

## THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ROMANIAN REVOLUTION

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### Abstract

*This article focuses on the December 1989 Revolution that ended the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceausescu in Romania. The research question explores the specificity and the consequences of the live coverage of the Revolution. In order to test, whether the television informed and mobilised people and, at the same time, legitimated the uprising, an empirical examination of the broadcast is conducted. The method chosen to study the speeches of the revolutionists is discourse analysis. The major findings are that the broadcast contributed to the victory of democratic forces by informing about the current situation, by legitimating the revolution and by mobilizing the population.*

### Introduction

The emancipation of the “satellite” states in Eastern and Central Europe from the authority of the USSR has often been described as a series of revolutions. However, with the exception of Romania, no real fighting occurred, only round-table discussions, mass demonstrations and clashes with the police. By the end of 1989, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Bulgaria witnessed the decisive transfer of power. In this context, the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu obstructed any development towards reform and proclaimed himself the last defender of communism. Consequently, the uprising that started in the western city of Timisoara and continued from the 21<sup>st</sup> of December in Bucharest was a violent one. According to the official sources, during the street fights, 1104 people were killed and 3552 were wounded.

Sixteen years after the events, the debates about the origins of the Revolution are still among the main issues on the Romanian political agenda. Many questions regarding the identity of the pro-regime terrorists, the role of the Soviet Union, or the names of those who ordered fire remained without answer. The lack of precise information created conspiracy scenarios and alternative explanations. In his article, “The Revolution after the Revolution”, Peter Siani-Davies explains that: “Many Romanians still feel that the full story has not been told and the accusations and

counter-accusations that continue to flow have only deepened the sense that something must be hidden.”<sup>44</sup>

Rather than focusing on the dilemmas surrounding the origins of the uprising or the implication of the foreign actors, this work will examine *the role played in Revolution by the live broadcast of the National Television*. No systematic analysis of the problem has been conducted until now. Therefore, my intention is to fill up this niche in the existing literature.

Immediately after Ceausescu’s departure from Bucharest, the Television became the *headquarters* of the protests, transmitting without interruption, for 72 hours, messages from the revolutionists. Many of the speeches and much of the celebration had been carried live by the broadcast of the newly entitled “Free Romanian Television”.

My research question explores *the specificity and the consequences of the live coverage* of the Romanian Revolution. My working hypothesis is that the Television contributed to the victory of the democratic forces by *informing* the population about the actual state of facts, by *mobilizing* civilians to participate in the rallies, and by *legitimizing* the anti-Communist uprising.

Throughout the whole paper, I will refer to revolution as “a rapid, fundamental transformation of the state and social structure, accompanied by mass uprising from below.”<sup>45</sup> The term “information” will be used as “a message received and understood that reduces the recipient's uncertainty.”<sup>46</sup> The terms “legitimation” and “delegitimation” imply the “active processes by which legitimacy is created and maintained or eroded and lost.”<sup>47</sup> “Legitimacy is the foundation of such governmental power as is exercised both with a consciousness on the government’s part that it has a right to govern and with some recognition by the governed of that right.”<sup>48</sup> “Mobilization” will designate the “process of activating resources including personnel, equipment and supplies. The process would include notification, reporting, and setup to attain readiness to initiate response and recovery actions.”<sup>49</sup> In his “Mobilization Model”<sup>50</sup>, Charles Tilly places this process in the middle of the three-variable causal chain: organization, mobilization, and collective action. Therefore, mobilization is considered the principal cause for collective action.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Siani-Davies, “The Revolution after the Revolution”, in *Post-Communist Romania. Coming to Terms with Transition*, ed. Duncan Light (Palgrave Publishers, 2001), 15.

<sup>45</sup> Definition according to *The International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences* (Elsevier, 2001).

<sup>46</sup> The definitions of “information” are according to *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (Oxford University Press 1995)

<sup>47</sup> According to the *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (Collier-Macmillan Publishers, London, 1991), volume 9.

<sup>48</sup> According to *International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, (Elsevier, 2001), volume 13.

<sup>49</sup> Definition available at <http://www1.va.gov/emshg/apps/emp/emp/definitions.htm>

<sup>50</sup> Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Addison-Wesley, 1978), chapter 3.

In order to test whether the television indeed informed and mobilized people and, at the same time, legitimated the uprising, an empirical examination of the broadcast was conducted. The method chosen to study the revolutionary's speeches was *discourse analysis*. The definitions of the key terms used in this field of research and the scheme of analysis applied in the paper will be included later. In addition, since this research was designed as a discourse examination, the whole structure of the work follows the stages of media discourse analysis presented by Norman Fairclough.<sup>51</sup>

The sources under scrutiny were the *transcripts of the videotapes* recorded on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1989. The "Multimedia Archive" of Romanian Television declined my request to access the original tapes, with the explanation that their space was under reconstruction and the material could not be found. Given these facts, I used as a primary source a *documentary book*,<sup>52</sup> from the library of the Television, containing the transcripts, the personalized information about those defending the institution and some ulterior testimonies regarding the events. A second important material was an autobiographical book of Teodor Brates<sup>53</sup>, the reporter considered the spokesman of the Revolution.

### ***The Communicative Event***

A methodological review of discourse analysis points out that the analysis of media discourse requires two synchronized centers of attention: *communicative events* (particular instances) and the order of discourse. In this section, the emphasis will be on the former: the program of The Romanian Television from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1989, the first day of broadcast revolution. At the same time, my interest is to identify evidence of the three functions that characterized the broadcast of the public TV station during the event: information, legitimation, and mobilization.

#### *1. The context*

The government-run national television network, "Televiziunea Română" (more commonly referred to as TVR) was established in 1956<sup>54</sup>, and first transmitted on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December the same year. A second channel, TVR2, was created in the 1970s, but was suspended from 1985 until after the fall of the Communist regime.

#### *1.1 The communist censorship*

Like other mass communication channels, television was subject to severe supervision in Communist Romania. Censorship was omnipresent; experts who were faithful to the regime checked with vigilance each story and each broadcast. In the late 1980s, the TVR agenda was strictly limited: only 2 hours per day (between 8 and 10 p.m.), most of which was devoted to the cult of personalities of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu. The only exception was on Sundays, when it was half propaganda and half real television. The content meant to impose the image of the new man and worship of its only personification, the leader. Plays and films with young workers who exceeded their quotas through hard work and enthusiasm for the budding of socialist Romania were broadcast weekly and then constantly rescheduled.

For years, Romanians watched only the programs of TVR, perceived as a misinformation instrument. A few people received satellite programs, but they ran the risk of being discovered by the secret police, the Securitate. Overall, the outcome was a critical lack of information and individual isolation within the reality that was fabricated for them on the TV screen.

In this context, the live broadcast of the Romanian Revolution represented a break in the model. In the following lines, a short chronology will present the broadcast events that occurred immediately before the Television became headquarter of the Revolution.

#### *1.2 A break in the "pattern"*

The first modifications in the usual TV program appeared in the evening of the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, when Ceausescu decided to make a direct appeal to the people regarding the revolts that started on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December in the city of Timisoara. He spoke about "international and terrorist actions by imperialist circles and foreign espionage agencies" designed to "provoke disorder and destroy the institutions" of the country. He encouraged the army to defend the country and suggested that no more than 10 people had been killed.

For the next morning, Ceausescu organized a demonstration of support in the "Square of the Republic", in front of the Central Committee Building. 100,000 workers were taken from their workplaces to hear Ceausescu speak. According to the official media it was a spontaneous movement in support of Ceausescu. Soon after he began to talk, from the back of the crowd could be heard screams of "Timisoara". Shortly, the protest becomes noisier through hoots and whistles. Confusion appears on the balcony where Ceausescu stops speaking, but is still filmed. Soon after, the live TV broadcast is cut. No more information or images were provided that day, but crowds in the city grew as more and more people headed into the streets burning photographs of the dictator and chanting "Timisoara".

<sup>51</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Media discourse* (London : E. Arnold, 1995).

<sup>52</sup> Mihai Tatulici, ed, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, English Translation of the title: *The Romanian Revolution Live* (Bucuresti 1990).

<sup>53</sup> Teodor Brates, *Explozia unei clipe. 22 decembrie 1989. O zi in studioul 4*, English translation of the title *The Explosion of a Moment. The 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1989. One day in the Studio 4*. (Bucuresti, Scripta, 1992).

<sup>54</sup> The history of the institution is available in English at [http://www.tvr.ro/org/about\\_us/index.php](http://www.tvr.ro/org/about_us/index.php)

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December the dictator tried one more time to speak to the crowd from the balcony of the Central Committee, but he became the target of the rage of the crowd. He managed to escape in a helicopter from the roof of the building. Meanwhile, the troops still loyal to Ceausescu continue to shoot the manifestants, but some of their representatives succeed in addressing the crowd from the balcony where Ceausescu had once stood.

### 1.3 The live broadcast

A column of demonstrators moved towards the Romanian Television station. The group wanted to make sure that their voices and their message would be heard in the whole country. Soon, the television station was taken over and began to broadcast that Ceausescu has been overturned. The cameras moved constantly back and forth between the Square of the Republic and studio 4 of the television station, where some of the newly important people came to address the nation. Many of those who would become important in the post-revolutionary governing body appeared before the cameras making statements and announcements. In studio 4 of the television station, instantly renamed “The Free Romanian Television” (“Televiziunea Romana Libera” or TVRL), everybody sent messages, appeals were made, and people were called to defend one or another building under attack by “terrorists”. At the same time, the army was requested to defend the “revolution” and the citizens were constantly asked to remain calm and to preserve order.

Throughout this period, the main source of information for the Romanian Television consisted of rumors and it created, in the first instance, a state of panic instead of acting as an informational environment. However, according to Teodor Brates<sup>55</sup>, one of the representatives of the TVRL in the studio 4, the information was constantly accompanied by calls to verify each piece of broadcast information. Nonetheless, any action of verification would have required free access to information and transparency on behalf of the authorities.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1989, the format of the transmission from studio 4 of The Free Romanian Television and, alternatively from the Square of the Republic, had no regular or predictable structure. The on-camera news read by the reporters was interrupted by short speeches from the revolutionists in the studio. Most of them started without any introduction and had no coherent structure. The newly created picture confirmed that people were in a hurry to transmit everything they kept inside “untold” during the “golden era”.

By contrast, the few leaders of the revolution who came to address the nation that day delivered long, consistent and articulate speeches. Appeals for help received from the capital and from other cities became also the focus of the reporters’ interventions. They always mentioned a telephone number for people to call. Demands for additional information were directed at possible witnesses of the shootings in the streets. Constantly repeated motifs were that there was someone out there who had information about those responsible for crimes, and that any verified information could be useful.

In order to allay the tense atmosphere, those present in the studio made appeals for calm and order. The program could be easily regarded as contributing to a general state of panic, and such attempts to reassure people indicate sensitivity on that score.

### 1.4 The television and its audience

These contextual considerations about the special structure of the broadcast may give an initial meaning of the articulation of voices, which is one of my main focuses. It suggests that voices are not clearly associated with roles, and in particular, that the presentation of breaking news and of appeals to the population was divided between reporters of the television and the revolutionists in the studio. This attempt to diminish the differences between mediators and the citizens was the first element in the process of reconstructing the relation between the television and its audience.

Furthermore, the break in the pattern and the spread of the news that was not dictated from the center are proof of *the information* role that the television came to assume. The acceptance of the protesters in the news studio contributed in the first moments to the identification of the institution with the “porte-parole” of the people. From this role it will derive its *legitimation*. The first appeals to the public also had as an effect *the mobilization* of civilians towards the main squares of Bucharest.

To take the examination further, the next sections will highlight aspects of discourse practice and intertextuality, supported with selective textual analysis.

## 2. Genre Analysis

The complex constraints of such a live broadcast and its multiple purposes manifest themselves through the heterogeneity of the texts. The feature is also valid in the discussion of genres, so that at least three main genres can be identified: narrative, biography and public appeal. They are connected in sequential and embedded forms of intertextuality<sup>56</sup>. That means that

<sup>55</sup> Brates, *Explozia unei clipe. 22 decembrie 1989. O zi in studioul 4*, 12.

<sup>56</sup> According to Fairclough (1992, 118), there are three different modes of intertextual relations: sequential intertextuality, embedded intertextuality and mixed intertextuality.

the different generic types alternate within a text and some are also embedded within the others.

### 2.1 Typical interventions

The narratives about what was happening on the streets of Bucharest were constantly interrupted by public calls for urgent matters. As evidence of the atrocity of the Ceausescu regime, the speakers were bringing up autobiographical details regarding their experiences in the recent years and also in the last days.

The following examples of discourse representation are taken from the complete transcripts<sup>57</sup> of the broadcast of the Romanian Television on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1989<sup>58</sup>.

“The transmission returns in the Studio 4. Near Petre Popescu are standing Teodor Brates and Liviu Tudor Samuila<sup>59</sup>.

Brates: Brothers, I speak to you again on behalf of the personnel of the Television. Please defend those who, from now on, will tell you the truth and only truth, those who put themselves in the service of the people. We have here doctors who say that blood is needed, blood donors...

Popescu: Come in...He is doctor Popescu from the Emergency Hospital.

Doctor: Brothers, in these hard moments, I am making an appeal to all the medical personnel: doctors, nurses, to help those who have been shot, those who have been ran down by the tanks. In our hospital there are several dozens of people, some of them have been directly carried to the morgue...We found out, from sources that are not very reliable, that apart of those who are wounded have been blended...wounded persons with corpses, and transported to Jilava<sup>60</sup>. We have to give immediate help to these national heroes!

Brates: Thank you. Brothers, pay attention to this message. Every person who might help whose suffering...(applauses). I want to say one more thing...

Samuila: We ask you from the bottom of the heart, in order to win for good what we already won, let us do our job...

The sound is sputtering, then it disappears. The image is commuted to the courtyard of the Television, still without sound.”<sup>61</sup>

This example of sequential intertextuality can be considered representative of the succession of episodes

that occurred that day. It starts with a short introduction from the reporter, and then the person who has been introduced presents himself and talks about an urgent matter. Finally, an appeal to the population it is made and emphasized.

“Sergiu Nicolaescu<sup>62</sup>: Now, we have here Mircea Dinescu<sup>63</sup>, whom we do not know unfortunately by face, only by voice<sup>64</sup>. Few months ago, he was fired from “Romania Literara” magazine, as a result of an interview against the dictator, granted to the French newspaper “Liberation”. He was arrested at his residence...Please...

Mircea Dinescu: I will make a short statement for the country. I am addressing now the workers, the peasants, the intellectuals and especially the students, to whom the entire country is thankful for their blood and life sacrifice from this heroic days...Do not leave your television sets! They are very important...Tonight, let's hope that till tonight...We make a call to the leadership of the army. Some high representatives should come here...from the Army and from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Be with us! Speak to the army and to the people! Workers, intellectuals...come to the Romanian Television. We will put together a declaration for the people...

Voice: The manifestations should continue...

Dinescu: Manifestations...Calm, be calm, calm...The people won in Romania.

Voice: The manifestations should continue...

Dinescu: The Romanian people rediscovered his present and his future that is so important in these moments...”<sup>65</sup>

### 2.2. Autobiographical testimonies

The three genres can be identified also together, in a single speech as a form of embedded intertextuality. Often, the opportunity to address the nation included the autobiographical data, the narratives about the tension-filled situation in the country and the final decisive public appeals. The time framework was limited both by the uncertain situation and by the large number of people that wanted to speak, and as a consequence the speeches had a compressed form and an alert rhythm.

“Gelu Voican: My name is Gelu Voican and I have known the prisons of Securitate. My thought is now with those who are imprisoned, under false charges of common law. Amnesty for those in jail! The judiciary situations of those recently imprisoned should be revised!

<sup>57</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 27.

<sup>58</sup> In order to differentiate in a clear manner my text from the translation of the transcripts for the former ones I will use letters in Italics.

<sup>59</sup> Petre Popescu was the news speaker during the last years of Ceausescu's regime; Teodor Brates was the assistant chief editor in the News Department; Samuila was a news reporter.

<sup>60</sup> Jilava is a village near Bucharest. The king Carol I of Romania built a fort here, in order to assure the defensive system of his capital. Later, this fort became a prison and its sad fame is linked to the communist rule of Romania.

<sup>61</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 33.

<sup>62</sup> Sergiu Nicolaescu is a famous Romanian film director.

<sup>63</sup> Mircea Dinescu is a Romanian poet and former dissident during the Ceausescu regime.

<sup>64</sup> Allusion to “Radio Free Europe” and “Radio Voice of America.”

<sup>65</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 27-28.

At the same time, I want to make a declaration for our people. In these moments, the whole world is looking at us. We have to prove that we are trustworthy, that we are a nation that knows its order, its hierarchy and its legality. Even though we suffered...even though we suffered, we should not be revengeful. We must get the Securitate archives, the archives of the minister of foreign Affairs and we must organize the verification of the files and the conviction of those who activated against us during all these years. Only on legal grounds and in virtue of the existing laws. Let's organize self-defense committees that will ensure the order and the discipline at all the levels! I am hoarse because I have been on the tanks<sup>66</sup> and last night I have been to Intercontinental...<sup>67</sup>

Another sample of coexisting narratives, biography and public appeals uncover the uncertain condition of the political prisoners:

“Dragomir Horomnea: I am the writer Dragomir Horomnea, the author of the novel “The Road of the Knights”, that was forbidden by the censorship of the former dictatorship...I do not want to insist upon the masquerade built in turn of me and of this novel. I just want to thank the colleagues that stood next to me and also to the people that, from now on, will stay next to us. I speak also on behalf of the patriots from “Romania Libera”<sup>68</sup> and most of all, of two exceptional journalists: Anton Uncu and Petrica Bacanu<sup>69</sup>. We know still very few about their destiny...We only know that Anton Uncu might be somewhere in a little town from Moldova, in a insignificant position that is very far away from his capabilities and his talent. About Petre Bacanu<sup>70</sup> we do not know anything, he might as well be dead. We want them near us! As soon as possible.”<sup>71</sup>

### 2.3 The role of the three genres

The succession of the three genres proved to be a requisite. Firstly, the biographies proved either that the person was an opponent of the regime or that he was an important figure of the public sphere that deserved to be heard. In some cases, it was relevant that the speaker

<sup>66</sup> In front of the Intercontinental Hotel in Bucharest, in front of the tanks, the people organised barricades during the night of 21<sup>st</sup> of December.

<sup>67</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 37.

<sup>68</sup> A group of journalists from the daily “Romania Libera” published in January 1989 the first clandestine journal called “Romania”. The members of the group had been arrested and condemned.

<sup>69</sup> A short history of the event is presented in the on-line version of the daily “Romania Libera” from the 21<sup>st</sup> of January 2004, see <http://www.romanialibera.ro/editie/index.php?url=articol&tabel=z21012004&idx=36>.

<sup>70</sup> Petre Mihai Bacanu was released from prison that day and he became the chief-editor of the daily where he worked before the arrest, “Romania Libera” (“The Free Romania”).

<sup>71</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 37.

represented a certain social group as special attention was given to the fair representation of each category.

Secondly, the narratives were informing about the current dramatic events from the streets of Bucharest. The legitimacy of the change was constructed through the several references to the victims and to the brutal reaction of the so-called “terrorists” (presented in narratives and biographies). Moreover, there were two forms of political action: the dissidence and the revolution were justified by being placed in antithesis with the totalitarian rule.

Lastly, the public appeals were completing the picture, requiring solidarity and mobilization. The civilians were asked to make humanitarian acts in order to help the victims. The medical personnel were explicitly solicited to assist the wounded victims.

The examples indicate that the broadcast was generically complex by being at the same time narrative, biographical and mobilizing. The narrative on its own is generically complex, unifying the relating from outside with the individual declarations of witnesses. This complex nature of narratives will be analyzed in the next section.

### 3. The stories

A substantial proportion of the broadcast from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1989 consisted of narratives. On the one hand, this feature can be considered normal, as the term “reporting” comprises the description of events and the story-telling. On the other hand however, the happenings are not only recounted, but also commented on and interpreted. As Fairclough<sup>72</sup> suggests, we must therefore distinguish between the actual story (“an ordered series of events”) and its presentation (“the way in which the story is realized and organized”).

#### 3.1 The stories

The stories told in front of the cameras by the revolutionists illustrate at least two main functions of the narratives. Firstly, stories represent a central part of group formation and a key element for the analysis of identity politics. Groups used stories to explain their long and recent history and in what direction they intended to go. The speakers in the studio and those addressing the crowd from the balcony of the Central Committee building constructed their new identity of free citizens by describing the unfortunate life conditions during Ceausescu's rule and the recent carnage in the streets of Bucharest and Timisoara. Secondly, narratives are the way human beings explain significant changes in human relationships. The dramatic individual and collective stories revealed the real situation of the country, disguised under false data. The radical change of power was therefore regarded as a necessity.

<sup>72</sup> Fairclough, *Media discourse*, 91.

### 3.2 *The emotional presentations*

The way people frame events can indicate what they consider valuable. In particular, the stories including personal experiences can lead to discourses connected to practices and what is valued in practice. The evaluation of the reports revealed a single standpoint regarding the event. Three arguments sustain this claim.

Despite the variety of topics present in the narrations, the perspective from which they were commented was only one. All the speeches were strongly against the personal dictatorship of Nicolae Ceausescu and were denouncing its atrocities. The list can be also regarded as an indictment of the regime. Each story was an accusation and each new abuse an argument for the revolution.

The emotional dimension of the stories is manifest both in the external narratives and in the testimonies. The external narratives told the stories from the point of view of an outsider who is able to take an overview. By contrast, the testimonies are stories told from the point of view of those involved. However, the revolution constructed a feeling of solidarity and a sense of identification with the victims that made the boundary between the different points of view insignificant.

The presence of “sensationalism” and of “spectacularization”, two common media techniques, was also a feature of the speeches. Nevertheless, the violent character of the events and the pressure to which the revolutionists were exposed might explain the exaggerations. From the balcony of the Central Committee, those addressing the nation could actually see “terrorists” shooting the crowd. The upper floors of the Television building (and especially the 11<sup>th</sup> floor where the direction’s offices were located) were a permanent target for bullets shot from the neighboring houses.

### 2.3. *The effects of the narratives*

The stories represented a convincing strategy to *legitimize* the uprising of the masses. With the purpose of *mobilizing* people, the majority of messages followed a simple logic: react immediately before the danger. The civilians were now not only asked to come in the streets, but also to defend threatened institutions, like the National Radio.

The use of a simple method brought significant results. After a long period of listening to fabricated news and seeing on the TV screen the same personages each evening, the Romanians could finally hear authentic *informations*. They could see people like themselves talking about things they themselves experienced and doing things that they had long wished to do, but never had the chance. In addition to the new reports describing the conflicts in the streets, the stories presented the “untold” and “unseen” Romania and it was through the power of this message that the audience was convinced.

## *Legitimation by Media*

### *1. The “topoi” of argumentation*

As stated in the “argumentation theory”, a standardized method of constructing an argument is called “topos”<sup>73</sup>. In other words, it is a content related rule that justifies the transition from arguments to deduction. During the revolutionary days, the universal conclusion was the necessity of Ceausescu’s fall. The following lines will attempt to identify the “topoi” used to validate this logic.<sup>74</sup> Each new paragraph will start with the acknowledged structure of the argument<sup>75</sup> and will continue with its illustration through examples extracted from the speeches.

The topos of “definition” can be paraphrased through the following conclusion rule: if a person is denominated as X, the person should carry the traits contained in the literal meaning of X. From the moment the studio 4 was occupied by protesters, Ceausescu was designated as the “dictator”. All later arguments sustained this statement. He was accused of creating a persuasive personality cult (giving himself titles such as “Genius of Carpathians”), of investing his wife and other members of his family with high positions in the government (his regime was labeled as “sultanistic”), and of the introduction of food rationing. He was blamed for the frequent heating, gas, and electricity stoppages, for the general decrease in living standards, and for transforming Romania into Europe’s fourth biggest exporter of weapons.

The topos of “danger” or of “threat” is based on the presupposition that if a political decision will produce dangerous consequences, one should not do it. Or, formulated differently: if specific dangers are identified, one should do something against them. The country, which had no information of the Timisoara events from the national media, heard about the revolt from western radio stations like Voice of America and Radio Free Europe and by word of mouth. When the confirmation came from the TV transmission, the immediate reaction was the imperative to act against the violence and therefore every intervention was finished by appeals for unity and for mobilization.

The topos of “responsibility” can be summarized by the formula: because a group of persons is responsible for the emergence of specific problems, they should act in order to find solutions to these problems. This type of argument was partially forced, since a group of people decided voluntarily to assume responsibility for the events and consequently they formed the Council of the National Salvation Front. Ion

<sup>73</sup>In the context of classical Greek rhetoric, a topos (literally: a place, plural: topoi) referred to a classic method of constructing or treating an argument, [http://encyclopedia.laborlawtalk.com/Literary\\_topos](http://encyclopedia.laborlawtalk.com/Literary_topos).

<sup>74</sup>For a list of topoi see <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/supplement2.html>.

<sup>75</sup>The description of “topoi” is based on table 4.2, page 74 from Ruth Wodak, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, (London: Sage, 2001).

Iliescu, the future president of Romania, read the official announcement for the country on behalf of the new organized structure of power. The document summarized the accusations against the communist regime and proposed 10 provisional solutions for the situation of crises.

The topos of “burdening” is to be regarded as a topos of consequence and can be reduced to the conditional: if an institution or country is burdened by specific problems, one should act in order to diminish these burdens. The review of harms was made public by a revolutionist who also formulated the expected compensatory measurements.

“Florin Filipoiu: I belong to the group of people that raised last night the barricade at Inter<sup>76</sup>. Then we formed the group “social justice” and those from the first line put on paper their requests. We do not know yet if they are going to be approved, but we will present them:

- the everlasting abolition of any form of personality cult
- the liberation of the political prisoners
- the cessation of the food export and their redistribution on the internal market
- the abolishment of the shops for nomenklatura
- the reduction of the industrial electric consume and the stopping of the energy savings requested from the population
- the abdication of the “Securitate” spying on people
- the free circulation of people inside and outside the country
- the independence of the Television, the freedom of the press, the freedom of speech, the abolition of censorship
- the right of circulation for the cars for every Sunday<sup>77</sup>
- the abolition of the gas “rationalization”
- the creation of a new system of food distribution for the population
- the return to a normal working timetable
- economic rights for the “little” landowners and for the peasants
- the abolition of the conditional system of supplying aliments to the peasants
- the exclusion of the political ideological education from schools and universities
- the abolition of the criminal demographic policies and the liberalization of the abortions<sup>78</sup>

- the surcease of the demolition of villages
- the right to free association
- commissions to investigate the abuses of the nomenklatura
- the creation of a committee to revise the Romanian history
- a new name for the country: “The Republic of Romania”
- the setting up of a commission of specialists to edit a new constitution that will guarantee that never again a dictatorial regime will rule Romania
- the appointment of specialists as head of the Ministers
- and... finally... democratic elections.

All these have been required by the people who formed last night the barricade at Inter. Long live the Free Romania! Long live the Republic of Romania!”<sup>79</sup>

Lastly, the topos of “history” can be described as follows: because history teaches that particular actions have specific consequences, one should perform a specific action in a situation comparable with the historical example referred to. Frequent references to the recent events in Eastern Europe ended up with the appeal to follow their example and manifest till the fall of the regime. A few people also mentioned the French Revolution and they noted that the main objectives are the same in Bucharest as they were exactly 200 years ago in Paris.

To sum up, the different forms of argumentation unveiled the same conclusion: the requirement to replace the personal dictatorship with a democratic regime. Accordingly, the statements were not open to many readings and the formulations were simple and explicit.

## 2. *Voices and legitimation*

I intend now to begin shifting the analysis of the discourse practice and intertextuality towards discourses. I will do so by looking at the range of voices that were included in the program, what relationships are set between the voices, and what the association is between voices and legitimacy.

### *Traditional legitimation*

Starting with the first broadcast interventions, it was requested that all social categories be represented in the studio.

<sup>76</sup> The Intercontinental hotel.

<sup>77</sup> To reduce the demand of gas, the law stipulated that the cars with matriculation numbers finished by an “even” number can circulate two Sundays per month. The “odd” numbers could circulate during the others two Sundays.

<sup>78</sup> An abstract about the reproductive policy of Ceausescu is available in Gail Kligman, *The politics of duplicity : controlling reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania*, (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1998), 6.

<sup>79</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct* , 53-54.

“Woman (addressing the crowd in the courtyard of the Television): Fifteen minutes ago the Television transmitted the first revolutionary communiqué. We need upstairs in the studio for the next announcement: two sociologists, two economists, two lawyers from each social category two representatives

A voice: Please repeat: two economists, two sociologists, two lawyers...also two students.”<sup>80</sup>

Later on, in his appeal to the nation, the dissident poet Mircea Dinescu reinforced the message:

“Workers, intellectuals...come to the Romanian Television. We will put together a declaration for the people...”<sup>81</sup>

The demand for correct representation can be considered a “heritage” of the egalitarian communist ideology. Ceausescu’s main concern for public celebration or congresses was that each social group be appropriately represented. It was a component of his authority built on the principle of valuing traditions<sup>82</sup> and on the presupposition that a command will be obeyed if it is in accordance with a learnt convention.

In addition to these accepted considerations, during the Revolution the appeal to all professional categories was a method for mobilizing people through “personalized” messages.

“Boris Zingher: I have a Ph.D. in Mathematics and I work at the National Center for statistics. I want to read a declaration that I edited together with my co-workers...Don’t interrupt the manifestation till the fall of the Ceausescu regime! Ask for the formation of a provisional government!”<sup>83</sup>

“Sold Ionel: I am sport trainer. Last night I was alongside the others on the barricades...”<sup>84</sup>

“Dragomir Horomnea: I am the writer Dragomir Horomnea, the author of the novel “The Road of the Knights”, that was forbidden by the censorship of the former dictatorship. I just want to thank the colleagues that stood next to me and also to the people that, from now on, will stay next to us.”<sup>85</sup>

“Military pilot: I am a representative of the air forces. I want you know that the aircraft is with the people...I want to tell you that the planes are ready to go in the territory and bring the representatives

of each county to meet the new power structures from Bucharest.”<sup>86</sup>

“The colonel Rusi: Esteemed viewers, from the General Inspectorate of Militia<sup>87</sup> three people left to address the nation: The general Campeanu, who wants to be the spokesman of the people in blue uniform, the colonel Suceava and myself. We are here to publicly announce that “Militia is with the people!” (Applause) “Militia respects the people, militia defends the people and the products of its creative work.”<sup>88</sup>

“Doctor Popescu: Brothers, in these hard moments, I am making an appeal to all the medical personnel: doctors, nurses, to help those who have been shot, those who have been hurt by the tanks.”<sup>89</sup>

“Colonel lieutenant Stan Gheorghe: I am the colonel lieutenant engineer Stan Gheorghe and I represent here the “Securitate”. I want to speak for my co-workers who certainly watch this transmission...I call the roll to you not to use your weapons, I make an appeal to you to lay down your weapons. Hand over your weapons because that’s what the people expect from you. The massacre is not needed. Enough bad was done by the tyrant who was happily removed from office.”<sup>90</sup>

“Dumitru Claudian: The ship skipper Dumitru Claudian is talking to you now. I am a sailor with dozens of years experience in this field. I consider myself the representative of the sailors from Danube, from the Black Sea, from all the rivers and ports of Romania. Sailors! Leave on the ship only the security team and organize patrols in the cities to maintain order and discipline and to prevent the act of vandalism by the Securitate members, dressed in civilians...”<sup>91</sup>

“Journalist: Dear colleagues, compatriots! The journalists and the printers of the daily “Scinteia”<sup>92</sup> decided to change the name of the newspaper to “Scinteia poporului”<sup>93</sup> and to transform it into a social daily. (Voices: “Adevarul”, you should rename it “Adevarul”) The first edition will appear in a couple of hours”.

“Nifon Ploiesteanu: Always close to the people, the Romanian Orthodox Church is blessing you in these moments when Jesus Chris is to be born. We said prayers for those who died these days and we will not cease to pray...”<sup>94</sup>

<sup>86</sup>Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 41.

<sup>87</sup> Militia was the name of the Romanian Police.

<sup>88</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 47.

<sup>89</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 33.

<sup>90</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 52.

<sup>91</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 54.

<sup>92</sup> “Scinteia” was the Communist official daily.

<sup>93</sup> For only a few days after the fall of Ceausescu it appeared as “Scinteia poporului” (“People’s Spark”), switching to the name of “Adevarul” (The Truth) on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December 1989.

<sup>94</sup>Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 57.

<sup>80</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 23.

<sup>81</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 28.

<sup>82</sup> From the beginning one of the main futures of the Romanian communist was the reduction of the discrepancies between social categories and their correct representation in the governing structures.

<sup>83</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 36.

<sup>84</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 37.

<sup>85</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 37.

“Constantin Radulescu: My name is Radulescu Constantin and I am the representative of the workers in the bread factories. I want to gladly announce that starting with today we will make sweet bread for the people, not for the dictators!”<sup>95</sup>

Thus, during the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December people from almost all-social categories addressed the nation. Their final words were always a plea for order and requests for solidarity with the revolution. Their voices had never been heard before, but it was to the multitude of their appeals that a unitary revolutionary discourse was created.

#### *Charismatic legitimation*

The first form of legitimation was directed at the “traditional” social categories. In addition, the presence in the studio of charismatic figures of the Romanian public sphere created the opportunity for innovation and for producing new kinds of institutions. Above all, those disowned by Ceausescu were presented as heroes and as an alternative to the authoritarian regime. In contrast with the ordinary people that had to present themselves, the spokesman was the one presenting the dissidents by brief and explicit references to their protester attitude.

In the years to come, these introductions became emblematic phrases for the revolution and have been often quoted in the media. In this context, it is however relevant to mention that few isolated dissidents had actually promoted the anti-Communist discourse in Ceausescu’s Romania. The country lacked a human rights movement and a consistent “samizdat” press. Those presented as dissidents during the Revolution were, to a great extent, former communist officials who had expressed publicly their discontent towards the extreme measures of Ceausescu. As a consequence they had been expelled from the party, followed by the Securitate, or condemned to “forced residence”.

A few hours after the historic flight of the helicopter, the future president of the country appeared in the studio 4 of the Television. The anchorman introduced him with these words:

“Esteemed viewers, we have the great joy to host here, in the studio, Ion Iliescu. He is the son of a revolutionary and patriot, he himself being a patriot.”<sup>96</sup>

Other well-known or less famous opponents of Nicolae Ceausescu were introduced in similar ways.

The Romanian Orthodox Church, a victim-institution of the atheist regime, was represented by its Patriarch. He was the only figure of the public sphere that remained in the same high position after the changes from 1989:

“Teoctist, the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church: My dears, our deep-rooted Church, through us, its hierarchics, cannot be

absent in these heroic moments of the Romanian history. Therefore, I express my total adhesion to this heroic moment and I make an appeal to the hierarchics, priests and believers of the Romanian Orthodox Church to collaborate and to listen to the new local committees. So that, the historic acts from the life of our people came to a good end.”<sup>97</sup>

Apart from these personalities, presented through their brave acts, the Revolution produced its own appealing characters. Among them, the spokesman of the entire broadcast, who occupied till then the position of assistant chief editor in the News Department. Teodor Brates was the one that opened the “gates” of the Television for the revolutionists and remained in studio 4 for 72 hours. Writing about his experience, in a chronicle of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December<sup>98</sup>, he paraphrased Ernst Rohm<sup>99</sup>: “Was it necessary that in our country also, like in other times and places, the revolution devoured its own children?”<sup>100</sup>. The allusion was to the accusations of establishing panic and disseminating misinformation that he received constantly. As a consequence, he resigned from the Romanian Television a few months after the Revolution.

#### *Legal legitimation*

In the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December, a proclamation was addressed to the nation by the future president of Romania. It was the first attempt to legalize the change and it was immediately followed by the abolition of some communist laws. The people were therefore asked to obey the law rather than a person. For the specific legal framework of the country the initiative had at least two good effects: it demonstrated, after a long period, that laws could be enacted through a bottom to top communication and it gave the legal legitimation of the general discourse.

The proclamation was edited partly in the building of the Central Committee, partly on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor of the Television. Ion Iliescu<sup>101</sup> read it in the studio 4, after he was introduced as the representative of the Council of the National Salvation Front. He was the main political beneficent of the change, as he assumed leadership.

“A new page is opened in the political and economic history of Romania. In these hard moments, we decided to form the National Salvation Front which is an ally of the Army and that it is composed of all the “healthy” forces of the country, disregarding the nationality, and of all the organizations and groups who arose bravely in the defense of liberty and dignity. The purpose of the

<sup>97</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 68.

<sup>98</sup> Brates, *Explozia*.

<sup>99</sup> Ernst Rohm: “All revolutions devour their own children.”

<sup>100</sup> Brates, *Explozia*, 14.

<sup>101</sup> Later on, when leader of the provisional government, Iliescu declared that he wished that Romanian would adopt an “original democracy”, as opposed to the communist system and the western-style democracy.

<sup>95</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 79.

<sup>96</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 41.

National Salvation Front is to establish democracy, freedom and dignity for the Romanian people. From this moment on, all power structures belonging to the Ceausescu clan are dissolved. The government is abolished. The State Council and its institutions will cease their activity. The Council of the National Salvation Front takes the whole power. Subordinated to it, there will be the Superior Military Council that coordinates the entire activity of the Army and that of the units of the Minister of Internal Affairs. All the ministers will continue the activity as subordinated to the National Salvation Front. In the territory, there will be constituted councils of the Front at all the administrative levels. The Militia will be in charge of the public order.”<sup>102</sup>

### *Conclusions*

To sum up, the three sources of *legitimation* listed in the typology of Max Weber are all identifiable in the discourse of the Romanian Revolution. An optimal combination of the three was the basis for both the legitimation of the new political power and the new political discourse. The traditional source made appeals to well-known social categories and requested their mobilization. The charismatic one recalled the exceptional personal traits of those challenging the former regime. Finally, the legal source completed the image of a trustworthy system that required people to obey the law. Through the means of the live broadcast, during only one day, a complex procedure was without delay schematized. The following days brought the consolidation of the process.

Besides, the appeals of the official representatives *mobilized* the weapons forces: the Army, the Navy, The Securitate and the Militia. Each of these delegates manifested public solidarity with the people. The military men were asked to stop the gunfire and to maintain order. The message was taken over by the people in the streets. The exclamation “The army is with us!” became emblematic for the victory of the Revolution.

### *Creating a New Political Discourse*

The focus will now shift to the complementary discussion of the order of discourse. This examination will attempt to distinguish how the new political identities were constructed and how the final declaration was produced, distributed, and interpreted.

### *Constructing a New Identity*

The creation of a new political discourse is illustrated through an analysis of the discourse practice of the televised broadcast. The focus will be on interpersonal relationships: the construction of an

identity for the leaders, an identity for the public, and a relationship between the leaders and the public.

#### *1. The “virtual” leaders*

Out of the many figures that gain credibility through their participation in the Revolution, my focus will be on Petre Roman, the future prim-minister and on Ion Iliescu, the future president of Romania. The former was a new actor on the political scene; the latter had a long career in the communist structures of power, but since 1971 was relegated. They both faced the problem of constructing a plausible identity for a new political leader.

They used different strategies of legitimation. Petre Roman was a young professor of the Polytechnic Institute who fought on the barricades and participated in the manifestation of protest. He was among the first ones who arrived at the Television where he was designated to read the “People’s Declaration”, the first communiqué to the nation:

“Petre Roman: People’s Declaration. Compatriots, brothers! Today, the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December due to the unity of the people and with the direct help of the Army, the dictator was removed. In this moment, the people, together with the Army, require that the political power is taken by democratic institutions chosen by free people. In the name of the citizens of Bucharest, who are now manifestating in the streets and controlling the building of the Central Committee, we make an appeal to the entire nation, to maintain calm and the public order so that we can organize the free and democratic life.”

According to his own account, the declaration was drafted “as a matter of urgency by four or five people who were there with me.”<sup>103</sup> Petre Roman became the spokesman of the young people participating in the uprising. Furthermore, since the accepted claim was that young people had waged the revolution on the streets, Roman was considered the representative in the government of revolutionary youth.

By contrast, Ion Iliescu was the voice of “experience”. He made a career in the Romanian nomenclatura, becoming in 1965 a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and in 1967, the Minister of Youth Problems. However, in 1971, due to his criticism of Ceausescu’s policies, he was marginalized and removed from all his political functions. Iliescu showed up, a few hours after Ceausescu’s escape, in studio 4 and was introduced with enthusiasm by the anchorman:

“...we have the great joy to host here, in the studio, Ion Iliescu. He is the son of a revolutionary<sup>104</sup> and patriot, he himself being a patriot.”<sup>105</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 234.

<sup>104</sup> He was the son of a railroad worker who was one of the few members of the pre-war Romanian Communist Party. Therefore, his

<sup>102</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 113-116.

Giving his first speech, Iliescu displayed assurance and authority:

“Twenty minutes ago, I spoke on the phone with General Stanculescu, the acting Defense Minister. He issued an order. The troops spread around the city with orders to shoot have been withdrawn. He turned back a column of armored vehicles which had been sent from Pitesti to Bucharest...Therefore, comrades, at this moment we have guarantees that the army is with the people.”<sup>106</sup>

He went on to announce that during the same day a Committee of National Salvation would be formed with the aim of restoring order. During the afternoon of December 22, he enjoyed considerable recognition and authority. His leadership was accepted with little criticism and no contest. With a power void to be filled and no other leader or group strong enough to assert power, he had basically no obstacle to overcome and no rival to defeat.

Iliescu announced the creation of the National Salvation Front (NSF) in a radio and television address. Within four days, a provisional government was formed, with Petre Roman as Prime Minister and Iliescu as president of the front and interim president of the country.

## 2. *The people*

For a new political structure to obtain power, it has to carve out a political base, a determined electorate. Such a political base is partly brought into existence through the discourses of politicians that construct and reconstruct the “public”. In the broadcast speeches, the future leaders frequently talked about “the Romanian people”. Furthermore, they often did so by listing their attributes.

“Mircea Dinescu: The Army should help the heroic Romanian people...”<sup>107</sup>

“Petre Roman: ...the united Romanian nation is victorious”.<sup>108</sup>

“Ion Iliescu: “Our people should demonstrate its wisdom and political maturity so that we can organize on a democratic basis.”

“Ion Iliescu: The Romanians deserved to enter in the group of civilized nations of Europe.”

The query of how the “audience” was constructed overlaps with the problem of what relationship was settled between the new leaders and the people. After the extreme experience of totalitarian rule, a certain

tension can be identified between a rapport with the audience characterized by authority and one characterized by solidarity.

Regarding this issue, pronouns are worth examining. The pronoun “we” was sometimes used to include the audience. “We all obtained a historic victory against the dictatorship”<sup>109</sup>. By contrast, sometimes “we” was exclusively referring to the new leadership. “We have now the mission to organize the destiny of the country,”<sup>110</sup> said Ion Iliescu. This last feature was typical for Ceausescu’s speeches that always separated him from the crowd. By contrast, the inclusive uses of “we” became a common feature of the new political discourse. Using it, solidarity could be claimed (since everybody was in the same boat), but also authority is respected (since the leader has the right to speak for all the people).

## 3. *The revolution as a mode of legitimation*

The NSF and its successors used the revolution as a mode of legitimation. The claim was that this organization has been the standard bearer of the event and the voice of the crowd. The new leaders asserted that they had been raised to their positions when they received the direct approbation of the crowd during their appearance on the balcony of the Central Committee and in the studios of the Television. In their speeches, Iliescu and the others NSF leaders constantly repeated this theme.

Arguing that the Revolution had imposed a broad consensus in Romania, they tried to use this to put up a new political system, which permitted the dialogue between different political opinions, but diminished any confrontation. The exact limits of this model were never fixed, but within it, the powers of NSF would have been considerable. The formation was the goal setter, the mediator of the debates, and the executor of decisions taken.

The epilogue of this story is that, even if seventy-three parties participated in the first democratic elections, held on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1990, the NSF candidates received an overwhelming 67% of the votes. Petre Roman was once again named Prime Minister. The candidate for Presidency, Ion Iliescu received 86% of the vote. The success of the NSF in the first postcommunist elections was unlike other East European parties and one cause may be their “use” of the Romanian Revolution.

## *The communiqué*

The first day of live broadcast of the Romanian Revolution ended with an intervention of Ion Iliescu reading the document that certified the “birth” of the new authority and listing its priorities. The following lines will focus on the production, distribution and reception of this mediatized political discourse

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father was a revolutionary only of a type entirely opposite to what a revolutionary meant on the day of victory over communism.

<sup>105</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 41.

<sup>106</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 42.

<sup>107</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 27.

<sup>108</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 34.

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<sup>109</sup> Petre Roman, in *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 34.

<sup>110</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 47.

### *The meeting*

After announcing on television that during the same day a Committee of National Salvation would be formed with the aim of restoring order, Iliescu arrived at the Central Committee building, where a number of people were already waiting for him. Among them were former party and government representatives that had been relegated by Ceausescu, known dissidents, and some active and retired Army officials. A Romanian Television camera recorded his arrival and the meeting that followed.<sup>111</sup>

“A voice from the crowd: Film and record everything!

Iliescu: We are going in the large hall to discuss.

Another voice: No! You must talk here. So that we know what is going on. We want to have control.

Iliescu: We want to form a council...<sup>112</sup>

According to the testimonies of the witnesses<sup>113</sup>, the meeting was a disordered and unclear one. The speakers were talking at the same time and the phone conversations were overlapping with discussions between two or more people. The general atmosphere was a tense one and little substantive information could be heard. An agreement about the necessity to form a provisional structure of power had been reached. The problems still to discuss were its name and the gathering of all its desiderates in a communiqué for the people.

“Roman: Salvation is not good...It belongs to a coup d’etat...The Front of National Democracy!

Iliescu: Democracy is with everybody...

Roman: But what does it mean “salvation”? Comrade Iliescu, when I spoke on the balcony, I said “People’s Unity Front.”

Militaru: Call it “National Salvation Front.”

Iliescu: It creates a state of panic when you say salvation...<sup>114</sup>

With regard to the issue of writing an announcement, a version of it seemed to have been already put on paper by the time of the meeting. After long argumentations and counter-argumentations, a 10-point program of the National Salvation Front was completed and included the aspirations for freedom, democracy, prosperity, and independence of the Romanian people.

### *The broadcast*

Ion Iliescu announced the formation of the Council of the National Salvation Front, its membership and its program on the national television:

“A new page is opened in the political and economical history of Romania. In these hard moments, we decided to form the National Salvation Front which is an ally of the Army and that it is composed of all the “healthy” forces of the country, disregarding the nationality, and of all the organisations and groups who arose bravely in the defence of liberty and dignity. The purpose of the National Salvation Front is to establish democracy, freedom and dignity for the Romanian people. From this moment on, all power structures belonging to the Ceausescu clan are dissolved. The government is abolished. The State Council and its institutions will cease their activity. The Council of the National Salvation Front takes the whole power.”

The political demands were parts of the general human rights discourse and their formulation was clear and concise:

- the establishment of a pluralist and democratic system of government
- free elections in April
- the separation of legislative, executive and judicial power and the election of the country’s leaders for no more than two terms
- respect for the rights of national minorities and guarantees for their equal status with the Romanians
- domestic and foreign policies based on the needs and interests of the human being
- full respect of human rights and liberties.

By comparison with the political ones, the economic problems were treated with a more hesitant and ambiguous approach:

- the reconstruction of the national economy with the purpose of obtaining efficiency and profitability
- the reduction of export
- support for small farm production
- the reorganization of trade to meet the daily needs of the population.

Nevertheless, the proclamation was the start that raised high hopes among the population. Additionally, its live broadcast transformed the birth of a new political power from a local event into a performance that could be watched by spectators from all over the world. The Romanian Television received messages of support from all over the world in the days to come, from the USA and the USSR to all the newly- formed political structures in Eastern and Central Europe. In the following days moral support was followed by material support. Large quantities of food, medicine, clothing, and medical equipment were sent to Romania.

<sup>111</sup> The images were transmitted the next day.

<sup>112</sup> Nestor Ratesh, *Romania: the Entangled Revolution*, (Praeger, The Washington Papers, 1991), 53.

<sup>113</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 187-240.

<sup>114</sup> Ratesh, *Romania*, 54.

Around the world, the press dedicated entire pages and sometimes even complete issues to the Romanian revolution and its heroes.

### *The impact*

In discussing the first reactions to the formation of the Council of the National Salvation Front and their discourse, my focus will be on the first appeal to its legitimacy. The main problem was that Iliescu and most of the others who formed the National Salvation Front were former members of the Romanian Communist Party. The question was whether they could really adapt to democracy and at the same time liberate themselves from their communist background.

In the case of Iliescu, the worry was increased by the mere fact that he was not just a simple party member, but one of its leading militants. During his first televised speeches, he seemed “infiltrated” by the communist imagery and way of speaking. Speaking in front of the cameras, he constantly used the designation “comrade”, and people addressed him with the same term. Moreover, in one of his interventions he tried to separate the Party and the communist ideology from Ceausescu’s personal tyranny.

“They<sup>115</sup> proclaimed themselves leaders, they proclaimed themselves representatives of the people, they proclaimed themselves communists. But they don’t have anything to do with the socialism or with the ideology of scientific communism. They defiled the name of the Romanian communist party, they defiled the memory of those who died for the principle of socialism in this country...”<sup>116</sup>

It can only be speculated whether the intention of Iliescu was to excuse and preserve the party. In any case, his vocabulary and his formulations reflected a state of facts that was in contradiction with the meaning of the revolution. And, even though, afterwards, he modified his style of address, there would still be many indications of Iliescu’s incapability of freeing himself of Communist categories and terminology.<sup>117</sup>

All those accused of collaborating with the former regime used as a defence strategy their personal disputes with Ceausescu in the last years of his rule and moreover, the relegations and sentences that followed. In his testimony from the book “The Romanian Revolution Live”, he remembers that: “For several years I was surveyed in different ways, but starting with the spring of 1989 this surveillance became very serious and obvious. Three Securitate crew were

incessantly following me, my wife and everyone who was coming to see us.”<sup>118</sup>

This approach did not however answer the main dilemma that was raised: were former communist leaders entitled to represent the ideals of an anti-Communist Revolution? As a result, a few weeks after the events, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 1990, the first serious challenge to the new power emerged. Thousands of people demonstrated in front of the building that was the headquarters of the new government. They clearly expressed their anti-Communist ideas and their opposition to a regime dominated by communists. Later on, from April till June 1990, in the University Square of Bucharest, a peaceful protest was organized against the predominance of former Communists in the new regime. The protest was violently repressed, but the problem remained on the public agenda and continues to be one of the major topics of political debates. It was best summarized by the motto of the anti-Communist manifestations: “The only solution: another Revolution!”

### *Conclusion*

This section illustrated two facets of the mediated political discourse from the days of the Romanian Revolution. On one hand, after a broadcast characterised by chaos and contradictions, the communiqué of the National Salvation Front represented the first official *information* on behalf of the new authorities. The demands and the expectations of the manifestants took the explicit form of a declaration transmitted to the country. After years of manipulation and censorship, the national television broadcasted the first authentic information.

In addition, through this announcement the new political power claimed *legitimation*. The leaders presented themselves as alternatives to the totalitarian rule. The audience was created in their discourses through heroic attributes and through the inclusive use of the pronoun “we”. The claim was that the new leaders represent the ideals of the revolutionary change and identified themselves with the people.

Consequently, the National Salvation Front was accused of “confiscating” the Revolution and of using it for political purposes. Moreover, another strong charge was that its legitimacy was debatable, since the new representatives took part in the old communist structures of power. The accusations were never answered properly and therefore, the legitimation and the veracity of the new political discourse are still subject to controversy.

### *Final conclusions*

What were the role and the consequences of the live coverage of the Romanian Revolution? My research question was answered at the beginning by the hypothesis claiming that the Television contributed to

<sup>115</sup> Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife, Elena.

<sup>116</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 46.

<sup>117</sup> In April 2005, for example, at one conference of the Social Democrat Party he introduced his succeeding speaker by the term “comrade.”

<sup>118</sup> Tatulici, *Revolutia Romana in direct*, 222.

the victory of the democratic forces by *informing* the population about the actual state of facts, by *mobilizing* civilians to participate in the rallies, and by *legitimizing* the anti-Communist uprising.

In order to verify this premise, I analyzed the transcripts of the Romanian Television broadcast using discourse analysis. The findings of the empirical research justify the restatement of the working hypothesis. The three assumed roles - information, legitimation and mobilization - have been confirmed, but a more detailed presentation of their effects is needed.

I. Firstly, the people were *informed about both the past* situation and the *current* one. During the last years of communism, the television was subject to strict censorship in Romania and its programming was mainly devoted to the personality cults of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu. The first real information about the consequences of Ceausescu's dictatorship appeared on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December through the speeches of the revolutionists. The delegitimation of the communist regime was realized through references to the political and economic situation of the country:

1. The political regime was a "sultanistic" dictatorship; the authorities disregarded the human rights discourse and punished any criticism.
2. The economic situation was a difficult one, the population lived in poverty, there was a slump on the internal market of food, and frequent heating, gas and electricity stoppages occurred.

The information about the unfolding situation started with the announcement of Ceausescu's departure from Bucharest. Then, details about the violent repression of the rally and the continuing street fights completed the picture. The positive reactions of the foreign political actors (ONU, USA and USSR) brought about the first argument for the acceptance of the new political discourse.

II. The process of *legitimation* had two main directions: the legitimation of the revolutionary actions and that of the new political discourse.

1. The former was based on the legitimation of the actions of the dissidents: the opponents of the regime were brought into the studio and introduced as heroes. Consequently, the uprising was presented as the only solution for ending the absolute rule of Nicolae Ceausescu.
2. The latter implied the justification of the democratic requests and the legitimation of the new leaders.

From my perspective, *the legitimation of the new political discourse* represented the core contribution to the victory of the revolution brought about by the Television broadcast. According to Max Weber's typology of the sources of legitimation, a combination of the three (traditional, charismatic, and legal) represented the basis for both the legitimation of the

new political power and the new political discourse. The traditional source made appeals to the well-known social categories and requested their mobilization. The charismatic one recalled the exceptional personal traits of those challenging the former regime. Finally, the legal source completed the image of a trustworthy system, requiring people to obey the law.

Through the means of the live broadcast, in only one day a complex procedure was schematized without delay.

III. The *mobilization* process had two targets: the civilians and the armed forces. The citizens of Bucharest were asked to participate in the rally from the Central Committee's square. Moreover, when the buildings of the National Radio and the Television were attacked by gun shots, the civilians were asked to defend them. Public appeals to humanitarian acts such as blood donation were repeated throughout the broadcast.

The appearance in the studio of the Army officials confirmed the solidarity of this institution with the revolutionists and the causes they defended. Later on, representatives of the Navy, the Aircraft, the Militia, and the Securitate made similar appeals. The forces of the Army and the Securitate were commended to cease-fire and to support the revolution. Finally, the defence of the public order was another request addressed to the armed forces.

To sum up, the three roles of the broadcasted Revolution - information, legitimation, and mobilization - contributed directly to the victory of the democratic forces. The Television was in those days the headquarters of the events. Moreover, the narration of the violent scenes, the launching of public appeals, and the recitation of official communiqués transformed the institution into the real center of power in the country. The live broadcast of the events transformed a revolt in Bucharest into a revolution at a national level. Aurel Munteanu, the first director of Free Romanian television, identified the critical role played by the media in those days by saying: "Television make the Revolution, television is the Revolution".<sup>119</sup>

My final considerations will point out the possible future continuation of this research. My study represents an empirical original work that was concluded with a model describing the role of the television in the Revolution. My intention was to fill up a niche in the literature surrounding the events of December 1989, since no previous material analyzed in a structured manner the role played by the Television. I claim that the final model can be tested in comparative studies discussing the role of the media in other revolutions, especially in recent times. As Jurgen

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<sup>119</sup> Martyn Rady, *Romania in Turmoil*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1992), 99.

Habermas <sup>120</sup> asserts, the modern revolutionary events “took place for the first time in the unorthodox space of an international arena of participating and partial observers, created by the uninterrupted presence of the electronic media.”

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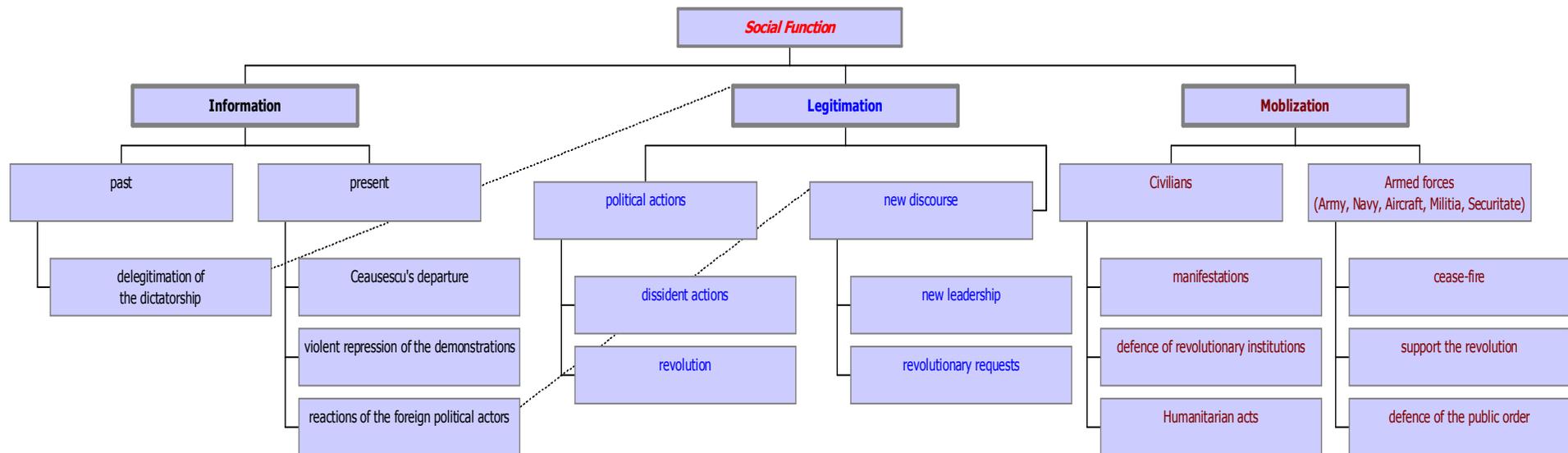
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<sup>120</sup> “What Does Socialism Mean today? The Rectifying Revolution and the Need for New Thinking on the Left” available at <http://www.newleftreview.net/Issue1179.asp?Article=01>.

Chart 1

## The Role of the Public Television during the Romanian Revolution



## Appendix A (for DO SMALL SETTLEMENT SCHOOLS PROVIDE EDUCATION OF INFERIOR QUALITY? THE CASE OF HUNGARY)

*DANIEL HORN*)

Table 4. Multinomial logit regressions

Academic	Odds ratios						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Small village	0.884** (0.049)	0.983 (0.058)	1.025 (0.061)	1.015 (0.060)	1.012 (0.060)	1.018 (0.060)	1.050 (0.063)
Town	1.749*** (0.116)	1.640*** (0.111)	1.277*** (0.091)	1.262*** (0.089)	1.565*** (0.195)	1.229*** (0.085)	1.237*** (0.084)
City	1.875*** (0.080)	1.311*** (0.054)	0.889 (0.070)	0.874* (0.068)	1.095 (0.118)	0.835** (0.059)	0.794*** (0.056)
Capital	2.649*** (0.194)	1.333*** (0.081)	0.902 (0.082)	0.894 (0.081)	1.105 (0.131)	0.826** (0.066)	0.652*** (0.051)
Primary, father		0.562*** (0.026)	0.565*** (0.026)	0.565*** (0.026)	0.563*** (0.026)	0.576*** (0.027)	0.587*** (0.028)
Voc. Technical, father		0.639*** (0.014)	0.641*** (0.014)	0.640*** (0.014)	0.640*** (0.014)	0.652*** (0.014)	0.658*** (0.014)
College, father		1.593*** (0.047)	1.590*** (0.047)	1.591*** (0.047)	1.595*** (0.047)	1.545*** (0.047)	1.533*** (0.047)
University, father		2.686*** (0.105)	2.678*** (0.105)	2.684*** (0.105)	2.678*** (0.104)	2.386*** (0.091)	2.273*** (0.086)
Primary, mother		0.569*** (0.020)	0.572*** (0.020)	0.572*** (0.020)	0.571*** (0.020)	0.582*** (0.020)	0.588*** (0.020)
Voc. Technical, mother		0.550*** (0.014)	0.551*** (0.014)	0.551*** (0.014)	0.551*** (0.014)	0.556*** (0.015)	0.562*** (0.015)
College, mother		2.022*** (0.049)	2.024*** (0.049)	2.025*** (0.049)	2.024*** (0.049)	1.945*** (0.049)	1.920*** (0.048)
University, mother		3.168*** (0.135)	3.166*** (0.135)	3.165*** (0.135)	3.170*** (0.135)	2.782*** (0.119)	2.633*** (0.112)
Unemployed, father		0.924*** (0.028)	0.926** (0.028)	0.926** (0.028)	0.924** (0.028)	0.939** (0.029)	0.944* (0.030)
Unemployed, mother		0.965 (0.025)	0.967 (0.025)	0.963 (0.025)	0.964 (0.025)	0.963 (0.026)	0.969 (0.026)
Educational aid		0.778*** (0.021)	0.779*** (0.021)	0.778*** (0.020)	0.778*** (0.020)	0.785*** (0.021)	0.786*** (0.021)
Female		2.170*** (0.043)	2.174*** (0.043)	2.173*** (0.043)	2.175*** (0.043)	2.193*** (0.043)	2.203*** (0.043)
Square root of distance			0.887*** (0.017)	0.886*** (0.017)	0.910*** (0.026)	0.934*** (0.017)	0.935*** (0.017)
Merged class						0.980 (0.046)	1.037 (0.048)
6/8 year long academic school						9.024*** (1.072)	2.566*** (0.350)

Ratio of teach. with university deg.							10.917***
							(1.983)
Ratio of teach. with no college deg.							0.805***
							(0.068)
No academic school, towns (interaction)					0.699**		
					(0.105)		
More than 2 types of voc. school					0.859**		
					(0.058)		
Commuting up				1.307***			
				(0.051)			
Observations	98385	98385	98385	98385	98385	98385	98385
Robust standard errors in parentheses							
* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%							
Coefficients for controlling missing dummy variables not shown							

Vocational Technical	Odds Ratios						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Small village	1.103*	1.036	1.032	1.026	1.028	1.071	1.076
	(0.057)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.053)	(0.053)
Town	0.922	0.934	0.971	0.962	1.053	0.919	0.931
	(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.100)	(0.051)	(0.053)
City	0.665***	0.888***	0.947	0.934	1.021	0.980	0.996
	(0.022)	(0.027)	(0.054)	(0.053)	(0.075)	(0.057)	(0.060)
Capital	0.372***	0.583***	0.622***	0.619***	0.671***	0.646***	0.665***
	(0.021)	(0.031)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.057)	(0.048)	(0.052)
Primary, father		2.098***	2.096***	2.095***	2.094***	2.083***	2.060***
		(0.073)	(0.073)	(0.073)	(0.073)	(0.073)	(0.072)
Voc. Technical, father		1.251***	1.250***	1.249***	1.249***	1.245***	1.242***
		(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
College, father		0.706***	0.707***	0.707***	0.707***	0.706***	0.707***
		(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)
University, father		0.630***	0.630***	0.632***	0.630***	0.627***	0.632***
		(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.052)
Primary, mother		2.748***	2.745***	2.744***	2.743***	2.721***	2.695***
		(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.079)	(0.078)
Voc. Technical, mother		1.751***	1.751***	1.751***	1.750***	1.749***	1.744***
		(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.041)
College, mother		0.668***	0.668***	0.668***	0.668***	0.668***	0.669***
		(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
University, mother		0.648***	0.648***	0.647***	0.648***	0.647***	0.650***
		(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.060)	(0.061)
Unemployed, father		1.357***	1.356***	1.356***	1.356***	1.355***	1.354***
		(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)
Unemployed, mother		1.388***	1.387***	1.384***	1.386***	1.383***	1.379***
		(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.031)
Educational aid		1.828***	1.828***	1.828***	1.827***	1.819***	1.816***

		(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.041)
Female		0.571***	0.571***	0.570***	0.571***	0.571***	0.571***
		(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Square root of distance			1.019	1.018	1.028	1.013	1.015
			(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.015)
Merged class						1.238***	1.192***
						(0.046)	(0.043)
6/8 year long academic school						0.711***	0.801
						(0.083)	(0.119)
Ratio of teach. with university deg.							0.814
							(0.167)
Ratio of teach. with no college deg.							1.895***
							(0.153)
No academic school, towns (interaction)					0.876		
					(0.100)		
More than 2 types of voc. school					0.945		
					(0.047)		
Commuting up				1.251***			
				(0.041)			
Observations	98385	98385	98385	98385	98385	98385	98385
Robust standard errors in parentheses							
* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%							
Coefficients for controlling missing dummy variables not shown							

Table 5. Marginal changes in predicted probabilities

Equation	1		2		3		4		5		6		7	
	Voc. training	Acad-emic												
Small village	0,032	-0,027	0,006	-0,005	0,004	0,003	0,003	0,002	0,004	0,001	0,009	0,000	0,009	0,006
Town	-0,065	0,118	-0,035	0,108	-0,016	0,050	-0,017	0,048	-0,016	0,090	-0,021	0,045	-0,020	0,045
City	-0,131	0,163	-0,030	0,060	-0,003	-0,019	-0,004	-0,021	-0,001	0,017	0,005	-0,032	0,009	-0,040
Capital	-0,232	0,288	-0,078	0,082	-0,058	-0,001	-0,058	-0,003	-0,057	0,037	-0,049	-0,019	-0,040	-0,058
Primary, father			0,171	-0,123	0,170	-0,121	0,169	-0,120	0,170	-0,122	0,163	-0,118	0,161	-0,113
Voc. Technical, father			0,057	-0,084	0,057	-0,082	0,056	-0,082	0,057	-0,083	0,054	-0,080	0,053	-0,077
College, father			-0,066	0,115	-0,066	0,114	-0,065	0,113	-0,066	0,115	-0,062	0,107	-0,062	0,104
University, father			-0,100	0,247	-0,099	0,245	-0,098	0,245	-0,100	0,246	-0,091	0,216	-0,089	0,202
Primary, mother			0,234	-0,134	0,234	-0,132	0,232	-0,131	0,234	-0,134	0,225	-0,130	0,224	-0,126
Voc. Technical, mother			0,131	-0,117	0,131	-0,116	0,130	-0,115	0,131	-0,117	0,126	-0,115	0,126	-0,111
College, mother			-0,082	0,174	-0,082	0,174	-0,081	0,173	-0,082	0,174	-0,077	0,164	-0,077	0,159
University, mother			-0,105	0,287	-0,105	0,286	-0,103	0,285	-0,105	0,287	-0,095	0,254	-0,093	0,238
Unemployed, father			0,055	-0,030	0,055	-0,029	0,054	-0,029	0,055	-0,030	0,052	-0,026	0,052	-0,025
Unemployed, mother			0,057	-0,023	0,057	-0,023	0,056	-0,023	0,057	-0,023	0,054	-0,023	0,054	-0,021
Educational aid			0,124	-0,074	0,124	-0,073	0,123	-0,072	0,124	-0,074	0,118	-0,071	0,119	-0,069
Female			-0,099	0,198	-0,099	0,198	-0,098	0,196	-0,099	0,199	-0,095	0,199	-0,096	0,199
Square root of distance ( $\pm 0,5$ unit change around the mean)					0,008	-0,023	0,008	-0,023	0,009	-0,019	0,005	-0,013	0,005	-0,013
Merged class											0,034	-0,014	0,026	-0,002
6/8 year long academic school											-0,135	0,513	-0,074	0,222
Ratio of teach. with university deg. ( $\pm 0,5$ unit change around the mean)													-0,131	0,437
Ratio of teach. with no college deg. ( $\pm 0,5$ unit change around the mean)													0,105	-0,068
No academic school, towns (interaction)									-0,005	-0,057				
More than 2 types of voc. school									-0,002	-0,025				
Commuting up							0,021	0,041						

Note: comparison category is large village parents with secondary school diploma, employed, no educational aid, male, not commuting, no merged class, no 6/8 year ac. school, distance and ratio of teachers are large village means.