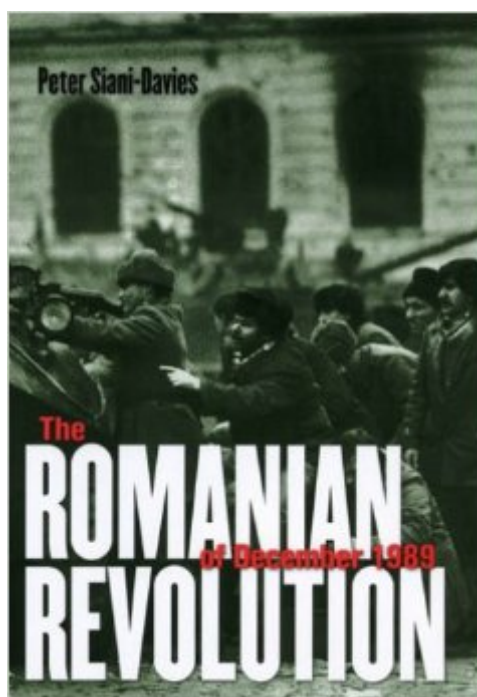


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The Romanian Revolution Of December 1989



Synopsis

The Romanian Revolution of 1989 was the most spectacularly violent and remains today the most controversial of all the East European upheavals of that year. Despite (or perhaps because of) the media attention the revolution received, it remains shrouded in mystery. How did the seemingly impregnable Ceausescu regime come to be toppled so swiftly and how did Ion Iliescu and the National Salvation Front come to power? Was it by coup d'État? Who were the mysterious "terrorists" who wreaked such havoc on the streets of Bucharest and the other major cities of Romania? Were they members of the notorious securitate? What was the role of the Soviet Union? Blending narrative with analysis, Peter Siani-Davies seeks to answer these and other questions while placing the events and their immediate aftermath within a wider context. Based on fieldwork conducted in Romania and drawing heavily on Romanian sources, including television and radio transcripts, official documents, newspaper reports, and interviews, this book is the most thorough study of the Romanian Revolution that has appeared in English or any other major European language. Recognizing that a definitive history of these events may be impossible, Siani-Davies focuses on the ways in which participants interpreted the events according to particular scripts and myths of revolution rooted in the Romanian historical experience. In the process the author sheds light on the ways in which history and the conflicting retellings of the 1989 events are put to political use in the transitional societies of Eastern Europe.

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Customer Reviews

I was 11 years old during the revolution and I vividly recall standing next to my father in the public

square in front of our town's communist party headquarters on December 22 or 23. Since then, I've read about a handful of book-length accounts of the revolution, though only in Romanian. I was pleased to find this work on , as most other English-language treatments of the events seem to be found only in academic journals or are otherwise difficult to obtain. The book's seven chapters deal with: the general picture of Romanian society in the 1980's (1), the spark and initial days of the revolution (2), the street fighting that occurred after the Ceausescus' flight (3), the thorny issues of who caused the deadly fighting and whether any political conspiracies triggered the revolution (4), the establishment of a new political regime and its many fractures (5 and 6), and a theoretical discussion of how to categorize and write about the events of late '89-early '90 in Romania. The author keeps a balanced stance throughout (which is particularly important in treating this subject, as more than half of Romanians nowadays do not consider that a "true" revolution took place in '89 and a variety of descriptions of the events are in circulation). The account of the events of the revolution themselves (chapters 2 and 3) make for a particularly stick-to-the-facts, yet lively, read. All in all, the book provides a great overview of the revolution and all of its social and political aspects, and pays particular attention to those thorny issues that are, as of yet, unresolved for the vast majority of Romanians.

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