and Disappointment*, in *Perestroika and the Party. National and Transnational Perspectives on European Communist Parties in the Era of Soviet Reform*, ed. Francesco Di Palma, Berghahn Books, 2019, p. 111.

ABREVIERI

<i>AARMSI</i>	= Analele Academiei Române, Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice
<i>AARMSL</i>	= Analele Academiei Române, Memoriile Secțiunii Literare
<i>AARPAD</i>	= „Analele Academiei Române”, seria II, București, 1879-1916
<i>AA.SS.</i>	= <i>Acta Sanctorum</i> , ed. Bollandisti, III ^a edițiune, Parigi 1863-1870
<i>AB</i>	= Arhivele Basarabiei
<i>ACNSAS</i>	= Arhivele Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității
<i>AE</i>	= L'Année Epigraphique, Paris
<i>AIR</i>	= Arhiva Istorică a României
<i>AIAC</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie Cluj
<i>AIIAI</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie „A. D. Xenopol”, Iași
<i>AIIC</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Cluj
<i>AIINC</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională, Cluj
<i>AIIX</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie „A. D. Xenopol”, Iași
<i>ALIL</i>	= Anuarul de Lingvistică și Istorie Literară, Iași
<i>ALMA</i>	= <i>Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi</i> . Genève.
<i>AM</i>	= Arheologia Moldovei, Iași
<i>AMAE</i>	= Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe
<i>AmAnthr</i>	= American Anthropologist, New Series, Published by Wiley on behalf of the American Anthropological Association
<i>AMM</i>	= Acta Moldaviae Meridionalis, Vaslui
<i>AMMB</i>	= Arhiva Mitropoliei Moldovei și Bucovinei, Iași
<i>AMN</i>	= Acta Musei Napocensis
<i>AMR</i>	= Arhivele Militare Române
<i>AMS</i>	= Anuarul Muzeului din Suceava
<i>ANB</i>	= Arhivele Naționale, București
<i>ANC</i>	= Arhivele Naționale. Serviciul Județean Cluj
<i>ANDMB</i>	= Arhivele Naționale. Direcția Municipiului București
<i>ANG</i>	= Arhivele Naționale. Serviciul Județean Galați
<i>ANI</i>	= Arhivele Naționale, Iași
<i>ANIC</i>	= Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale
<i>ANR-Cluj</i>	= Arhivele Naționale, Cluj-Napoca
<i>ANR-Sibiu</i>	= Arhivele Naționale, Sibiu
<i>ANRM</i>	= Arhivele Naționale ale Republicii Moldova, Chișinău
<i>ANRW</i>	= Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, Berlin-New York
<i>ANSMB</i>	= Arhivele Naționale. Serviciul Municipiului București
<i>ANV</i>	= Arhivele Naționale, Vaslui
<i>AO</i>	= Arhivele Olteniei
<i>AP</i>	= Analele Putnei
<i>APH</i>	= Acta Poloniae Historica, Varșovia
<i>AqLeg</i>	= <i>Aquila Legionis. Cuadernos de Estudios sobre el Ejército Romano</i> , Salamanca
<i>AR</i>	= Arhiva Românească
<i>ArchM</i>	= Arhiva Moldaviae, Iași
<i>ArhGen</i>	= Arhiva Genealogică
„Arhiva”	= „Arhiva”. Organul Societății Științifice și Literare, Iași
<i>ArhMold</i>	= Arheologia Moldovei
<i>ASRR</i>	= Arhiva Societății Române de Radiodifuziune
<i>AȘUI</i>	= Analele Științifice ale Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași

- ATS = Ancient Textile Series, Oxbow Books, Oxford și Oakville
 AUAIC = Arhiva Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași
 AUB = Analele Universității „București”
 BA = *Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, Roma, Città Nuova Editrice
 BAR = Biblioteca Academiei Române
 BArchB = Bundesarchiv Berlin
 BAR int. ser. = British Archaeological Reports, International Series
 BBRF = Buletinul Bibliotecii Române din Freiburg
 BCIR = Buletinul Comisiei Istorice a României
 BCMI = Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice
 BCU-Iași = Biblioteca Centrală Universitară, Iași
 BE = Bulletin Epigraphique
 BF = Byzantinische Forschungen, Amsterdam
 BJ = Bonner Jahrbücher, Bonn
 BMI = Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice
 BMIM = București. Materiale de istorie și muzeografie
 BNB = Biblioteca Națională București
 BNJ = Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher
 BOR = Biserica Ortodoxă Română
 BS = Balkan Studies
 BSNR = Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române
 ByzSlav = Byzantinoslavica
 CA = Cercetări arheologice
 CAI = Caiete de Antropologie Istorică
 CartNova = *La ciudad de Carthago Nova 3: La documentación epigráfica*, Murcia
 CB = Cahiers balkaniques
 CC = Codrul Cosminului, Suceava (ambele serii)
 CCAR = Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România, CIMEC, București
 CCh = *Corpus Christianorum*, Turnhout
 CChSG = *Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca*
 CCSL = *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, Turnhout, Brepols
 CDM = *Catalogul documentelor moldovenești din Arhivele Centrale de Stat*, București, vol. I-V; supl. I.
 CDȚR = *Catalogul documentelor Țării Românești din Arhivele Statului*, București, vol. II-VIII, 1974-2006
 Chiron = Chiron: Mitteilungen der Kommission für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, 1971
 CI = Cercetări istorice (ambele serii)
 CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, Berlin
 CL = Cercetări literare
 CLRE = *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire*, eds. R. S. Bagnall, A. Cameron, S. R. Schwartz, K. A. Worp, Atlanta, 1987
 CN = Cercetări Numismatice
 CNA = Cronica Numismatică și Arheologică, București
 CSCO = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Louvain
 CSEA = *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiae Aquileiensis*, Roma, Città Nuova Editrice
 CSEL = *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, Wien, De Gruyter
 CSPAMI = Centrul de Studii și Păstrare a Arhivelor Militare Centrale, Pitești
 CT = Columna lui Traian, București
 CTh = *Codex Theodosianus*. Theodosiani, Libri XVI cum constitutionibus Sirmondianis, I, edidit adsumpto apparatu P. Kruegeri, Th. Mommsen, Hildesheim, 1970-1971
 Cv.L = Convorbiri literare (ambele serii)

„Dacia”, N.S.	= Dacia. Nouvelle Série, Revue d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne, București
DANIC	= Direcția Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale
DGAS	= Direcția Generală a Arhivelor Statului
DI	= Diplomatarium Italicum
DIR	= <i>Documente privind istoria României</i>
DIRRI	= <i>Documente privind Istoria României. Războiul pentru Independență</i>
DOP	= Dumbarton Oaks Papers
DTN	= <i>Din trecutul nostru</i> , Chișinău
DRH	= <i>Documenta Romaniae Historica</i>
EB	= Études Balkaniques
EBPB	= Études byzantines et post-byzantines
EDCS	= <i>Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss-Slaby</i> (http://www.manfredclauss.de/)
EDR	= <i>Epigraphic Database Roma</i> (http://www.edr-edr.it/default/index.php)
EpigrAnat	= Epigraphica Anatolica, Münster
ERAsturias	= F. Diego Santos, <i>Epigrafiya Romana de Asturias</i> , Oviedo, 1959.
Gerión	= Gerión. Revista de Historia Antigua, Madrid
GB	= Glasul Bisericii
GCS	= <i>Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller</i> , Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1897-1969
GLK	= <i>Grammatici Latini Keil</i>
HEp	= <i>Hispania Epigraphica</i> , Madrid
„Hierasus”	= <i>Hierasus</i> . Anuarul Muzeului Județean Botoșani, Botoșani
HM	= Heraldica Moldaviae, Chișinău
HU	= Historia Urbana, Sibiu
HUI	= Historia Universitatis Iassiensis, Iași
IDR	= <i>Inscripțiile din Dacia romană</i> , Bucurști-Paris
IDRE	= <i>Inscriptions de la Dacie romaine. Inscriptions externes concernant l'histoire de la Dacie</i> , I-II, Bucarest, 1996, 2000
IGLN	= Inscriptions grecques et latines de Novae, Bordeaux
IGLR	= <i>Inscripțiile grecești și latine din secolele IV-XIII descoperite în România</i> , București, 1976
ILLPecs	= Instrumenta Inscripta Latina. <i>Das römische Leben im Spiegel der Kleininschriften</i> , Pecs, 1991
ILAlg	= <i>Inscriptions latines d'Algérie</i> , Paris
ILB	= <i>Inscriptiones Latinae in Bulgaria repertae. Inscriptiones inter Oescum et Iatrum repertae</i> , Sofia, 1989
ILD	= <i>Inscripții latine din Dacia</i> , București
ILN	= <i>Inscriptions latines de Novae</i> , Poznan
ILLPRON	= <i>Inscriptionum Lapidarium Latinarum Provinciae Norici usque ad annum MCMLXXXIV repertarum indices</i> , Berlin, 1986
ILS	= <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , 1892
IMS	= <i>Inscriptiones Moesiae Superioris</i> , Belgrad
IN	= „Ioan Neculce”. Buletinul Muzeului Municipal Iași
ISM	= <i>Inscripțiile din Scythia Minor grecești și latine</i> , București, vol. I-III, 1983-1999
JGO	= Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas
JL	= Junimea literară
JRS	= The Journal of Roman studies, London
LR	= Limba română
MA	= Memoria Antiquitatis, Piatra Neamț
MCA	= Materiale și cercetări arheologice
MEF	= <i>Moldova în epoca feudalismului</i> , vol. I-XII, 1961-2012, Chișinău
MEFRA	= <i>Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Antiquité</i> , Roma

- MGH** = *Monumenta Germaniae Historica inde ab anno Christi quingentesimo usque ad annum millesimum et quingentesimum auspiciis societatis aperiendis fontibus rerum Germanicarum medii aevi*, Berlin 1877-
MI = Magazin istoric, București
MIM = Materiale de istorie și muzeografie
MM = Mitropolia Moldovei
MMS = Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei
MN = Muzeul Național, București
MO = Mitropolia Olteniei
MOF = Monitorul Oficial al României
Navarro = M. Navarro Caballero, *Perfectissima femina. Femmes de l'elite dans l'Hispanie romaine*, Bordeaux, 2017.
NBA = *Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana*, Roma, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum
NDPAC = *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane*, I, A-E, 2e edizione, Marietti, 2006; III, P-Z, 2e edizione, Marietti, 2008
NEH = *Nouvelles études d'histoire*
OI = Opțiuni istoriografice, Iași
OPEL = *Onomasticon provinciarum Europae latinarum*, vol. I-IV, Budapesta-Viena, 1994-2002
PG = *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris, 1886-1912
PIR = *Prosopographia Imperii Romani. Saec. I.II.III*, editio altera, Berlin.
PLRE = *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 3 vol., eds. A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris, Cambridge, 1971-1992
RA = Revista arhivelor
RBAR = Revista Bibliotecii Academiei Române, București
RC = Revista catolică
RdI = Revista de istorie
REByz = *Revue des Études Byzantines*
RER = *Revue des études roumaines*
RESEE = *Revue des études Sud-Est européennes*
RHP = *Die römischen Hilfstruppen in Pannonien während der Prinzipatszeit. I: Die Inschriften*, Viena
RHSEE = *Revue historique de Sud-Est européen*
RI = Revista istorică (ambele serii)
RIAF = Revista pentru istorie, arheologie și filologie
RIB = *Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, Londra
RIM = Revista de Istorie a Moldovei, Chișinău
RIR = Revista istorică română, București
RIS = Revista de istorie socială, Iași
RITL = Revista de istorie și teorie literară
RIU = *Die römischen Inschriften Ungarns*, Budapesta
RJMH = *The Romanian Journal of Modern History*, Iași
RM = Revista muzeelor
RMD = *Roman Military Diplomas*, Londra
RMM = *Römische Militärdiplome und Entlassungsurkunden in der Sammlung des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums*, Mainz
RMM-MIA = Revista muzeelor și monumentelor, seria Monumente istorice și de artă
RMR = Revista Medicală Română
RRH = *Revue roumaine d'histoire*
RRHA = *Revue roumaine de l'histoire de l'art*
RRHA-BA = *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire de l'Art. Série Beaux Arts*
RSIAB = Revista Societății istorice și arheologice bisericești, Chișinău
Rsl = Romanoslavica

<i>SAHIR</i>	= Studia et Acta Historiae Iudaeorum Romaniae, București
<i>SAI</i>	= Studii și Articole de Istorie
<i>SCB</i>	= Studii și cercetări de bibliologie
<i>Sch</i>	= <i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> , Paris
<i>SCIA</i>	= Studii și cercetări de istoria artei
<i>SCIM</i>	= Studii și cercetări de istorie medie
<i>SCIV/SCIVA</i>	= Studii și cercetări de istorie veche (și arheologie)
<i>SCN</i>	= Studii și Cercetări Numismatice, București
<i>SCȘI</i>	= Studii și cercetări științifice, Istorie
<i>SEER</i>	= The Slavonic and East European Review
<i>SHA</i>	= <i>Scriptores Historiae Augustae</i>
<i>SJAN</i>	= Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale
<i>SMIC</i>	= Studii și materiale de istorie contemporană, București
<i>SMIM</i>	= Studii și materiale de istorie medie, București
<i>SMIMod</i>	= Studii și materiale de istorie modernă, București
<i>SOF</i>	= Südost-Forschungen, München
<i>ST</i>	= Studii Teologice, București
<i>StAntArh</i>	= Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica, Iași
<i>T&MBYZ</i>	= <i>Travaux et Mémoires du Centre de recherches d'histoire et de civilisation byzantines</i>
<i>ThD</i>	= Thraco-Dacica, București
<i>TR</i>	= Transylvanian Review, Cluj-Napoca
<i>TV</i>	= Teologie și viața, Iași
<i>ZPE</i>	= Zeitschrift für Papyralogie und Epigraphik
<i>ZSL</i>	= Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde