



Romania: The Entangled Revolution (The Washington Papers)

By Nestor Ratesh

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This volume offers a full account of the December 1989 revolution that toppled the Communist dictatorship of Nicolae Ceausescu in Romania. Based on the author's personal investigation and interviews, extensive screening of the Romanian and international press, and critical examination of sources and interpretations, it offers a full and objective analysis of a complex, often puzzling series of events. Nestor Ratesh explores the economic, social, and human disaster that led to the uprising, and then chronicles the seven days of the revolution from its inception in the western city of Timisoara to its climax in Bucharest on December 22, 1989, when Ceausescu fled the city. The bloody and confused aftermath is examined from different angles, with surprising details and telling portraits of the main players, some of whom the author knows personally.

Ratesh skeptically scrutinizes the revelations, hints, and rumors of conspiracies that reportedly either caused the revolution--or hijacked it. Evidence available so far points toward a genuinely spontaneous popular uprising during which large segments of the army and secret police slowly realized that the fall of the regime was imminent. They first blinked, then searched for ways to save themselves--forcing Ceausescu to flee and bringing into power both new and old politicians who represented change to the masses but maintained relative stability in the power structure. The paradox that an essentially anti-Communist revolution would produce a regime controlled by former Communists has dominated most of the developments since then. The book concludes by examining the ensuing months of dislocation and commotion. Clearly the December revolution remains unfulfilled, entangled in a myriad of contradictions, obstacles, intrigues, lies, rivalries, ineptitude, and plain wrongdoing.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Ratesh offers a snapshot of the Romanian revolution of 1989-90. As such, the book is similar to Timothy Garton Ash's *The Magic Lantern* (CH, Feb'91) which treated revolutions in other East European countries at the same time. Both books give a sense of actually being on the spot during revolutionary times. Ratesh (Radio Free Europe's Washington correspondent) briefly describes the 1989 revolution, key events in the destruction of the Ceausescu regime, and the efforts of the successor Iliescu leadership to pick up the pieces in the immediate postrevolutionary situation. He depicts unique aspects of the Romanian revolution (e.g., the execution of the dictator) as well as the continuing presence of former Communists at the highest levels of government after December 1989 and explores perplexing questions (e.g., whether the revolution was mass-based or elite-led). The book is particularly helpful in sorting out the rivalries among various leaders as well as among key organizations such as the military and Securitate. An important resource for those beginning more formal studies of the Romanian revolution. Footnotes but no bibliography. Students at all levels and general readers."-Choice

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"Ratesh has succeeded in the difficult task of bringing clarity and balance to the understanding of the often murky and emotional realities of the 1989 Romanian revolution. His facts are as abundant as they are reliable, and he seldom departs from them into the realm of speculation. Well written and structured, this book is clearly the best scholarly analysis of Eastern Europe's bloodiest anti-Communist uprising." - Michael Radu Resident Scholar Foreign Policy Research Institute (Philadelphia)

"Nestor Ratesh's volume is an engrossing, fast-moving, and well-researched account of the exciting days of the Romanian revolution, of what lay behind it, and of its aftermath. Ratesh probes the controversies as to whether this was a popular uprising, a Communist putsch, or a Soviet plot, and gives us his balanced conclusion. He ably describes the 'purgatory' through which Romania is now passing and offers valuable insights into the country's future."-Roger Kirk Adjunct Professor Georgetown University Former U.S. Ambassador to Romania

About the Author

NESTOR RATESH, formerly head of Radio Free Europe's Romanian Broadcasting Department and currently its Washington senior correspondent, is a native of Romania and a graduate of the Philosophy

School of the Bucharest University. Mr. Ratesh began his journalistic career as an editor of the Romanian News Agency. He is the author of numerous studies on Romania and U.S.-Romanian relations.

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