

## Romanian Communism

### Conference

SPEECH HELD AT THE OPENING OF THE SECOND ROMANIAN COMMUNISM CONFERENCE  
 (BUCHAREST, 15-16 MARCH 2012)

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to this conference on behalf of the Rule of Law Program South East Europe of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. Freedom, Justice and Solidarity are Christian Democratic values and as a Christian Democratic think tank we promote these values. Freedom and Justice only exist in democratic societies, in which human and civil rights are respected and in which the rule of law prevails.

This is why we happily support a conference on Romanian Communism for the second time. We want to contribute to a realistic and true description of that era in Romania in the history books, we want to defy those who want people to forget what communist rule meant for this country and we want to counter attempts to falsify history.

I would like to express my profound thanks to our partners, The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives and the Institute for History Nicolae Iorga.

We have common objectives:

- We want to develop research and educational activities aiming at disseminating accurate historical information about the repressive actions of the Securitate and of the entire communist regime, and their consequences on Romanian society
- We believe that it is important to disclose former agents and informal collaborators, as well as to expose the repressive actions of the former communist secret police in accordance with the rule-of law principles, and thus enabling lustration
- And we think that to ensure the free access of individuals to their personal files produced by the former Securitate during the period March 1945 to December 1989 is of high importance in order to raise awareness about the extent of communist repression and also to come to terms with the recent past.

That this work is as necessary as ever becomes clear if we look at the results of regular opinion polls about the perception of communism in the former socialist

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countries. In Romania in August 2010 61% said that communism was a good idea, in October 2010 this was the opinion of 59 % and in May 2011 there were again 61 % that shared that idea. On the question whether communist ideas after World War II were well or wrongly applied opinions are almost equally divided, 37 % say it was well applied, 38 % say it was wrongly applied.

I still find these results disturbing if not shocking. For me it is incomprehensible that a system that promotes the dictatorship of the proletariat, that stands for single party rule, that has everywhere where it was applied led to collective poverty and nowhere to collective prosperity can be perceived as a good idea.

I grew up in the Western part of Germany three kilometres from the Inner German Border. East Germans were not allowed to visit us but we could visit them so that I had the opportunity to compare the two systems. The difference could not have been bigger. In the West we had free media, we could freely express our opinion in public, we had democratic elections, and if someone thought that his constitutional rights had been violated by a public authority he had access to independent courts. And the vast majority lived in prosperity.

In the East police was everywhere. Everybody had two opinions about the same thing, one which he would utter in public and one which he would only share with family members or close friends. But still this was a risk as the Security Police also hired spouses and friends of people whom they suspected of being opponents of socialism. The media all told the same lies, elections were a farce, young people were forced to join the Communist youth organization, you had to accept the despotism of authorities and police forces,

shops were empty and especially inner cities in decay.

This all convinced me that it was necessary to work actively in politics and of course the party of my choice was one that clearly opposed communism.

Please forgive me if I am now mentioning a few facts about conditions in Romania under communist rule. I know for sure that each of you knows them but some people in this country and the same is true for all the countries of the former socialist camp - seem to have forgotten them or worse try to re-write history with the objective to deceive the young generation which knows communism only from what older people tell them. We must make sure that they don't get away with that.

I know that there are people who want to re-write history. They want to make people forget that no socialist regime could survive without a powerful and omnipresent secret police. In Romania the Securitate was everywhere, they employed more than 14, 000 official agents and there were between 400,000 and 700,000 unofficial collaborators. By comparison: in East Germany which had a population roughly three quarters of Romania, the secret police employed up to 200,000 unofficial collaborators and already that led to an atmosphere of general surveillance. In Romania like in all other socialist countries every form of opposition was brutally suppressed. People disappeared in psychiatric clinics or prisons like Jilava under inhumane conditions.

The people who want to re-write history want to make people forget the tragic consequences of decree 770. Ceausescu wanted to increase the population and forbade both contraceptives and abortions. But many desperate women tried

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to abort by primitive means – often unsuccessfully. Many handicapped and unwanted children were born and ended up in orphanages in Cighid, for example. There a selection – a word that sounds terrible in German ears – took place. Only those who were considered strong and healthy enough to be useful for the regime were adequately fed. Those who were handicapped or chronically ill – so called *irecuperabili*- were held like cattle. It was the objective to let them die as soon as possible.

And the people who want to re-write history want to make people forget that for ordinary citizens conditions were hard. In 1982 food was rationed, there were regulations for every city or district. In Galați for example every citizen was daily entitled to 300 g of bread and monthly to 1kg of sugar, 1kg of corn flour, 750 g of oil, 100 g of butter, 1 kg of flour, and 8-10 eggs. There were regions in which rations were slightly higher but still small. Meat was everywhere hard to find and if so very often only pigs feet, called Adidas by the people. Of course a big black market existed. The temperature in district heated flats was strangled to 12° C in winter, sometimes they broke down completely. The infant mortality rate was 26.9 % - the highest in Europe. With the exception of Saturday and Sunday TV programs were broadcasted only two hours per day, most programs were about Ceausescu. Petrol rations were reduced from 60 litres per car to 20 litres; on one Sunday only drivers who owned cars with even numbers were allowed to drive, on the other Sunday owners of cars with odd numbers.

(Source: Marius Stan 2008: "*Cu sacosa spre comunism. Programul stiitific de alimentatie rationala in Romania socialista.*", Coordonator Ruxandra Ivan: "*Transformarea socialista*".)

Fortunately it is difficult to make people forget that despite of all this, there was money for the construction of Casa Poporului, in which more than 20,000 workers were involved? To create space 40,000 flats, some of them in historic quarters were destroyed, a dozen churches, among them the Vacaresti Monastery, and three synagogues.

Please don't get me wrong. I am not talking about a specifically Romanian phenomenon. Also in my country some people paint a picture of history that has little in common with the reality that once existed.

I am still full of admiration for the people who stood up for freedom and democracy at the end of 1989 and toppled the communist regimes. Also we in Germany know that the fight in Romania was by far the hardest and we are full of the highest respect for those who risked and lost their lives in this country.

As a Christian Democratic foundation we stand for the basic values freedom, justice and solidarity. We believe in social market economy in which men are not degraded to mere economic units that produce and consume but in which the dignity of every individual is both respected and safeguarded. And we don't believe in so-called "socialist human rights" but in universal and inviolable rights, in civil liberties and pluralism.

Let me thank all those who prepared and organized this conference. Let me as a German thank you for including a discussion on resistance of members of the German minority in Romania in the agenda. Let me thank you who participate in the conference and let me express my wish to continue our cooperation in the future.