

# MARTOR



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## The miners on the miner riots.

January-june 1990



### 1. The miner riot<sup>1</sup> in January 1990

I still remember that we took part in the first riot, that during winter time and it was very cold. I even remember that it was very cold. As far as we could find out... the people in Bucharest were going to break and steal... and in front of the Parliament, or anyway I can't tell exactly the place because I don't know Bucharest very well, Iliescu showed up and thanked us. As a matter of fact we had been sent by the company. We had been told that we had to go to Bucharest.

*Weren't you surprised?*

Of course that we were surprised and we kept on asking ourselves why but we could also watch on TV the events taking place in Bucharest. But everything had been set up by our leaders and not by the foremen because they had little interest in sending us to Bucharest. But, if we received an order, we said that we had to obey it. And I remember that we went to Petroșani by car and in Petroșani we stepped in the train and we went. The trains weren't waiting for us in the train station but after half an hour they gave us a special train to go to Bucharest.

*And didn't that seem weird to you?*

Yes, it did, since I was sitting there asking myself: what are we going to do there? Why do they take us there?

*But hadn't you been told that they were going to take you there for this or for the other?*

Well, as I said before, the times were quite confusing... This is how I remember it, taking into account what we also saw on TV. And I know that shops were broken into in Bucharest, at least that's what I heard and that democracy was in danger. And I also know that mister Iliescu summoned all the good men.

*But do you consider yourself a good man?*

I think so.

*And when he summoned all the good men, would you have gone?*

I wouldn't have gone on my own account!

*But what if you had been on leave?*

If I had been on leave I would have carried on with my stuff...

*Yet, as a good man, because the president appealed to the good men, wouldn't you have gone?*

I personally think that it would have made no sense and now I wonder why they asked us to go to Bucharest because they could have taken care of their problems alone. Still, I believe that they must have talked to the big bosses here in The Valley and this is how they organised the departure.

*And what do you think, did they set up a real democracy back then?*

No, no. Because afterwards things went

worse than before and the situation was tougher, especially after the major redundancies.

*But what do you think now: did the miners have anything to win or to lose after the riots?*

I think they had more to lose.

*Let's come back to the first riot. How did things really go in Bucharest?*

Well, we got there in the morning and by night we were already back. But the first thing we did was to go in front of the Parliament or anyway some building, perhaps in Victoria Square and mister Iliescu showed up and he thanked the miners for being a force in the country and stuff like that. But I know that the entire demonstration had been peaceful. Even from the north railway Station we had been expected by a couple of cars with milk, three with bread and they shared all of this with us. I know that there hadn't been destructions or things like that at that moment. I also remember that there were people who were taking us to their hearts. And almost everybody was saying: "Well done, miners!" and "Well done for having come to help us get rid of the scum". Yet, after this riot, I never took part in any other.

*Why is that?*

Because I know very well what I had to go through during the first one. When we got to Bucharest, in front of the Parliament, the miners were eager to get a closer look to mister Iliescu and I, being shorter and caught in the crush got stepped over. I cannot say they hurt me because the soil was yellow and soft. They couldn't step aside because they were very many and I also don't believe that they stepped on me deliberately... it's just that coming so many from behind and being such a big group they couldn't walk either on the left or on the right, so they had no space to move.

But then I said to myself "I will never set my foot on this ground ever again" and it has been so. When I got back home I was covered in yellow soil and my back kind of ached. Arriving at Vulcan I stepped off the bus in the station. But I didn't know what to do to get back home sooner.

I was wearing the overalls but I was covered in yellow soil and my neighbours knew I was no drunkard to fall down God knows where. So I started walking between the blocks and I didn't even use the front door to get in, I used the back door.

*But didn't you feel sorry for missing the second riot in June 1990 which was of bigger proportions than the one in January 1990?*

No, I wasn't sorry. This was also because someone had to stay at work to keep an eye on the appliances.

*Yet, hadn't you been forced to take part in that manifestation?*

Yes, of course. I didn't want to go anyway and I talked to a foreman to let me stay in the mine. And he was more understanding, saying that someone had to stay at work. And that was in fact true, since the people going to Bucharest were going to put things in order for us too and those at home were going to watch over the appliances for them. Yet, in spite of the fact that I had to stay in the mine as it had been decided I was dragged out of there by some of my colleagues.

Still, I took off my glow lamp and I wanted to keep a low profile so as not to be seen. Then, a miner, one who was taller and around 40, saw me and took me out to go with the others and pushed me towards the bus. But I said that I had to stay at work to keep an eye on the appliances and if something may have gone wrong, I would have answered for it.

And I blocked the bus door with my hand, saying that I didn't want to go. But this miner had a scoop shank and he hit me so hard with it that I almost lost my conscience. I shall remember this for the rest of my life. And when he raised the shank to hit me again, I finally stepped in the bus. And that's how we got to Petroșani at the Industrial Complex.

But, the person who hit me asked another two miners to watch me in case I wanted to run away. And in the Marketplace, in Petroșani, I told them that I had to go and buy cigarettes but,

more than that, I needed to run away. But they came with me, bought the cigarettes and came back.

*And how did you get rid of them?*

Actually I didn't. I kind of had some chaperones with me who had to take care of me not leaving the gathering in front of the Industrial Complex. I don't know for how long we had to stay there because some of the miners left the place, heading towards Bucharest. In the end, as people were bunched there, I somehow managed to get away. And, together with a colleague, we hitchhiked and we managed to get in a car which took us to Vulcan.

*And did you go to the mine?*

No, I went home, spent a couple of hours there and then went back to the enterprise. And there I changed shifts with the colleague who had to stay overtime since I didn't manage to come back in time. Then I did his shift as well.

*But afterwards, weren't you angry with those who had forced you to go with them?*

No, I wasn't, because I also took into consideration their judgement. I told myself that they weren't actually thinking too much because somebody had to stay behind to take care of the appliances and they hadn't even given it a thought. And I had similar problems once. It was another manifestation of this kind, a strike, not a riot. Anyway, people were supposed to go to the Industrial Complex, in Petroşani. I was working on the second shift and a boy, a miner, seeing me with the lamp in my hand said: "Hoy, you're coming with us!" And I said: "No!" Then, a guy called Radu, grabbed me and started to say: "Mates, this hasn't taken part in any of our manifestations!" And he started pulling my clothes towards his sector, where their group was gathered. But then, a colleague in my sector, coming out of our sector, grabbed his neck, hit him against the wall and said: "What's your problem with him?" and this other mate replied: "Well, he has never taken part in any manifestation! Let him join us!" But my colleague told him to mind his own business and then this

other guy let go of me.

*What did you expect from the Revolution in December?*

Once with the Revolution, I hoped for a better life, for an easier job, because eight hours in the mine is quite tough and when we shifted to six I saw it as a progress, meaning something easier for us, but then it had been even more difficult especially in what regards the provision with materials. During Ceauşescu's time, people were saying that we had little or no freedom, but I say we had certain liberties because after work I was able to do, not everything I wanted but at least my things at home. Now, even if we have more freedom, we have nothing to live on.

(B.V- former putter at E.M Petroşani)

## 2. The Miner riot from June 1990.

*How was it to be a union leader immediately after 1989 ?*

It was very difficult to be a union leader immediately after 1989 because you had to deal with many problems which never ceased to come up. I had always tried to deal with the problems not by myself but together with the members of the Union Council.

Every time after the council meeting we used to pick up 4-5 members and thus go to the very difficult spots in the mine when needed, to see if working conditions were getting better or not. And, unfortunately, in many cases, no change was registered, on the contrary, it was getting worse. The working material provision was every day more difficult and some materials, especially nails, were kind of given another destination, situation that occurred with the screws as well. Some people were taking advantage of the situation and were trading the materials in Turkey or God knows where. From this point of view, the Revolution also triggered a bad change, most of the people disregarding work discipline, some of them coming at work drunk or during the shift they pleased...

Ceauşescu's regime kept the miners under

control. Because, during the democratic regime, each of us, being granted freedom, interpreted it to our knowledge and this turned into chaos. Thus, each of us, when faced with the smallest conflict was threatening with going on strike, with making a scandal and a mate was there to say that he had his team and that nobody could force him to do anything. After the Revolution, all off us, even the Union and the leading staff had more than a dozen of problems while working with people.

*Did you take part in the first miner riots?*

I didn't take part in the first miner riots but I had the misfortune to be part of that in June 1990 in Bucharest. Being already a union leader, you couldn't follow your conscience, you had to do the way the crowd was telling you to, if not you would have been swamped.

If I had followed my conscience I would have been there because I have always been a proponent of negotiations and of peaceful discussions instead of fights because these never seem to function.

*Yet, how come that you took part in that miner riot in June?*

In June 1990 the officer on duty came to my house and said that he wouldn't work in the third shift because he wanted to go to Bucharest. I hadn't even had the time to turn on the TV to see what was going on. Thus, when I got to the mine, the miners told me that chaos was unleashed in Bucharest and that we had better go there. Then I said: "How now, should we solve their problems? There are many inhabitants of Bucharest who have to solve them!" In the end, I had to call Cozma at home and this is how I could find out that he was in somebody's house to watch the world football championship because that somebody had a colour TV.

Apparently he didn't have a colour TV yet. I finally managed to get in touch with him and he told me that I was crazy, "what Bucharest?" His answer was so edgy because the same day we had had a council meeting with unions and there had been no discussion about Bucharest.

*So isn't it as they say now, that Cozma organized that miner riot?*

No, it isn't, at least that's what I think because he told me "Stay by the phone and I will call you from the Administration". When he came back from the Administration he said: "The train station is full, there's no way to stop them! So, if people want to go to Bucharest, let them go!" That's why I say that I don't think that it was Cozma who got them there because when I called him, the train station was already full.

*Then who led them there, because, at least lately, there had been great emphasis on Cozma having organized that riot?*

I think there had been other persons infiltrated among them. Of course that we have no names, not even one and maybe we will never have any even if there had been many people who weren't in the union together with Cozma, and he knew it.

*But do you have clear pieces of evidence to prove that it had been a fabric?*

I have a doubt because I don't think that the miners would have gone to the train station without having been urged to do so, but I can't say who talked them into it.

*What did you do after getting to the mine?*

After I got to the mine people had already started to leave the second shift also and then I told the officer on duty to allow those who wanted it to go to Bucharest in order to avoid any conflict. Thus, we brought them food and the buses took them to Petroșani.

*Did you see any miners who didn't want to go?*

I can say almost half of them!

*Was there any pay back?*

Some blaming between them like "Hoy, why aren't you joining us because you also take advantage of the strike!"

*Did they believe that by going to Bucharest they would have got certain advantages?*

This is what they mainly believed, that by going there, they would have got certain advantages.

*So, did they go there with a very pragmatic goal in their minds?*

Yes, they thought that if going, they would have been given I don't know what. But it wasn't like that! I finally got to Bucharest by train and that train functioned under emergency conditions stopping only 2-3 times. We got to the North Railway Station and from there right to Victoriei Square. In Victoriei Square we met our union leaders and they talked for like 4-5 minutes, then the President and the Prime -minister arrived and from then on we headed directly to the University. We arrived at Bucharest only on 15<sup>th</sup> in the morning and by the time we got there, the University had already been vandalised. It may very well be that it had been vandalised by the miners as well but by the time we got there, it had already been vandalised.

*What did your group do there?*

There were several burnt cars turned up side down and the miners helped the people to lift them up and to take them away. They started to clean up the places in Universităţii Square where the opponents' camp had been placed, but I think that this could have also been done by those living there. That order had been carried out by the police and afterwards they followed the police through Bucharest to do things like: doing away with the stalls which had been abusively installed, which didn't seem fair to me. As far as I am concerned, I didn't take part in these actions because I didn't find it right to.

*But what was really going on?*

A guy or two used to come to pick up a group of miners and then they would leave together.

*But were these people civilians or what were they wearing?*

Yes, they were civilians!

*And what were they saying?*

Let's take you to the Liberal Party, to the Peasant Party because they have drugs there and all sorts of things...

*Did the miners buy it?*

Yes, they did and they even put the objects taken from these residences into cars. But I told

them: "Hoy, when it comes to the point, nobody will believe that you have been there with the police since there is no minutes to prove it." They took these objects from some people and gave them to others.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon, the miners had been divided into two groups: some at Polivalentă Hall and others at Casa Scânteii. I had to go to the Polivalentă. There we watched football matches on TV and in the morning there arrived cars with food. Since I was the leader I divided the food, slicing bread, salami, ham and everything else. The supplies had been sent from Bucharest, I don't know exactly from where, in special food vans; then, some inhabitants of Bucharest also came to bring us more food.

Then, I also wanted to eat with the miners I knew.

While I was eating, a car arrived, a tip-up truck and all the miners around me stepped in it. This is the moment when I felt awful because they had come there with me and they were leaving God knows with whom. I really felt deserted. Then, I asked them what they were doing and where they were going. Then, the driver replied: "Don't worry, I'll take them to Ferentari!" And there was another civilian in the cabin with the driver. And then I told to my buddies: "Hoy, if someone came to your house pretending to force his way in, how would you feel? Would you like it?" Then, they got the point, stepped off the car and joined another group.

*Did all of them step off?*

All of them!

*And what was the reaction of the driver and that of his companion?*

They asked me why I was doing it, why I wasn't letting them go. They were really angry and even shouting at me: "Let them go!" but they finally filled the car with another group and left.

*But didn't they say anything else?*

They said nothing else, apart from asking me why I wasn't letting them go. But I said that they had nothing to do there since those people in Ferentari did them no harm. The tip-up truck

had Bucharest number plates but I cannot tell where it came from and how.

*But what did those in that tip-up truck really do?*

I can't exactly say since I hadn't been there but when I came back I found out that some of the people who went there came back with certain valuable things, even colour TVs and cassette players. And then, those joining me where throwing this situation back at me, that they didn't go and that they lost so many things.

*Yet, which was the slogan which made them go there?*

To put the crooks in order. This slogan was on everybody's lips.

And there was another thing which bemused me: after all the miners had left, there had remained a group which had been given guard clothes [of the old patriotic guard, n.red.] These kept on hanging around for another 5 days to clean Bucharest. After all that we tried to gather them around and to take them to the train station.

*Was it difficult to gather them around?*

Very difficult because under such circumstances when they come from various mines, one can easily lose control over them because they mix so that you cannot tell who belongs where. You say something to your mate and a stranger has a go at you for bothering him. Thus, when they are bunched, one can easily lose control.

*Did the leaders lose control over the crowd in Bucharest?*

I think they did! And I especially remember a scene. A civilian showed up and said: "And that was Universităţii Square" And the miners immediately let into him with hoses and sticks.

*And who was that civilian?*

I don't know and neither did the miners but then another man showed up and said: "Hoy, the guy you smacked was the mayor of the sector." What else can you say when they were taking it back on each other, it was just something difficult to understand. At least I couldn't understand it.

*Had there been many violence scenes?*

Yes they had, why should I deny it? To my shame, there had been. But I told my people over and over again " Mates, don't do that because they are going to have you on film twice or maybe three times and then you won't be able to deny it. You deny once, you deny twice but you can't keep on doing it forever and there will be a time when you have to take responsibility for your acts." Some got it, some didn't! The truth is that there were also civilians who were coming down to provide the miners with alcohol bottles meant to open their taste for fighting, for chaos. All of it left me a bitter taste. And between brackets: the drinking problem was already endemic. There was a time when during each miner strike cars were coming with free booze for everybody.

*Who was sharing it and why?*

I can't understand who was interested in doing it and why.

*It is indeed difficult to understand.*

I think there were interests dictated from above. And that was the very reason why the strikes were so difficult to hold in check because when the miners were stoned they became very difficult to control and I think that that was also the point.

*Yet, generally speaking, did the union leaders try to stir or to prevent the miners from becoming aggressive?*

All the leaders I had the chance to meet during my time, since I had been a leader up to 1991, had tried to control the miners. And even before going to Bucharest in June 1990, we had a little gathering and we decided to do our best to hold them in check. [... ]

*And did Cozma agree with it?*

Yes, he did, but I don't think he was able to keep his word. He saw that people were into it and he decided to go for the violent version according to which the force and the crowd were the key to everything. And the miners believed the same thing. When I told them that we should go to negotiate they replied: " Dude, these days

nobody goes to pay respects anymore, you have to stand your ground!”

*Where do you think they got this mentality from?*

They got it from others who embraced it and tried to put it into practice. Sometimes, during the strikes, while gathered at Paro?eni or Vulcan, for example, there were groups of miners throughout the Valley who were gathering the others from the rest of the mines and if they didn't want to go, they were threatening them.

(Nicolae Croitoru - Union leader at E.M Vulcan from March 1990 till October 1991)

3.

*Did you take part in the June 1990 miner riot?*

During the miner riot in June 1990 I happened to be in Bucharest visiting my godfather. And he told me: “look what is going on!” (he was talking about the events in Universităţii Square). “Wait and see that the miners are going to come to Bucharest!” he added. But I said: “Why should they come here? What should they

do?

And it was indeed so. The miners came to Bucharest. And I met them there by chance and I asked them: “What is going on? Why are you here?” And they said: “Well, can't you see what these folks are doing here?” You couldn't actually talk to them because they were very nervous. I remember that Romeo Beja was with them but he wasn't yet a leader, still he was definitely after fame, wanting to be seen.

*Since you had been a witness back then, did you see any violent scenes or something which you particularly remember?*

Yes, I saw street fights. And I could see that the miners were being manipulated. There were all sorts of civilians saying: “this one is high, or that one is a ragamuffin” and the miners were taking him down immediately. They didn't take the time to check it. So they were being manipulated, it was obvious. All the more, I could see miners in clean overalls, which is hardly possible. The miner is a poor soul: with broken boots and a torn sheepskin coat. So you could tell who was a miner and who was pretending to be.





*Yet, what were those in clean overalls?*

Some destabilizers since they were guiding them: “go here, go there”, because the miner cannot know where to go.

*Who do you think is responsible for the riots?*

I think that Cozma had his big share all the time. Because he was the first to mention the alternative to go to Bucharest both in June 1990 and in September 1991. The truth is that he didn't say to the people: “Let's go to Bucharest!” but he rather asked them three times: “Shall we go to Bucharest?” which was actually a rhetorical question under the given circumstances. Since he was such an influential leader he should have said: “we are not going to Bucharest! We stay here and let the representatives go!” but he didn't do it and he was actually the only leader who asked the miners if they wanted to go to Bucharest or not.

(Ion Munteanu, non-commissioned engineer, former leader of the Free Democratic Union from E.M. Paroşeni)

#### 4.

The people had already been put in fear of the great monopolies, of closing down the mines and thus of losing their jobs and they acted accordingly. The 1990 miner riot was caused by people's fear. This is what happens when you play with people's sub-conscience and you seed the fear that they are going to lose everything.

(V.C- former miner foreman, presently a pensioner)

#### 5.

There (in Petroşani) we benefited from several sets of cars which took us to the North Railway Station, in Bucharest. From the North Railway Station we walked to Universităţii Square, being led by those who were familiar with the city, I mean you can very well understand... we knew some of them, they were security members [infiltrated after the 1987 strike, editor's note] placed in the Valley and we knew them very well and they were the ones who were familiar with

Bucharest. And they were showing us (the security people and the inhabitants of the city – but I cannot tell who they were) which were the residences of the parties, those of the newspapers, where we could find Băcanu, Raţiu, etc.

(V.C- former miner foreman)

#### 6.

Nicolae Cămărăşescu was one of the people who guided us through Bucharest. I met him while he was a security member infiltrated here in the Valley. As far as I know, he was one of those who entered the residence of the Peasant Party and took out lots of dollars. I know it because he came back to the military camp, where my group and I had been accommodated, with booze and money (you could see his pockets full of dollars). And he was bragging, while being drunk: “Dudes, I can close this military camp down!” and we were dead scared because we had no idea what he wanted to do even if we were carrying guns. And that is because we had been given guns and patriotic guard uniforms, but the guns had no bullets so we weren't able to use them. There were around 800 soldiers in that camp together with around 600 miners. And we were eating in the same hall with the soldiers. And trust me, we were ashamed of those soldiers. We were served some enormous stakes, plus three beers and a glass of brandy while the soldiers were only given bed-plate (rice). We used to take half of our helping and share it with those kids. We spent an entire week in that military camp.

(V.C- former miner foreman)

#### 7.

I was legally questioned by the military prosecution for the June 1990 miner riot being accused of the fact that us, the foremen, the engineers and the managers, actually organized the strike. Yet, I denied it and I explained how we had been summoned and told to leave, how we got to the railway station in Bucharest or to the military camp in Ghencea. And the military pros-

ecutor replied: "Admit that you vandalised the residence of the Peasant Party"

They were actually looking for a scapegoat instead of the real guilty people so that we could be in a foul-up. I realised it right away so I replied: "How should I say that if it isn't true! Maybe the residence of the Peasant Party had been vandalised by the miners but, by the time our group got there it had already been destroyed and some miners were pulling down an antenna..."

During the same trial he made me accept the fact that us, the engineers and the foremen had actually organized the riot... when actually the other foremen and I, together with the engineers took part in the riot in order to hold the miners in check because if the miner gets angry he lets his anger out and we went there to put a restraint on them because if it had been only the miners and the brigade leader, it would have been a disaster. If it hadn't been for us they would have all probably started drinking because they carried money with them.

Coming back to the trial, I can say that, at the auditions, I blew the lid off the identity of those who had summoned us there.

I was afraid but I had no other choice. And, at the end of the day, everybody knows who they were since an entire country saw who thanked us... I think that we were off the hook not because those who had asked us to come are still holding the power but because we were very heterogeneous, both ethnically and from the point of view of the positions that we had: Romanians and Hungarians, Germans and Gypsies; foremen and brigade leaders, engineers and managers. And I think they were afraid of unjustly condemning somebody and make the whole story go public abroad.

As a matter of fact, the prosecutors knew the facts because during the riot we had been filmed by a French team, right when we entered the military camp where we had been accommodated. And this tape was later broadcast on CNN or I don't know on what other foreign TV channel

and everybody could easily see that we didn't do anything... now that I think of it I pray to God to keep those people safe and sound because it may be because of their tape that we got out of it unharmed.

This is why I say that I would definitely not take part in any of the miner riots again! Because of these riots an entire country and the whole working class was put to stick both inside the country and worldwide. And I don't think that the journalists had this interest. They just did their job.

Now, while looking back, I realize we only had been a bunch of idiots for having gone there and they also took us for fools. In 1998, during the whole year, I had been almost monthly asked to go to Bucharest for the trial. And it was only last year (2001) that they exonerated me. And when they did that, they said: "You are exonerated but you are still at our disposition." And then I got mad and I told them: "Why is that? If I am guilty, take me in now, if not, the only way I can come here again will be with handcuffs." And then the prosecutor started to laugh and said: "You are free to go!"

(V.C. former miner foreman)

### 8.

During the last meeting I told the prosecutor: "Sir, in the mine it is the same like in the army, you have to obey the orders. If the manager ordered me to go to Bucharest, I had no other choice! The manager is responsible for me, I am responsible for the people under my command. That is why I took the tally book with me and registered the people in Bucharest."

You had to go, you had no other choice and if the governing people hadn't asked us to go there, I think nobody would have gone... Yet, the miners had been manipulated because we had threatened with losing our jobs, with the coming of the great monopolies which would have closed the mines down, this kind of rumours. The psychosis had been huge... But it is more than obvious who thanked the miners for

this manifestation and implicitly who generated the psychosis...

I had 150 people under my command, out of which 90% joined me and the rest stayed behind for the inspection (for watching over the machines) in the mine.

(V.C- former miner foreman, presently a pensioner)

### 9.

For example, during the June 1990 miner riot we were kind of expecting to be fired at even from Basarabi Railway station and we were making plans and thinking of what we were going to do once we got there. We thought that in Bucharest army troops were fighting with security troops, those who had fired at people during the Revolution and that we had been summoned there to join the army which was faithful to the new society, to the new leadership of the country. And it was more than normal for violence to explode in the days to come. Never mind the fact that, concealed by these events, a lot of people cleared the scores with others.

(Petru Braiț- former electrician at E.M Petrița, former leader of those made redundant)

### 10.

The question of our manipulation has been asked all over again. Of course we didn't believe it at the time. Practically, manipulation ceases to be effective when the man becomes aware of it. The January and February miner riots had been but a sort of trump for certain leaders who implicitly were trying to say: "If it happens for something to go wrong in Bucharest, look how prompt the miners are!" I blamed it on the need to be part of certain events unfold in the country during those days. In 1990 Romania was a country which belonged to the miners!

(Petru Braiț- former electrician at E.M Petrița, former leader of those made redundant)

### 11.

I also took part in the June 1990 miner riot.

I will never forget it for the rest of my life. I was working in the first shift. And I heard my mates talking that Iliescu and Petre Roman had asked the miners to go to Bucharest because the opposition had attacked the Television, Cotroceni Palace and the Government.

My mates knew all that because they had been announced by our union leaders. And Miron Cozma addressed all the mines by saying: "all the good people should come and defend the State". And then we were immediately given some sets of cars and we left. This is where I would like to say that lots of innocent people got beaten.

They got beaten both by the army and by the miners because as soon as we got there the two joined forces. Yet, one can say that the miners are not generally violent, just easily susceptible and the majority of the miners here have barely graduated a few grades, very few having gone to trade schools.

A lot of poor quality miners have been brought to the valley: thieves, burglars, robbers. And to be honest, no one did the tally for the miners who went to Bucharest then. Other people came down from the country, from Craiova, Târgu-Jiu, etc. and many overalls and boots had been sold on a lot of money, even in Bucharest.

(Nagy Bela- former brigade leader, former leader of those made redundant)

### 12.

It wasn't only Miron Cozma who affected our image. I personally entered the television with him and somebody gave Cozma a gun which he personally handed over to Răzvan Theodorescu, when entering the television, and Corneliu Roșianu, the editor at the moment, is a witness of that. And Cozma said: "we aren't here to cause violence", in order to be judged for illegally carrying a gun.

Watching back retrospectively I cannot believe that we went there to defend the state, I'd rather say that it was a political game directed by... Iliescu. And I am not afraid of saying it be-

cause the Romanian Constitution states it that I can express my opinion and I think that nobody can take this right away from me.

He is to blame for having summoned the miners and their leader in order to nail him for 18 years when he didn't need him anymore. And Cozma is not to blame for the 1991 miner riot either. I think that Miron Cozma properly defended the miners' rights. Today, their life is tougher!

(Nagy Bela- former brigade leader, former leader of those made redundant)

**13.**

We were a sort of bodyguard of the F.S.N<sup>1</sup>. The police even gave us to drink... packs, packs of whisky, when we didn't even know what that was. And then they took us to the Triumph Arch. During the night they were taking us to sleep in a nearby room while during the day we were asked to act. Yet, something didn't fit there. Because as we got on one side, they appeared to pick us up on the other, "let's go on the other side". And there you could find two or three guys, but they were wearing clean overalls, which is hardly the case in a mine. And they made us move from one side to the other. We didn't pay attention to those guys then, only afterwards. It was only afterwards that we could see clear! I think that Cozma also had been manipulated.

(G.V- locksmith at Vulcan mine)

**14.**

I didn't take part in the miner riots because I cannot be influenced by the effects of the collective mechanics. Even if I had been afterwards questioned by my colleagues regarding my lack of commitment, I overtly told them that I couldn't have been part of such a manipulation.

(D.L- electrician at the Vulcan mine, emigrant in the U.S.A with the Visa Lottery)

**15. The February 1990 Miner Riot**

We had the feeling that we had to protect Iliescu, that is why, in the train, on the way there, we were thinking of the fact that we had to make sure that nobody would beat Iliescu, take him out of the country or something along the line. The word Iliescu was part of the daily routine. Afterwards I got home and I was hospitalised, but it wasn't only me, I can say it was one of ten of those coming back from Bucharest who was ill.

(Holban Marian- former underground electrician, at present a union leader at Petroșani mine)

**16. The June 1990 Miner Riot**

June was a little different. It was my birthday and I had a lots of guests, parents... when, the TV programme was interrupted and we heard another appeal to the country and... that moment I knew for certain that in the city people were going to Bucharest. That is why I told my wife that I was going to go and see what was happening. My wife, seeing me so determined to leave, said: "leave your keys at home!" That was her insurance that I wasn't going to leave because there I had the keys from my drawer in the mine, the entrance mark and other things. Well, OK, I said, I'll leave them! And I put them there. My wife must have probably thought: "if the keys are here, he won't go!" Arriving in the city, I could see that things were better and more broadly organized this time. There were cars taking the civilians to the mines in order to get dressed and thus go to Petroșani. That's exactly what happened to me.

I was in slippers and in shorts. It was 6 when a van stopped right in front of me. There were around twenty civilians in it. "Hoy, what are you doing?" I asked. They replied that they were going to get dressed in order to go to Bucharest.

Meanwhile, dozens of cars from Uricani, Bărbăteni, Lupeni, were heading towards

Petroșani. The doors of the van were opened: one could see the bats and the hoses hanging. You could tell that they were all equipped. I finally got to the mine and they gave me the lamp without carrying the entrance mark, they gave me a trip supplement and I could really see that everything had been organized by the union. After the appeal transmitted on TV according to which destabilizing forces were trying to overthrow the government and that democracy was in danger, we all knew that Universităţii Square was full of “ragamuffins” intending to destabilize the country.

And, at the moment, we really believed that there was a group of antigovernment people sleeping there, but we had no idea who they were, what they wanted, or which were their ideals, I thought that they were a group of people who didn't like the actual government and, back then I honestly didn't like this idea.

I got this opinion because both mass media and the press of the time were very manipulative and there existed no other TV channel apart from TVR<sup>1</sup> which was a proponent of the power. That is why almost everybody was angry to see what was going on there and at the mine they used to talk in very tough terms about how we were going to rack and ruin this time. “This time” they said, because we had already been there twice and things had been carried out peacefully.

On 13<sup>th</sup> during the evening we already knew that people were fighting in Bucharest. The security forces were fighting with some groups which were claiming something.

Now I tend to believe that these were people who knew that Romania wasn't going to find its right way too soon and they wanted to set a much real democracy than the one existing now in the country. Maybe at the moment they didn't all know it, but their leaders did!

The first set of cars arrived at the North Railway Station in Bucharest around 5 in the morning. On the platform we found layers of coffee and a little parcel with: a tomato, a schnitzel,

cheese, a bun and two minced-meat balls. A civilian was waiting for us and he said: “Guys, you've got a supplement, you have everything you need, go straight to Victoriei Square.”

We lit the lamps and the show was fascinating. The miners were marching in rows and if someone would stick his head out of the window, the miners were using the tomatoes in the package to hit him. We got to Universităţii Square where Iliescu showed up and told us to go directly to Universităţii Square to clean it off.

I personally believed that we were supposed to arrange the flowerbeds or something along the line. When we got there we found two buses completely burnt. Their wheels had entered the asphalt after melting; the ragamuffins' tents had already been scattered and the “ragamuffins” locked up in the University.

What did the miners together with Cosma do? Cosma was in a TV car with four megaphones above, guiding us: “Don't let them run away, none of them can escape!”, the University was still closed. Then four miners carrying axes climbed the lightning rod, made a hole in the roof and entered the attic.

And those four miners opened the University door. Can you believe it? Only four miners managed to open a university passing through the hundreds of people gathered there!!! I didn't meet those miners but I don't think they belonged to the security troops, on the contrary, I think they were real miners, because they were too determined.

Those inside were many and I think that they could have taken the miners down if they had wanted, but they didn't. Yet, the University door could have been tumbled down with axes, but Cosma didn't allow them to do it...

The moment the door opened, the University was ravished. Those inside were dragged out and smacked. They caught Marian Munteanu and Cosma personally was smacking him, dipping him into the fountain and then smacking him again and again. Marian Munteanu was already injured a bit, a broken lip as far as I could tell,

when Cosma started to hit him. But after that smacking, I thought that the man must have died. Afterwards, an ambulance arrived and took him away and then Cosma said: "Come and clean the place where these ragamuffins have shitted!" And people started to clean up!

There was also a crane there which wanted to lift one of the burnt buses, but it couldn't reach it because of the trolley wires. Then, a miner came and said: "Hoy, let's move this bus in order for the crane to take it away!" This is how people gathered around and started to struggle (yet, it was stuck in the asphalt as its rims had melted) and they tumbled it twice.

Afterwards a raid was initiated in Universităţii Square and those who had a ragamuffin badge were taken away and smacked... I had one at home but I have no idea what I have done with it! After gathering many of the ragamuffins, they locked them up in a bookshop: boys, girls, youngsters, elders. There were all kinds of people who were wearing those badges...

Then the police cars arrived to take them away. The miners were also literally cleaning up, meaning real and figurative cleansing, that is smacking. There were also some guys there who were guiding the rest, that is giving orders, but the most savage beatings were administrated by the miners, that is to anyone who seemed a suspect... since they were "a bit stoned".

I only entered the University the next day, out of curiosity. The University was a complete ruin. It was more than obvious that it was a miner's and not a security person's job. The security people only gave orders, they didn't practically touch anything, maybe they didn't even raise the fist at somebody. They only manipulated. By arriving there, I could find a teacher pretending to go along with the miners, but he also couldn't believe his eyes. All lecture rooms were destroyed, I don't think that they missed any. The one completely vandalised was the gym, where they even used the axe to hit the walls and even the floor... Then I left the place...

I spent that night at Polivalent? Hall because

some of us had been accommodated there. We had watched Romania-Cameroon football match when we lost with 2-1. After watching the match each of us on his best account, we came back to the Hall. There were some big orange plush curtains there. Well, the miners took them, cut them and turned them into laces for their boots. So, they all changed their laces, wearing orange ones!

Afterwards, in order not to get bored, we saw some movies on the projector. "The Lonesome Wolf" starring Chuck Norris, and then another movie... then, all the miners in the room started to shout: "Porn! Porn! Porn!"... they all wanted porn movies. But how should they broadcast porn movies when they had none!...

There were many aluminium boxes down the hall, mineral water bottles, the cars were bringing us ready-made sandwiches, cigarette packs: BT, Apollonia, Snagov... We slept there, each of us where he could, on chairs, on the floor.

In the morning, we started to think of what we should do. Right next to Polivalent? Hall there was the Children's Wonderland. I, together with around seven mates, said: "Hoy, what's our business with these people of Bucharest? Let's better have fun!" We had money.

Right there, in the neighbourhood, there was a cart track with wooden raceway and carts. And we all stepped in those carts. The guy responsible for them was very happy to see he was selling the tickets because we didn't go there forcedly to say: "Hoy, if you don't let us in the carts, we will smack you, or something along the line". We paid honestly... it wasn't expensive: five lei a round.

We played around for like two hours when... my cart went off the track. My brother, who was on one side, came to help me push back the cart. Yet, another cart came from behind, caught his leg between the buffers and broke it!

This is when the good time was over. We quickly called for an ambulance to take him away. We put him on a crowbar and this is how we took him to the ambulance, because it couldn't enter up to there

The miners who were passing by and who were seeing us were immediately asking us: "Hoy, what's wrong with him, who smacked him, tell us quickly, where do they live?" "Relax, mates, nobody smacked him, it was just an accident!" My brother was urgently taken to the hospital and I met him again only at the Globus Circus.

That was the last meeting of the entire group of miners and Iliescu's last speech. Meanwhile, our group wandered around, took a bath in a lake or a walk through Bucharest. I can say that our group didn't touch a soul, but I could see many extremely violent scenes...

There were also some groups of miners, let's say more peaceful, which, even if guided by the security people towards somebody, were just catching the person, hit him once or twice with the rubber bats and then let him go or hand him over to the police.

To my mind, what really influenced these negative acts had been the poor quality of many of the miners in Valea Jiului.

When faced with a tense situation which can generate conflicts, like those in Bucharest at the time, a more or less learned man tries to avoid violent manifestations, but those with little or no education at all were heading towards these conflicts, hitting without thinking, believing that physical strength is more important than brains.

Still, in Universităţii Square this is exactly what happened. In Universităţii Square we met some miners from the mines around Piteşti. They were very calm, didn't join the fights at all. I guess that they came there to be numerically impressive. Even the way they spoke was different from that of the miners in Valea Jiului, they weren't cursing, weren't displaying a low language, they were completely different.

I guess that the majority of those who had been involved in fights were Moldavians, people with very little education, coming from the countryside... I could also see a lady getting smacked, an innocent woman... they hit her with the pressure hoses with metal insert which they had

bluntly chopped with an axe down the sidewalk so that all the wires were coming out of them and if you hit somebody, they were scratching the skin.

I could also see how a miner, a bastard, hit a woman's back three or four times with such a hose. Can you believe that he left her all fringes? I dread to think of it. It was something inhuman. And I also saw how some guy hit another with a scoop stick. This is again inhuman.

I could get a close look to other things, when people got punched... and I could perceive that man's reaction, the wince caused by the awareness of the fact that he was going to be hit and then the falling down on the asphalt or the hitting of the head against the sidewalk.

I witnessed an entire scene from the moment when the fist was raised and till it reached its target... I can't describe that man's look when he saw the fist and till the moment of the impact... I don't wish this to anybody...

I can definitely say that of those who came down to Bucharest, only 95% were miners. But they were very little learned miners; very few were slicks from Valea Jiului to say that they did such things. This is how we were. We were looking for having fun and we had thought of what to do long before.

That is why we had a sort of plan: "mates, now we are watching football, afterwards we are going to have fun in the pleasure ground, then we are taking a walk through Bucharest"... That's why I am telling you that if all miners had drunk, it would definitely have ended up in a catastrophe.

I think that of those who lent themselves to such things only approximately 20% had been our miners and exceptionally very few from other mines. The rest had been padding, as a number... other also did real cleaning, meaning helping the authorities to take the waste from the square.

I myself didn't take part in any of these actions because I realized that it was all a felony. I was only 26 back then, I enjoyed life and having

fun and mostly that is why I went.

Eventually, it was all over. In the end Iliescu delivered a speech... we all carried bats when he came, but a bulky guy with a white helmet showed up and said: "Hey, mates, the television is going to come down with cameras. Why don't you throw those bats?"

All of a sudden I could hear a noise: "bang, bang" and the next moment everybody was empty-handed. Iliescu came down immediately accompanied by a group of people, thanked us for our efforts and appreciated our spirit of unity.

He also wished us to keep up the good work, etc. and all the miners cheered and applauded him. Afterwards, he let us know that the sets of cars were waiting at the North Railways Station in order to take us home. Then, at Globus Circus I met my brother again who was constantly asked what happened to his leg. And he was taking the mickey saying that he got beaten or stuff like that, but in the end they all found out the truth.

There was another miner with both hands in plaster and he also had a stupid accident, that is he grabbed a branch while being in the car and he fell off on the hands. So only stupid accidents, nothing near us getting beaten or some-

thing along the line. We all happily went home because we had been the ones dictating the law in Bucharest.

But perhaps now, when looking back, I can say that it would have been better to overthrow the regime then. And I think we would have, because Romania was getting swamped by information at the moment... And once with the miner riots we sort of came back to what we used to have before the Revolution: you couldn't say a word at work because you would have been thrown obstacles in your way according to a very simple logic: "If you are not with us you are against us!"

This has carried on ever since, taking back the old security people eager to spill the bins as soon as you say something. After the Revolution, this situation kind of disappeared but the miner riots reinstated this feeling: lack of safety at work and fear of not ruining your life for saying something wrong. I felt sorry! And I can say it had been a huge loss.

(Hoban Marian- former miner electrician, presently a union leader at Paroşeni mine)

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