

not a lot of high drama. Most of those involved had little enthusiasm for grandiose strategies. In fact, Ostermann demonstrates that much of the drama was reserved for these officials' interactions with their European counterparts, above all the headstrong West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer.

Between Containment and Rollback suggests that if there was a single factor that united most U.S. policymakers, it was much more "containment" than "rollback." In fact, even the word "containment" must be qualified insofar as it implies a unified and coherent strategy that in reality was present only intermittently. Nonetheless, no matter how one characterizes U.S. aims, Ostermann succeeds in presenting a persuasively non-deterministic study of a highly consequential moment in modern history.



Andrei Ursu and Roland O. Thomasson, in collaboration with Mădălin Hodor, *Trăgători și Mistificatori: Contrarevoluția Securității în decembrie 1989*. Bucharest: Polirom, 2019. 423 pp. RON 44.95.

Reviewed by Corina Snitar, University of Glasgow

This book by two prominent experts, Andrei Ursu and Roland Thomasson, is a valuable contribution to the history of the Romanian revolution of 1989, shedding light on events that continue to be the subject of debate among both historians and the wider public in Romania. The authors' effort "to find the judicial truth" and "to bring justice to the victims of the revolution" (pp. 22–23) is admirable. In particular, they set out to provide a definitive answer to the question of "who was firing at [Romanians] after the 22nd" of December 1989, the day Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu fled Bucharest and were no longer able to oversee a crackdown. This question has long preoccupied the families of the victims (roughly 1,100) and the Romanian citizenry as a whole. The authors argue that evidence gathered from archival research and oral history dispels any doubt about the central role played by the Securitate in the violence used against protesters. Securitate officers were intent on preserving their agency's powerful role in Romania.

The authors dismantle conspiracy theories about the revolution that depict Hungarian irredentism or a Soviet intelligence plot as the impetus for the revolutionary movement (see the case of General Nicolae Militaru in the appendix, pp. 345–358). Such theories, they maintain, are baseless, having been concocted to legitimize repressive measures against protesters. Ursu and Thomasson attribute the conspiracy theories to former Securitate collaborators who took up academic or journalistic positions after 1989 and tried to divert attention from the crimes committed by the Securitate from the beginning of the revolution until the Ceaușescus were executed on Christmas Day. Preliminary versions of these theories were articulated at the outset of the revolution

to boost the morale of the army and to fuel a public “psychosis” about terrorists acting everywhere.

The first chapter discusses the Ceaușescu dictatorship through the lens of its repressive organ—the Securitate—and its main task of defending Ceaușescu, his family, and his regime regardless of the popular will. The authors discuss the Securitate’s plan to organize resistance on “territory temporarily occupied by the enemy,” which in the Securitate’s view included “national groups, gangs, and organizations that support enemies by using violent actions against the Communist state”—the phrasing used in a top-secret article published by two Securitate officers, Tudor Alexandru and Nicolae Catană, in the classified journal *Securitatea* in early 1989 (pp. 34–37).

The second chapter covers events taking place in Iași, a city near the border with the USSR, where a group of opponents of the regime under the name “Romanian Popular Front” (*Frontul Popular Român*) tried to organize anti-Communist demonstrations on 16, 23, and 30 December 1989 (p. 41). The initiative was quickly suppressed through arrests that began on the morning of 14 December in factories where secret police officers believed there was a substantial risk of protests. Squads from the Securitate’s counterterrorism division (USLA) were dispatched to the city under the pretext of taking part in a judo competition (*Dinamoviada*) conveniently scheduled for 11–17 December 1989 (pp. 42–43). The authors refer to this episode to highlight another method employed by Securitate commanders in anticipation of a possible threat to the regime’s stability: what happened in Iași was used a few days later by Iulian Vlad, the head of the Securitate, to convince his subordinates that they needed to act against an initiative such as that of the Romanian Popular Front “which was definitely not spontaneous” and “could have developed into a serious threat” (p. 43). Repressive measures against the protesters had to be legally and morally justified, and Ceaușescu’s illusion of having popular support had to be maintained.

The following chapter surveys the events in Timișoara from 15 to 21 December to highlight the Securitate’s key role in violent crackdowns against protesters there. The authors are troubled that prosecutors of the Military Court of Justice “suspiciously” ignored the large amount of evidence at their disposal showing how the Securitate’s actions caused most of the fatalities: testimonies given by direct witnesses in the trial opened in the case of Timișoara (*Procesul Timișoara*) and interviews of former Communist officials conducted in the first three decades after 1989. Ultimately, only an insignificant number of Securitate officers were questioned by the military prosecutors, and most of them were released without charges. The authors’ hypothesis is that it could not have been otherwise insofar as the Securitate’s archival files show clearly that the military courts were subservient to the Securitate before 1989, and most former officers of the Securitate’s Department for Penal Investigations (*Dirrecția a VI-a: Cercetări Penale*) became prosecutors after the collapse of the Communist system (pp. 291–293).

The book also stresses that recent attempts to lay blame for the bloodshed only on the former president Ion Iliescu as the supposed head of “a Soviet-ophile branch” within the National Salvation Front (*Frontul Salvării Naționale*, FSN) are

disingenuous (pp. 316–318). Such arguments were merely the most expedient tactic used by military prosecutors to close the case. Ursu and Thomasson argue that the prosecutors disregarded evidence showing that the “terrorists” were real people shooting from apartments belonging to the family members of party activists or Securitate personnel who had vacated the premises two to three days before, and from roofs and lofts of buildings near sites occupied by revolutionaries or the army. The terrorists were not a product of “collective imagination,” as the trials seemed to suggest.

The book continues with a chronological review of events and case studies in Bucharest, Sibiu, Braşov, Craiova, Cluj-Napoca, Brăila, Hunedoara, and Arad, based on participants’ testimonies and archival files showing how the Securitate’s actions were designed to create panic among army soldiers and cadets so that they would open fire on one another, in many cases with victims among people caught in the middle. According to the authors, those short, violent, and recurrent attacks usually occurred at night against the Ministry of National Defense, the national television and radio, and military units in accordance with “the plan of resistance” laid out by Alexandru and Catană in 1989. The Securitate’s repressive tactics included the use of sophisticated arms with night vision and “dum-dum” bullets against revolutionaries—equipment that only the security forces possessed at that time (pp. 206–259).

The authors’ conclusion that Securitate forces were the only ones who possessed the necessary training and weapons for urban guerrilla warfare and that, therefore, the “terrorists” were in fact Securitate officers is not new in Romanian academic and journalistic literature on these matters, but the book’s novelty is in bringing together evidence collected from multiple sources in support of this view. Besides testimonies of participants and witnesses, the book offers new material gathered from the National Center for Studying the Archives of the Securitate, including the working agenda of Major Dinu and other officers of the Securitate’s department in charge of protecting state officials (*Direcția a V-a*). The protection department’s records mention the orders given during the revolution, and they are supplemented by printed and online sources published after 1990 by former revolutionaries.

The invaluable information provided in the book will undoubtedly help spur further investigation into, for example, the fate of evidence that disappeared from the Ministry of National Defense, such as a map with the exact locations of purported terrorists (p. 237) or the devices used in simulation attacks captured by soldiers when they searched apartments from which shots were reportedly being fired (p. 342). The resolution of such matters would clarify further the role played by the Securitate, the police, and the army, all of which had personnel on the streets during the revolution. Another point that merits further discussion concerns the impact of the events on the formation of the new government in Romania after the collapse of the Ceauşescu regime. According to the authors, the FSN—the first free form of government whose members were centrally involved in Romania’s transformation—had been infiltrated by Securitate officers from the moment the FSN was founded (p. 26).

