

**RFE-RL****RADIO FREE EUROPE** *Research*

RAD Background Report/135  
(Romania)  
27 July 1984

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE CEAUSESCU CLAN**

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Summary: Although Romania, as a communist country within the Soviet sphere of influence and authority, suffers from problems that are intrinsic to its social, political, and economic system and not solely attributable to the Ceausescu dynasty at its helm, the peculiar features of "personal totalitarianism" continue to attract the attention of observers. This paper attempts to sketch the careers of the main protagonists and to serve as a source of reference material for more analytical approaches.

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Nicolae Ceausescu. On 22 March 1965, after the death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Ceausescu took over command of the RCP; since then he has constructed for himself an image of infallibility and omnipotence. Stalin, Mao, and Tito may have served him as models, and he may be compared to Kim Il-song of North Korea, although Ceausescu himself would no doubt find any such comparison belittling. What foundation does this image have and how did Ceausescu go about constructing it?

Soon after his accession, Ceausescu did what all politicians do to establish and cement new authority: he brought his own followers into the Secretariat, expanded the number of those loyal to him on the Executive Committee, and sent packing older party leaders who might have challenged him. In the communist system, tight control over the party usually generates domination over government as well. Ceausescu wanted to be more than a chairman, he wanted direct authority over state affairs. Chivu Stoica as Chairman of the State Council lay in his way. Therefore, at the National Party Conference in December 1967, Ceausescu annexed his

position and right away started to expand the power of the State Council at the expense of the Council of Ministers. It became clear that Ceausescu preferred the rank of a head of state to that of a head of government.

His ambitions meant he needed more support, and he started to place family members in top party and government positions. As more people began to owe their position to Ceausescu's favor, so signs of dissent and resistance began to die out and Ceausescu's ambition of supremacy became reality by the end of the 1960s.

Ceausescu was born on 26 January 1918 in Scornicesti, in the county of Olt, as the third son in a large, poor, peasant family. At the age of 11, he wanted to learn the trade of a shoemaker and went to Pitesti as an apprentice to one Gabor, a well-known maker of fashion shoes for high society. Ceausescu did not stay for long and probably went on to Bucharest to join his elder sister Nicolina, who worked in a shoe factory. At the age of 15, in 1933, he joined the illegal Communist Youth Organization, and in 1936 he joined the Communist Party. He was sent as secretary of the Communist Youth to Prahova county. On account of his illegal communist activities, he was arrested several times and spent most of the next few years in various prisons.

After the coup d'etat on 23 August 1944, Ceausescu was released from the Tirgu Jiu internment camp, together with his mentor Gheorghiu-Dej. His credentials were well-suited to rapid advancement. He was named Secretary of the Communist Youth Organization and elected an alternate member of the Central Committee at the first National Conference of the Communist Party in October 1945. After the communist assumption of power at the end of 1947 and the congress held in February 1948, when the Communists absorbed the Social Democratic Party, he was elected a full member of the Central Committee of the new Romanian Workers' Party. For a short time, until March 1950, he was a Deputy Minister of Agriculture; during this period he is said to have been in charge of the collectivization drive in the Oltenia and Dobruja regions, and his direct involvement is said to have been very ruthless. He was then promoted to Major General and appointed Deputy Minister of the Armed Forces, serving under the Soviet-trained General Emil Bodnaras. Later he became chief of the Higher Political Directorate and was promoted to Lieutenant General and First Deputy Minister of the Armed Forces.

Ceausescu's rise in the party began after the purge of Ana Pauker and her associates in May 1952, when he became the CC secretary in charge of the Organizational Department, advancing to alternate member of the Politburo on 20 April 1954 and achieving full membership of the highest party body at the second party congress in December 1955, at the age of 37. His next advancement came in July 1957, after the removal of Iosif Chisinevski from the Secretariat and the ouster of Miron Constantinescu from the Politburo. It became clear that, after Gheorghiu-Dej, he was the second man in the party. At the 1960

party congress he was re-elected to Central Committee, the Secretariat, and the Politburo, and he became known as an advocate of greater independence in Romania's relations with other countries. He stressed this attitude in speeches at Brasov in June 1963, during the visit of a Soviet delegation headed by Podgorny, and at the crucial Central Committee plenum in April 1964.

The ninth party congress in July 1965 (originally the Third Romanian Workers' Party Congress) was dominated by Ceausescu, who, after Gheorghiu-Dej's death, was elected Secretary-General. He had the party revert to its original name, the Romanian Communist Party, and renamed the People's Republic as the Socialist Republic of Romania. He also succeeded in pushing aside Gheorghe Apostol, Chivu Stoica, and, perhaps his most dangerous enemy, Alexandru Draghici. This maneuver was made easy for him, because he had inherited from Gheorghiu-Dej a party used to the domination of one man.

There followed a period in which, in order to strengthen his power, Ceausescu created new bodies, making himself their head. After the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact troops, in which Romania did not take part, the Front of Socialist Unity was formed<sup>1</sup> and the Defense Council the following year,<sup>2</sup> with Ceausescu as chairman and "the supreme commander of the Romanian Army." In the years that followed, Ceausescu projected himself as a world statesman, notably by frequent visits abroad, including the West. While maintaining a neutral position in the Sino-Soviet dispute, his visit to China in 1971<sup>3</sup> was the cause of some tension in his relations with the Soviet Union.

Ceausescu reached the culmination of his ambitions in March 1974, when he was elected President of the Republic, the first president to hold, as the official picture duly showed, a scepter as a symbol of his authority. The role made for administrative convenience, allowing him, for example, to preside over meetings of the Council of Ministers without holding the title of Prime Minister. It was rumored that Emperor Hirohito of Japan had been the immediate cause of the change. He had refused to receive Ceausescu and his son Nicu with all the honors due to a governing head of state, so the first official visit was then postponed.<sup>4</sup> After Ceausescu had been made president, however, Emperor Hirohito received him and his son with all the necessary pomp.<sup>5</sup>

#### Ceausescu's Career

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| 1933 | Joined the Communist Youth Union.                     |
| 1936 | Joined the illegal Communist Party.                   |
| 1944 | Became Secretary of the Communist Youth Union.        |
| 1945 | Alternate member of the RCP Central Committee.        |
| 1948 | Full member of the CC of the Romanian Workers' Party. |

- 1949-1950 Deputy Minister of Agriculture.
- 1950 Made Major General and appointed Deputy Minister of the Armed Forces.
- 1952 CC Secretary in charge of the Organizational Department.
- 1952-1954 Chief of the Higher Political Directorate of the Armed Forces, Lieutenant-General, and First Deputy Minister of the Armed Forces.
- 1954 CC Secretary and alternate member of the Politburo.
- 1955 Full member of the Politburo.
- 1965 (March) First Secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party.
- 1965 (July) Secretary-General of the RCP CC.
- 1967 Chairman of the State Council.
- 1968 Chairman of the Socialist Unity Front.
- 1969 Chairman of the Defense Council and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.
- 1970 Chairman of the Supreme Council on Social-Economic Development.
- 1974 President of the Republic.
- 1977 Chairman of the National Council of Working People.

Ceausescu's Wife, Elena Ceausescu. She was born on 7 January 1919 (an official date made public only a few years ago, she may be older), the daughter of an innkeeper in Petresti. She joined the party in 1937 before which nothing is known about her revolutionary activities, except that on 1 May 1939, during popular festivities, she was elected "queen" of the parade. It was on this occasion that Ceausescu met her.<sup>6</sup>

In the early 1960s she was reported to be secretary of the party committee of the Bucharest Central Institute of Chemical Researches, and, when Ceausescu took over the party leadership in March 1965, she was listed as the institute's director.<sup>7</sup> In December of the same year, she was elected a member of the newly established National Council of Scientific Research, and in September 1966 she was awarded the Order of Scientific Merit First Class.

Since 1968 she has risen rapidly to political prominence. She frequently accompanied her husband on official visits abroad, and it was during the state visit to China in June 1971,<sup>8</sup> where



she noticed how Mao's wife had her own position of real power in the state, that Elena's remarkable rise was given a Chinese fillip. In July 1971 she was elected a member of the Central Commission on Socio-Economic Forecasting, and in July 1972 she became a full member of the RCP CC. She was elected a member of the Executive Committee in June 1973, after being proposed by Emil Bodnaras. In November 1974, at the 11th party congress, she was made a member of the (renamed) political executive committee and in January 1977 became a member of the highest party body, the Permanent Bureau of the Political Executive Committee. In March 1980, she was made a First Deputy Prime Minister.<sup>9</sup>

Since March 1974 Elena Ceausescu has been a member of the Romanian Academy's Section for Chemical Sciences.<sup>10</sup> It is rumored that, at the time when she wanted to receive her doctorate from the Bucharest Faculty of Chemistry, she met with strong opposition from the great Romanian chemist Costin D. Nenitescu, the dean of the faculty. She was forced instead to present her thesis to Cristofor Simionescu and Ioan Ursu at the University of Iasi, where she met with complete success. After her glorification, Prof. Nicolae Tipei, at present living in the USA, sent her a letter, renouncing his academic title.<sup>11</sup>

The personality cult surrounding Ceausescu has expanded over the last few years to include his wife Elena, too. She now shares her husband's limelight, receives heads of foreign scientific or technical delegations, taking precedence on such occasions over any high officials in Romania. She now accompanies her husband on foreign trips and on his various internal tours as well. This year, her 65th birthday was marked by special ceremonies in which her career as a scientist and politician was stressed.<sup>12</sup> Articles of praise were published, glorifying her "more than 45 years of revolutionary activity" and her new scientific work on the "Stereospecific Polymerization of Isoprene."

It is generally believed that Elena Ceausescu's celebrated competence in science is less than genuine. During her time as Director of the Central Institute of Chemical Research, she took the floor at several conferences and meetings but spoke on general matters. Whenever a specific scientific theme arose, she would defer to "Comrade Engineer" X or Y, who then had to explain what had to be done. Elena Ceausescu is tough, pitiless, hard-headed, and has the reputation of paying no attention to other people's needs.

#### Elena Ceausescu's Career

- 1963 Chemical engineer, Secretary of the Party Committee of the Bucharest Central Institute of Chemical Research.
- 1965 Director of the Central Institute of Chemical Research. Elected in December the same year a member of the newly established National Council of Scientific Research.

- 1968 Member of the Bucharest City Party Committee.
- 1971 Member of the Central Commission on Socio-Economic Forecasting.
- 1972 Full member of the RCP CC.
- 1973 Member of the Executive Committee of the RCP CC.
- 1974 Titular member of the Romanian Academy.
- 1975 Chairman of the section for Chemical Industry with the Supreme Council for Social and Economic Development.
- 1977 Member of the Standing Bureau of the Political Executive Committee of the RCP CC.
- 1979 Chairman of the RCP CC's Commission for Cadres. In June appointed Chairman of the (renamed) National Council for Science and Technology.
- 1980 First Deputy Prime Minister.
- 1982 Vice Chairman of the Supreme Council for Social and Economic Development.
- 1983 Vice Chairman of the National Command for Land Improvement.

The Youngest Son, Nicu Ceausescu. Born in 1950, he has been First Secretary of the Communist Youth Union since December 1983, an office that automatically carries a government post as Minister of Youth.<sup>13</sup> Although only in his 30s, he became a full member of the Central Committee of the RCP in 1982 and also holds the highest civilian medal, the Order of Labor, First Class. His frequent visits abroad, either with or without his father, do not always arise from official duties as Chairman of the UN Consultative Committee for Youth; he also travels as his father's representative. He has been sent on several diplomatic missions abroad, and there is much speculation that he is being groomed to succeed his father. He is a graduate of the Bucharest Polytechnical Institute and has been known to refer to himself as "doctor" in scientific publications. He is reputed to be a playboy.

#### Nicu Ceausescu's Career

- 1973 Vice Chairman of the Union of Communist Students' Associations.
- 1975 Member of the Bureau of the Communist Youth Union.
- 1976 Secretary of the Communist Youth Union.
- 1978 Member of the Radio and TV National Council.

- 1979 Alternate member of the RCP CC.
- 1980 Secretary of the Grand National Assembly.
- 1981 Chairman of the UN Consultative Committee for youth, Member of the National Council on World Peace, Vice Chairman of the National Committee for the UN youth International Year.
- 1982 Full member of the RCP CC.
- 1983 Refers to himself as a "doctor" in scientific publications. In December elected First Secretary of the Communist Youth Union and Minister of Youth.

The Adopted Son, Valentin Ceausescu. His date of birth is not known. (He was probably born around the end of World War II.) He is believed to be the child of Moldavian peasants, who during the drought period in 1946 in their region were unable to take care of him. At the appeal of the Central Committee of the communist party, several members of the party adopted Moldavian children. In 1969, Valentin was a third-year student at the Imperial Collage of Science and Technology in London. In April 1972 he accompanied Prof. Ioan Ursu, at that time Chairman of the State Commitee for Nuclear Energy, on his visit to the European Center for Nuclear Research at Geneva, and he was listed as a researcher with the Romanian Institute for Nuclear Physics.<sup>4</sup> Valentin is presently employed as a Scientific Secretary with the Romanian Institute of Nuclear Physics in Bucharest.

The Daughter, Zoia Elena Ceausescu. There is little information about Ceausescu's daughter. She graduated from the Bucharest School of Mathematics and Mechanics; she has a doctorate and is now director of the Mathematics Institute and a senior research associate with the National Institute for Scientific and Technological Advancement. With her brother Valentin she was awarded somewhat minor awards in May 1983. Valentin received the Order of Scientific Merit, Second Class, and she the Order of Labor, Second Class. Neither of them appears to hold any political office. Nicu is evidently the favorite son in this respect. Some recent reports suggest that both Zoia and Valentin may, however, be gaining ground in the politics of science. Valentin was in Britain on a scientific visit and had talks with Malcolm Rifkind, Minister of State in the Foreign Office.<sup>15</sup> Zoia was recently chairman of the international conference on the Theory of Mathematics Operators in Bucharest.<sup>16</sup>

The Oldest Brother, Marin Ceausescu. Born in 1915, he is a trade councilor with the Romanian Embassy in Vienna. In September 1972 he was listed for the first time as the director of the Romanian stand at the 14th Brno International Engineering Fair and was then moved to Vienna as chief of the Romanian Trade Agency in April 1974.

Ilie Ceausescu, a Brother and Military Historian. He graduated in August 1964 from the Bucharest Faculty of History and in August 1969 was listed as a Doctor of History. In July 1975 he was referred to as Major General and Deputy Secretary of the Higher Political Council at the Ministry of National Defense in charge of the party organization there. In March 1980 he was elected Vice Chairman of the Grand National Assembly's Defense Commission, and two years later he was promoted to Lieutenant General. In April 1983 he was appointed Deputy Minister of National Defense and Secretary of the Higher Political Council. He is a prolific author of articles and books on Romanian history.

Another Brother, Ion Ceausescu. He has been the First Vice Chairman (with the rank of a Minister Secretary) of the State Planning Commission since 1983. In September 1967 he was identified as an agronomist and director of the Institute for Utilization and Industrialization of Vegetables, Fruits, and Potatoes. By August 1969 he had already been appointed Secretary-General at the Ministry for Domestic Trade, holding the chief position in the Department for the Industrialization of Vegetable and Fruit Growing. In November 1969 he was moved to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry as Secretary-General, and in May 1972 he was appointed Deputy Minister at the (renamed) Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry, and Water Conservation. It is said that before he became known as an official he had been working at a farm owned by the Central Committee on the former royal estate near Bucharest. The head of the farm was a man named Enciu, who became Ion Ceausescu's father-in-law.

A Brother with a Middle Name, Nicolae Andruta Ceausescu. He had to adopt his father's name, Andruta, in order to distinguish himself from the chief of the clan. In the early days of the family rise he is believed to have been an officer with the security forces but was mentioned in the Romanian press in April 1972 as being a consul with the Romanian General Consulate in Kiev. He has now been promoted from Major General to Lieutenant General in the Ministry of the Interior. *Le Monde* (dated 1 March 1984) identified him as rector of the Academy of the Ministry of the Interior.

A Brother and Journalist, Florea Ceausescu. He has never been more than a correspondent of *Scinteia*, the party's daily.

A Sister, Elena Barbulescu. She is a school inspector in Olt County. Formerly she taught history at a high school in Scornicesti, where she was the headmistress.

Vasile Barbulescu is from Scornicesti and the husband of Ceausescu's sister Elena. He was referred to for the first time in January 1960 as chairman of the Scornicesti agricultural production complex. Later, he was listed as head of the Scornicesti



local party committee. Little is known about him or his education. Nevertheless, in November 1974, at the 11th party congress, he came to political prominence, being elected an alternate member in the Central Committee and achieving full membership in November 1979. He is Hero of Socialist Labor<sup>17</sup> and Chairman of the Scornicesti Unified Council of Agricultural Cooperatives.<sup>18</sup> In March 1980 he was elected Vice Chairman of the Grand National Assembly's Commission for Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Administration, and in February 1981 he was made a Vice Chairman of the National Union of Agricultural Production Cooperatives.

Maria Manescu, Another Sister? Married to Manea Manescu, Maria became known in December 1973 as a Vice Chairman of the Romanian Red Cross Society and has been a member of the National Council of Women since April 1978.

There is no evidence that Maria Manescu is indeed Ceausescu's sister. Michel P. Hamelet, in his book on Nicolae Ceausescu, published in Paris in 1971, states that a sister Maria, who was a long-time worker at an electromagnetic factory in Bucharest, is married to an engineer. Therefore, both Maria and Manea Manescu's belonging to the Ceausescu clan is doubtful in spite of persistent speculations to this effect.

Manea Manescu himself was born on 9 August 1916 in Braila. His father was a party veteran from Ploiesti, who in the early 1920s supported the transformation of the socialist party into the communist party. It is rather strange that he has now been brought back into the limelight, since he had already retired. In 1944, after the coup d'etat, he worked together with Ceausescu in the Communist Youth Union. In 1951 he was appointed head of the Department of Economics at Bucharest University and Director General of the Central Directorate of Statistics; he became a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy in 1955 and held the office of Minister of Finance from 1955 to 1957. He came to greater prominence in the year that Ceausescu took over the party leadership. In July 1965, at the ninth party congress, he was elected an alternate member of the Executive Committee and a Secretary of the Central Committee and most probably was put in charge of economic activities; in December 1967 he was appointed Chairman of the Economic Council. He was promoted to full membership of the Executive Committee in December 1968 and, after holding various positions in the party and government, in March 1973 became Prime Minister until 1979, when he had to retire because of ill health. At present he is Vice Chairman of the State Council and Vice Chairman of the Supreme Council for Economic and Social Development. In his capacity as a member of the State Council, he went on several trips abroad.

Gheorghe Petrescu, brother of Ceausescu's wife Elena and presently a Deputy Prime Minister, was first mentioned in the Romanian press in February 1957 as a deputy for the Dragasani-Olt constituency. Since then his career has advanced handsomely. At

the ninth party congress in July 1965, he was elected a member of the Central Auditing Committee. In August of the same year, he was mentioned as a section chief of the Central Committee and identified a year later as chief of the party organization section.<sup>19</sup> He was made a full member of the Central Committee in April 1967. When the Oltenia region needed a new First Secretary he was given the job in September 1967.<sup>20</sup> In 1968 Ceausescu reorganized the administrative division of the country and, Gheorghe Petrescu became head of Dolj County and chairman of the county's people's council.<sup>21</sup> In February 1971 Petrescu became Chairman of the National Union of Agricultural Production Cooperatives, but two years later he inexplicably moved back to first secretary of Dolj County. His next position was that of State Secretary with the Ministry of Machine-Building Industry in January 1977. A couple of years later, he was upgraded, becoming Minister State Secretary of the Machine Tool Industry, Electrical Engineering, and Electronics.<sup>22</sup> For a short time he was Romania's standing representative with the CMEA in Moscow.

Poliana Cristescu, Chairman of the Pioneers' National Council, is a recent newcomer to the clan. People say she is the wife of "Crown Prince" Nicu Ceausescu. Her sudden rise and importance is not to be overlooked. She was reported in January 1982 to be Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth Union and the same year in December she was elected an alternate member of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist party. She praised Nicolae Ceausescu in an article published by the weekly *Flacara* in February 1983 and a couple of months later was made Chairman of the Young Pioneers' National Council.<sup>23</sup> She visited China and North Korea in October 1983 on behalf of the pioneers. In the same capacity she subsequently visited Tunisia and Egypt.<sup>24</sup> No official statements about her martial status have been noted.

Ilie Verdet is another Ceausescu man who is rumored to be related to him, but no confirmation or even circumstantial evidence can be found. He is a CC Secretary in charge of the economy.

Cornel Burtica is said to be one of Ceausescu's nephews, but the relationship cannot be validated. He fell from favor in the autumn of 1982, after having been Minister of Foreign Trade since 1978 and having held other important positions in the party.

Ion Ionita is also alleged to be a nephew of Ceausescu. The impressive progress of his career culminated with his appointment as Minister of the Armed Forces (later renamed Minister of National Defense) in 1966. He was, however, relieved from this position in June 1976.

### Conclusions

Despite the fact that nepotism in the communist world is not such an uncommon factor and everywhere the party leaders have given their family members privileged positions, Ceausescu is something special. Since taking over the leadership he has never made a secret of his familial favoritism. In addition to his wife Elena and son Nicu, other relatives were swiftly promoted to key state and party positions. His brothers are strategically placed in the army, security, planning, agriculture, and even the mass media. There may be other in-laws and distant relatives who are still not known as such. For example, who is Gheorghe Ceausescu, listed since June 1984 as chairman of the Bucharest Legal Councilors. Who is Constantin Ceausescu, formerly a deputy minister and now head of the post, radio, and television directorate in the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications?

In a way, the case of Elena Ceausescu is the most striking. Her pictures are everywhere next to her husband's. He rarely leaves the country on official visits without her. During their last official trip to Poland in June 1984, the two Ceausescus were seen in officially released pictures talking to Jaruzelski and Jablonski, with Romanian Prime Minister Constantin Dascalescu nowhere in sight. Could it have been a signal? Elena Ceausescu ranks third in the government but second in the party leadership. It will be interesting to watch possible changes at the 13th party congress that has now been scheduled to take place this autumn.

On balance, however, one should not overvalue the familial aspect of communist rule in Romania. An oligarchy need not be bound by blood relations. In a sense, all those who play Ceausescu's authoritarian game are related.

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- 1 *Scinteia*, 20 November 1968.
- 2 *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 32, 14 March 1969.
- 3 *Scinteia*, 1 to 10 June 1971.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 24 May 1972.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 5 to 10 April 1972.
- 6 *Actuel*, no. 27, January 1982.

- 7 *Informatia Bucurestiului*, 21 June 1965.
- 8 *Scinteia*, 1 to 10 June 1971.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 30 March 1980.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 2 March 1974.
- 11 *Actuel*, no. 27, January 1982.
- 12 See Romanian Situation Report/3, *Radio Free Europe Research*, 14 February 1984, item 2.
- 13 *Ibid.*, no. 1, 7 January 1984, item 4, and *Scinteia*, 13 December 1983.
- 14 *Scinteia*, 28 April 1972.
- 15 Radio Bucharest, 16 June 1984.
- 16 *Scinteia*, 16 June 1984.
- 17 *Romania Libera*, 29 July 1978.
- 18 *Scinteia*, 1 May 1982.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 9 September 1966.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 26 September 1967.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 18 February 1968.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 26 January 1977.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 21 May 1983.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 1 and 4 October 1983.

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