

Nicolae Ceau°escu

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## Nicolae Ceau°escu

Romania, the country famously known for its vampire lore has more than Vlad Tepes to put on its roster of infamous citizens. Nicolae Ceau°escu has been said by many to be Romania's vampire dictator. Miraculously, he was born a Romanian country peasant, who managed to become the country's dictator. (Thomas A. Sipos, 2005)

Sadly, people in turmoil are easily led by a strong willed person who promises the world, who promises a golden era. Germany had Adolph Hitler and Russia had Joseph Stalin. In Romania's case Nicolae Ceau°escu was to eventually be the most feared and hated man in the country. Romania is located in the south east section of Europe, bordering Hungary, Serbia, the Ukraine, Moldova, and Bulgaria. The country's resources were depleted by the World Wars and its economy was in ruin. And, it had been a sovereign nation up until 1947, when the soviet influences of World War II had finally took hold and it became a communist nation. ("Early Life and Career", Wikipedia, 2005)

In the 1946, the communist party took eighty percent of the countries political vote. At this point Ceau°escu had been imprisoned a few times for being considered a dangerous communist. He continued to steadily rise through the ranks of the Communist Party of Romania as he got older. After his mentor Gheorghiu-Dej died, he took over has first secretary of the Romanian Communist Party. He eventually furthered his political power by declaring himself president of the state council and than president of Romania. His popularity was also increasing because of his independent views and opposing the Soviet Union supremacy. ("Leadership of Romania", Wikipedia, 2005)

His wife, Elena Petrescu was also a prominent political figure in the Romanian Communist Party as well. He gave her as much power as possible to keep other members

under tight control. Together, they made many changes to the Romanian way of life. One of the biggest changes they made was the decree of 1966. This decree banned all forms of birth control and abortion. It also punished people for not having children passed a certain age despite being married or not. Another part of the decree was giving benefits to mothers who had five or more children and giving the “golden package” to mothers of ten or more children. The mothers were called “heroine mothers” and were given cars, free transportation, a gold medal and other significant benefits. It also had a big impact on divorce by making it extremely difficult to obtain. Due to this decree, homelessness, street children, AIDS, STD’s and abandonment were on the rise. Ceau°escu’s regime refused to acknowledge the existence of the disease and therefore would not allow HIV testing. In today’s Romania, abandoned children, AIDS, and an overcrowding of the orphanage system is still a big issue. (“The 1966 Decree”, Wikipedia, 2005)

Ceau°escu also had a program to redesign Romania in his image. This program started in 1972 was called systematization. The program consisted of tearing down the traditional villages and historical buildings and rebuilding everything in a modern “communist” look. Another reason for destroying the villages was to push the population into closer areas and use the urban areas for industrialization. Over one-fifth of the capitol’s historical buildings were demolished. Today Romania is an odd mix of medieval, classical, art-deco, Communist style, and modern architecture. (“Leadership of Romania”, Wikipedia, 2005)

In order to increase his power and popularity, Ceau°escu created what is known as a personality cult. He used mass media to create a larger than life image. He wanted to be flattered and praised without question. Stalin and Hitler had the same policies but Ceau°escu was less extreme about how far he would make people go. He created nicknames for himself, such as “Conducãtor” (“Leader”) and “Geniul din Carpați” (“Genius of the Carpathians”). He made huge

posters, signs, and billboards portraying him as the loved father to the children of Romania. He even had a king's scepter made for himself. ("Personality Cult and Authoritarianism", Wikipedia, 2005)

During his reign, Ceau°escu borrowed heavily from the western nations. It seems he was not aware of the damages that this would cost his country. He borrowed more than \$13 billion dollars to fund his programs. To erase the country's debt he created a program that exported most of Romania's agricultural and industrial production. This caused a major shortage in the availability of food and general items to the people of Romania. This shortage lasted for nearly a decade. During this decade, Ceau°escu was often seen on television going into well stocked stores in an effort to convince the people of Romania that everything was going fine. Also, during this time, he was able to make changes to the nation's constitution so that Romania would never again be able to take foreign debts in the future. ("Foreign Debt", Wikipedia, 2005)



In 1978 one of Ceau°escu's two star generals, Ion Mihai Pacepa defected to the United States causing a blow to Ceau°escu's regime. He was a senior member of Romania's political police as well. While in America, Ion Mihai Pacepa wrote a book describing the inside secrets of the regime, Ceau°escu's business dealings with Arab terrorists, his espionage of American industry, and his attempts to rally political support from the west. Due to the defection, Romania's economic growth stopped. Ceau°escu's intelligence agency was infiltrated by foreign spies. His control of the country started to slip away after he failed to show that he can control his political staff. While in America, Ion Mihai Pacepa was stripped of his rank, properties, and sentenced to death. The Romanian Supreme Court did not agree with the president's decision

and canceled the death sentence and restored Pacepa's rank and property. ("The Pacepa Defection", Wikipedia, 2005)

By 1987, Ceau°escu's control started to go bad. It was becoming apparent he was either ignoring important issues or just becoming senile. His totalitarian control on every aspect of life was also making a bad situation worse. In 1989, some say that he was showing no sign of accepting the real situation of what state his nation was in. An example of this would be during TV appearances, people would hand him letters and petitions and he would just hand them to his security, not even taking a look at them. The people were discouraged to try to talk to him and that made the depression of the people even higher knowing that they did not have a good leader. ("Leadership Weaknesses", Wikipedia, 2005)

By the December of 1989, Ceau°escu's reign was at an end. There were violent riots in the nation's capitol, Bucharest and Timi°oara that led to the overthrow and public execution of Nicolae Ceau°escu and his wife. Ceau°escu was reelected in November, 1989 for another five years. This raised tensions even more as the country's people saw another five years of poverty and struggle. The riots that happened in Bucharest initially started in Timi°oara as a demonstration to remove a Hungarian preacher who was accused by the government of inciting ethnic hatred. The villagers surrounded his home for support and the military forces and police fired on them. This happened on December 17, 1989. Ceau°escu made the situation worse by leaving the country to go to Iran. His wife and other members of his staff had to crush the revolt. ("Revolution", Wikipedia, 2005)

On December 21, 1989 there was a mass meeting in the town square of Bucharest with the official cause being a show of support for Ceau°escu. Appearing before the crowd with his wife, Ceau°escu appeared disoriented and could not comprehend the situation. They failed to

control the crowd after they started booing and getting unruly and fled inside the Central Committee Building. The couple stayed there for two days before fleeing to the countryside. The country was in a state of panic as most people did not know exactly what was happening and there was no leader to guide them. The escape of the presidential couple lasted several days as they kept moving from place to place in the countryside. They had to abandon their aides,



helicopter, and eventually their car. The police caught them and handed them over to the army. They were sentenced to death for crimes of illegal gathering of wealth to genocide. They were publicly executed on Christmas day, three days after they fled.

They are buried in simple graves with false identities. (“The end of Ceau°escu”, Wikipedia, 2005)

Nicolae Ceau°escu was not out to change Romania for the better when he started his reign. He just wanted to be in control. His dictatorship was very different from other dictators as he was a leader far longer than most dictators, who only last at the longest 15 to 20 years. Ceau°escu’s reign lasted for 23 years. Ceau°escu and his wife died at an old age, which is also rare for most totalitarian leaders.



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