

## Introduction

### *Politics, Reproduction, and Duplicity*

*Freedom Triumphs and Romania Goes Pro-Choice: Romania's Pre-revolution  
Abortion Laws Should Serve as Warning to U.S.*

J. ROWE, *Christian Science Monitor*, JANUARY 27, 1990

*Shame about the Babies: Why Romania Has to Learn to Care.*

C. SARLER, *London Sunday Times Magazine*, JANUARY 20, 1991

*Irish Supreme Court Allows Teenager to Seek Abortion: Girl Who Had Been Raped  
Can Go to England for the Procedure*

G. FRANKEL, *Washington Post*, FEBRUARY 27, 1992

*U.S. Rights Group Asserts China Let Thousands of Orphans Die*

P. TYLER, *New York Times*, JANUARY 6, 1996

Headlines such as these appear regularly on the front pages of prominent newspapers around the world. In 1996, six years after dramatic and disturbing pictures of Romania's orphans were publicly circulated, the neglected orphans of China replaced them as objects of the world's sympathy and outrage. The unwanted children in these countries are in part the tangible consequences of coercive pro- and antinatalist state policies as these collide with or collude against family interests and possibilities. In China, where the one-child policy was imposed in 1979 to control population growth, this limitation on family size has prompted a variety of popular resistance strategies, including female infanticide.<sup>1</sup> In Nicolae Ceausescu's Romania, where abortion was banned in 1966, the state demanded that each family produce four or five children as a way of forcing population growth. As a result, illegal abortion became the primary method of fertility regulation.<sup>2</sup>

Illegal abortion and what is known as "abortion tourism" are widely practiced elsewhere, notably in staunchly Catholic countries such as Brazil, Italy, Ireland, and Poland, where the moral authority of the Church permeates everyday life. It is estimated that some 4,000 Irish women travel each year to England for abortions.<sup>3</sup> Abortion tourism became rampant in

Poland after the Catholic Church succeeded in its campaign to have abortion banned in postcommunist Poland.<sup>4</sup> Brazilian women are believed to have one to three abortions during their fertile years; sterilization has become a preferred method of birth control.<sup>5</sup> The Italian birthrate is the lowest in Europe, despite claims by approximately 84 percent of the population that they are practicing Catholics.<sup>6</sup> In each instance, a clear disarticulation exists between what has been preached from the political podium or the pulpit and what has happened in response to the exigencies of real life.

But this book is not about Italy, Poland, Brazil, China, Ireland, or the United States. It is explicitly concerned with the Socialist Republic of Romania under the rule of the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. During twenty-three of the twenty-four years of Ceausescu's reign (1965–1989), the regime enforced one of the most repressive pronatalist policies known to the world. The legislative centerpiece of these policies was the strict anti-abortion law that was originally passed in 1966. These policies—which affected the lives of every adult man and woman regardless of marital or reproductive status—brought the state into intimate contact with the bodies of its citizens, and its citizens into the social organization of the state.<sup>7</sup> In the end, these policies contributed to what may be characterized as a national tragedy.

This book presents both an ethnography of the state—Ceausescu's Romania—and an ethnography of the politics of reproduction. An analysis of what was highly politicized demographic policy offers a provocative means through which to explore the institutionalization of social practices, such as duplicity and complicity, and of identities that together constituted the Romanian socialist state and everyday life. This critical inquiry enables us to comprehend more fully both the lived processes of social atomization and dehumanization that are legacies of the Ceausescu era, and the means by which reproductive issues become embedded in social-political agendas, both national and international in scope.

A cautionary word is in order: Around the world, the politics of reproduction are burdened with duplicitous rhetoric and practices, as the opening epigraphs attest. When reproductive legislation and policies are formulated according to abstract ideological and religious tenets rather than in consideration of actual socioeconomic factors that affect the quality of human life, the lived consequences are often tragic, particularly for women and children. Romania offers a unique case study. The comparative implications are sobering.

#### AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE STATE

The interests of states (and nations) in social reproduction often conflict with those of women and families in the determination of biological or in-

dividual reproduction. Modern states and their citizens alike claim rights to the regulation of diverse reproductive concerns such as contraception, abortion, and adoption.<sup>8</sup> Hence, reproduction serves as an ideal locus through which to illuminate the complexity of formal and informal relations between states and their citizens, or noncitizens, as the case may be.<sup>9</sup> How are state policies institutionalized in official discourse and in bureaucratic procedures and practices? How are these policies implemented and enforced? How do such policies affect people in their daily lives—that is, how are macro-social issues of state policy and ideological control experienced in everyday life?

As the above questions suggest, the modern state is interventionist; historically, intervention has provoked diverse forms of resistance to varying kinds of constraints. The “arts of resistance” are many; often performed as mechanisms of survival, they represent characteristic reactions to institutional or individual relations of domination, hierarchy, and inequality.<sup>10</sup> *Scott* “Beating the system,” “defying authority,” “conning someone,” and “getting away with murder” are familiar phrases throughout the world, and likely always have been. These acts enrich people's daily lives by seeming to give them a measure of control over oppressive environments and everyday routines.<sup>11</sup> With respect to fertility regulation, the banning of abortion has always encountered resistance, the consequences of which nonetheless remain historically and comparatively consistent across political and religious systems.

By an ethnography of the state, I refer to an analysis of the rhetorical and institutionalized practices of the state within the public sphere and their integration into daily life. How do the supposedly objective interests of the state acquire legitimacy or become taken for granted as a natural feature of the environment? Anthropologist Derek Sayer suggests that state formation and routinization necessarily entail tacit complicity between states and their citizens, regardless of the latter's actual belief in the political legitimacy of any particular state.<sup>12</sup> To the extent that citizens are able to manage their daily lives in a reasonable fashion, the state will be able to function relatively unchallenged. What techniques of control are utilized to shape and discipline the body politic and public culture in the interests of the state? What are the effects of the state on the lives of its citizens? And how do people “use their local cultural logics and social relations to incorporate, revise, or resist the influence of seemingly distant political and economic forces”?<sup>13</sup>

Citizens are typically incorporated into states under the rubric “we, the people,” who together make up nations and populations. Such inclusive social abstractions linguistically homogenize social diversity by presuming certain shared features that identify peoples as Americans, Romanians, or whomever. These shared features may be political, social, or cultural and are treated differently in different political contexts. In the United States,

for example, the tolerance of diversity is a revered component of liberalism. At present, diversity is highly politicized: the homogenized rhetorical "we" has been challenged by the heterogeneous "we's," which constitute the whole. By contrast, in Ceausescu's Romania homogenization, or the eradication of social difference, was a formal political goal. Diversity was denied in the official discourse of the state, which celebrated what was termed "original democracy."

States are always given form through the actions of peoples. The objectification of the state as a legitimate entity unto itself masks what all too frequently is "the petty, the personal, the corrupt, the backstabbing, the wheeling and dealing."<sup>14</sup> Yet objectification rhetorically transfers the locus of human subjectivity and agency from persons to the state.<sup>15</sup> In the former socialist states and according to popular understanding, the state, the party, and the secret police were virtually synonymous with respect to their referent: "the power." These rhetorical devices distinguished "them" from "us," and in part legitimated acts of complicity with, and duplicity against, the state. As shall be discussed, duplicity and complicity—viewed as modes of communicative behavior—were crucial to both the endurance and the demise of the Ceausescu regime.

The embodiment of the state was accompanied by the formulation of its imaginary subjectivity. The state claimed needs and desires that had to be satisfied. As such, it represented itself as embodied, corporeal. The socialist state reconstituted itself as what Claude Lefort, the French social and political theorist, termed the "People-As-One."<sup>16</sup> The people's body, so to speak, was the property of the state, to be molded and developed into the socialist body politic. The state as personified being spoke incessantly about itself and exercised power in its own interests, presented as those of its citizens.<sup>17</sup> Through rhetorical, institutionalized, and disciplinary strategies, the state defined the parameters of the permissible, the limits of what could be tolerated.<sup>18</sup> It also constituted a self-serving symbolic order to which interests other than its own were to be fully subjugated. Fertility control was a critical issue around which conflicts of interest between the state and its citizens, especially women, were likely to erupt. Socialist economies were dependent on the availability of labor, or human capital, and "reproduction of the labor force" became a virtual mantra of political rhetoric. To this end, reproduction was consciously politicized, especially in Romania. Political demography, which is addressed later in this introduction, was the strategy by which the state controlled both social and biological reproduction for the "building of socialism."

### THE POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION

As feminist anthropologists Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp have reminded us, "reproduction" is a slippery concept, connoting parturition, Marxist

notions of household sustenance and constitution of a labor force, and ideologies that support the continuity of social systems."<sup>19</sup> That reproduction has been politicized in all societies in one way or another is hardly surprising: reproduction provides the means by which individuals and collectivities ensure their continuity, a point to which I will return momentarily. First, it is pertinent to clarify what I mean by the politics of reproduction. I broadly refer to the complex relations among individual, local, national, and global interests that influence reproductive practices, public policy, and the exercise of power. Otherwise stated, the politics of reproduction center attention on the intersection between politics and the life cycle, whether in terms of abortion, new reproductive technologies, international family planning programs, eugenics, or welfare.<sup>20</sup>

Reproduction is fundamentally associated with identity: that of "the nation" as the "imagined community" that the state serves and protects, and over which it exercises authority;<sup>21</sup> or that of the family and the lineage—in most instances, a patrilineage—in the protection and perpetuation of itself and its name. As mentioned above, social reproduction and biological reproduction secure the continuity of peoples in social units—couples, families, ethnic groups, and nations. But discontinuity is also a possibility, and one that is frequently exploited for national(ist) purposes.<sup>22</sup> The failure to reproduce is instrumentally claimed by political "entrepreneurs" to threaten the very existence of the family or the nation-state.

In view of the multiple interests and values attached to reproduction, it is understandable that reproduction is highly politicized, frequently at the expense of the concerns of individuals, especially women. It is equally understandable that individual, familial, and political interests in reproduction differ so dramatically. The state, as in Ceausescu's Romania, may demand that women bear children in fulfillment of their patriotic duties; or, as in Deng's China, the state may restrict the number of children per family in an effort to curtail population growth. International family planning organizations' fertility regulation efforts have been aimed especially at Third World countries to bring fertility rates in line with development and economic interests.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, economic issues are always linked to social and biological reproduction. Cost-benefit considerations necessarily enter into individual as well as political calculations, the results of which are often at odds. To underscore again, reproductive issues constitute a focus for contestation within societies as well as between them.<sup>24</sup>

The intervention of states or governments into reproductive issues also blurs the distinctions between public and private prerogatives. In general, women are the most affected, although not exclusively so, by the transgression of embodied boundaries. As one Romanian woman poignantly commented, "When the state usurps the private [one's privacy], the body is undressed in public." That which is most intimate—sexuality—is exposed to public scrutiny, or, as some maintain, to voyeurism in the name of the

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public good. The personal becomes political by virtue of the state's penetration into the body politic not as metaphor but as practice.

Questions about the sanctity of the body and what individuals do with their bodies point to issues of individual rights. Here, I wish to emphasize that this book is not about political struggles over reproductive rights, although I hardly mean to dismiss their significance. I strongly believe that states must protect women's right to safe abortions and that the protection of this right is fundamental. Children remain the primary responsibilities of women the world over; hence, women should have the ultimate say about the control of their reproductive lives.<sup>25</sup> To argue otherwise is to engage in rhetorical obfuscation.<sup>26</sup> The "family values" so often invoked by anti-abortionists are an ideal to which many of the world's peoples adhere, including those who support the right to abortion. But the realization of family values is differently managed among different peoples and cultures and is complexly mediated by the variables of race, class, ethnicity, gender, and situation. Beliefs that represent social, moral, and ethical principles are frequently compromised by necessity, as illustrated by the author of a *New York Times* op-ed article who volunteered: "I'm a Republican who always believed that abortion is wrong. Then I had one."<sup>26</sup> By the same token, Catholic women have often resorted to abortion despite deep sentiments that abortion is wrong.

In Ceausescu's Romania, individual rights did not form part of public or private discourse.<sup>27</sup> The state legislated social equality and ideologically supported social rights (e.g., jobs, housing, access to medical care). The banning of abortion and the bearing of children were related to citizens' obligations to the paternalist state that "cared" for them. Individual rights were not at issue. During my extended research on abortion and Romania's pronatalist policies, neither women nor men ever expressed their thoughts or recounted their experiences in terms of rights. Conceptualization about the self is culturally contextualized and conditioned.

#### CEAUSESCU'S ROMANIA AND THE POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION

Ceausescu's Romania presents an extreme instance of state intrusion into the bodies and lives of its citizens. It also represents "the most striking failure of a coercive public policy designed to influence reproductive behavior."<sup>28</sup> Banning abortion has never eradicated the practice of abortion—neither in repressive, totalizing states such as Ceausescu's Romania or Stalin's Soviet Union, nor in countries where the Catholic Church reigns supreme, such as Brazil, Italy, Ireland, or Poland. Instead, banning abortion renders the practice of abortion invisible in the public sphere and women's lives vulnerable to the physical and psychological risks that accompany il-

legal abortion.<sup>29</sup> Theological and ideological arguments against abortion promulgate abstract moral imperatives on behalf of the soul or the good of society. Ironically, whether one is discussing the dictates of the Catholic Church or of Ceausescu's regime, the body is instrumentalized as a vehicle through which "greater" goals than those of the individual are intended to be realized.<sup>30</sup> Here, it is worth commenting on organizational parallels between the Catholic Church and the Communist Party, both being hierarchical, male-dominated institutions seeking growth in the number of their adherents, who are to be highly disciplined in comportment.<sup>31</sup> Domination of the public sphere by church or state demands the selfless dedication—or sacrifice—of persons to it, rather than the self-interested practices of individuals in it as typically associated with capitalism.<sup>32</sup> This fundamental contradiction captures the tensions that characterize the conflicts of interest between states, churches, and their populations that pertain to reproductive politics and practices. In each case, the fact of life itself supersedes consideration of its quality, especially with respect to the mother or the child.

An analysis of the politics of reproduction—and more specifically, the banning of abortion—in Ceausescu's Romania offers a dramatic illustration of a tragic reality that is historically and comparatively consistent. At the same time, it presents a detailed excursion into the everyday workings of a totalizing regime. A focus on Ceausescu's political demographic policies serves other purposes as well. The contradictions, traumas, and opportunities that emerge from the banning of abortion are highlighted or made more explicit in nondemocratic contexts, as are international responses to them. In a neo-Stalinist state, the legitimate spaces in which citizens could seek refuge or resist the penetrating gaze of state surveillance were greatly reduced. The state's presence was maximal. To illustrate, abortion tourism was hardly an option for ordinary citizens of Ceausescu's Romania since travel abroad was highly restricted. By contrast, in postcommunist Poland, where abortion has been criminalized, abortion tourism has provided possibilities for women with the means to travel elsewhere.<sup>33</sup> In this respect, the Catholic Church must contend with a political economy that may not support its totalizing view of the body, nature, and sexuality.

In Romania, strict pronatalism served Ceausescu's nationalism and megalomaniacal fantasies under the aegis of the political economy of socialism.<sup>34</sup> Recall that reproduction of the labor force was claimed to be essential to the building of socialism. Socioeconomic hardships were distributed across the majority of the population rather than differentiated by class. By the mid-1980s, daily life had become impoverished in almost all respects. Women's circumstances were especially dire because women also bore the greatest burden of the political demographic policies. Here, it is important to underline the basic invariance of the relationship between poverty, illegal abortion, and their consequences. In hard empirical terms, poor

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women, regardless of race or geopolitical context, suffer the harshest effects of delegalized abortion. They are generally unable to afford safer illegal procedures performed by medical personnel or midwives, and they cannot afford to travel abroad. Hence, poor women are especially vulnerable to abortion-related complications and as a result are more likely to become maternal mortality statistics. As chapter 7 discusses, in Ceausescu's Romania, where poverty had become a general condition, the maternal mortality rate for 1989 was the highest ever recorded in Europe. Illegal abortion was the primary cause.

To be sure, analysis of Ceausescu's political demographic policies enables us to explore in detail the tragic consequences of banned abortion in Romania and also calls attention to other aspects of the politics of reproduction, notably how international interests come into play, often in unintentionally nefarious ways. In the 1970s, Ceausescu's pronatalist policies were regarded positively in the West. By the late 1980s those same policies were widely condemned.<sup>35</sup> In post-Ceausescu Romania, international adoption has become a highly politicized issue, which will be discussed in chapter 7. The rapid class differentiation accompanying the present postcommunist transition has affected reproductive practices in Romania at individual, local, national, and international levels. Women's reproductive lives are no longer subjected to the political demographic policies that turned women into human machines that reproduced future workers. However, many poor and single women have instead become vulnerable to market pressures to reproduce babies for foreigners. Transnational inequalities have thus emerged in the complex arena of international adoption.

Clearly, biological and social reproduction rarely prove to be as straightforward as political or religious ideals represent them. Life circumstances intervene, complicating the interrelations between what is said, what is believed, and what is done. Reconciling competing interests and pressures often draws individuals into multilayered acts of complicity and duplicity, which this ethnography of the Ceausescu regime's political demographic policies sadly affirms. Before turning to it, a cursory discussion of both demographic policy—referred to as political demography in this book—and the politics of duplicity is in order.

### Political Demography and Population Control

*The Political Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party appeals to the entire population, to urban and village workers, to understand that to ensure normal demographic growth it is a great honor and patriotic obligation for every family and for all of our people . . . to have enduring families with many children, raised with love, and by so doing, to guarantee the vitality, youth, and vigor of the entire nation. Today, more than ever, we have the utmost obli-*

*gation to assure our patrie of new generations that will contribute to the flourishing of our socialist nation, to the triumph of socialism and communism in Romania.*

POLITICAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
OF THE ROMANIAN COMMUNIST PARTY<sup>36</sup>

*In this climate of economic stability, we all celebrated the arrival of the child whose birth at the end of last year enabled our country's population to surpass the threshold of 23 million inhabitants. We are a free people and masters of our own destiny. We have a wonderful country, with a strongly developed economy, fully involved in the process of modernization.*

NICOLAE CEAUSESCU<sup>37</sup>

*When social power is exercised through statistics, experience is no longer a moment of awareness but an experimental practice . . . a test of the precise degree to which a given social objective has succeeded.*

T. ASAD, "ETHNOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION,  
STATISTICS, AND MODERN POWER"

During the 1960s and 1970s, international debates about population policies tended to reflect two divergent, if rhetorically reconcilable, geopolitical perspectives: the promotion of family planning (in the interest of regulating what was presented as the population explosion), and the right of each state to determine the population policies most suited to its national interests. The former position was generally endorsed by the developed countries of the West; the latter by the developing countries, especially the Third World.<sup>38</sup> Debates along these geopolitical lines dominated the agenda at the 1974 World Population Conference, held in Bucharest. At this conference, the critical role of women in population policies was officially acknowledged.<sup>39</sup> Romania, acting in accord with the World Population *Plan of Action*, took the significance of women to heart; women and the family were placed on the population pedestal of socialist development.

In Romania, "politica demografica" or "demographic policy" was explicitly politicized for the purpose of building socialism. The control of demographic phenomena was generally considered vital to the success of development strategies in planned economies. The customary connotation of "demographic policy" as understood in the West does not adequately capture the extent to which demography was harnessed for ideological goals by the Ceausescu regime. "Politica demografica" was taken to be an "attribute of state sovereignty" (of all states in the interest of self-determination).<sup>40</sup> Hence, throughout this book, in most instances I refer to "political demography" or "political demographic policies" rather than "demographic policy" or "population policy."

Demography entails the study of factors related to the life cycle of a population: natality, mortality, longevity, morbidity, the structure of the population by age and sex, mobility (social, economic), and migration (internal and international). Political demography focuses on all demographic

factors and their interrelations. According to Romanian specialists, political demography referred to "the ensemble of measures and actions in the socioeconomic domain . . . related in one way or another to the population with respect to the conditions of life,"<sup>41</sup> or "the integral aspect of socioeconomic development policies, such that demographic variables are incorporated into the general system of socioeconomic variables."<sup>42</sup> Otherwise stated, the objectives of political demography were "to accord greater attention to strengthening the family—the basic nucleus of society—increasing natality and maintaining a corresponding age structure of the population, ensuring the vigor and youth of our population, caring for and educating children, the young generations who represent the future of our socialist nation."<sup>43</sup>

Political demography legitimated the state's intervention in the "internal affairs" of its citizens' lives: birth, schooling, labor force participation, marriage, sexuality, reproduction, and death. To this end, "demographic investments" in Romania were to cover the "material and financial costs and the services that advance society and the family, and support a growing population."<sup>44</sup> The overall political demographic system consisted by and large of policies aimed at coordinating the economic and social aspects of demographic development.<sup>45</sup> These policies, in turn, were buttressed by all-encompassing legislation designed to facilitate their effective implementation.

Political demography was claimed by the state as its "right" to determine and control the interests of Romania's population. It also served as a mechanism with which the state was able to directly control the population itself. In keeping with the human capital needs of command economies, the state's primary interest was professed to be the creation and maintenance of the labor force to build socialism; steady population growth regulated through political demography was to be the principal means of achieving this end. As elsewhere, "the population" served as a strategic element to be disciplined and manipulated, ostensibly for purposes of maximizing development potential.<sup>46</sup>

This was surely the case in Ceausescu's Romania. There, "family planning" acquired a meaning specific to the context in which it was applied. Crudely put, the state assumed responsibility for family planning on behalf of the population. Family planning was a prerequisite for achieving "the ideal number of children suited to the family and to society,"<sup>47</sup> both of which were to be socialist. As indicated above, in Romania, family planning was designed to maximize human reproduction, not decrease it. Population rights in Romania were ideologically grounded in the "profound humanism" of the Romanian Communist Party; economic incentives were deemed essential components of the state's pronatalist policy in the best interests of "the family." The rights of the population included those of "well-being, the improvement of the quality of life and the human condition

in general,"<sup>48</sup> among which figured social rights such as health and environmental protection, education, and work.

Political demography and the interests of the population were inextricably entwined, interrelating the macro-level policies of the state with the micro-level practices of the population. "Population," officially defined as an aggregate of individuals,<sup>49</sup> transformed individuals into collective abstractions. As classificatory terms, "the population" (*populatie*) was synonymous with "the masses" (*maselor*), "the people" (*poporul*), or "the nation" (*natie*). It is important to recognize that objectification works both ways. The facelessness of the masses (or the population) was reinscribed in the facelessness of "the state" (*statul*), of "they" (*ei*), or of "the power" (*puterea*). Dehumanization of the individuals who together constituted the collectivized referents of these terms (whether the state or the population) was discursively reproduced in official as well as everyday language.<sup>50</sup> These disembodied speech acts became standard features of communication and contributed to the rationalization of dissimulation as a social practice.

For the paternalist socialist state, attention to the needs of the population was represented, in Foucault's words, as "the ultimate end of government":

In contrast to sovereignty, government has as its purpose not the act of government itself, but the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc.; . . . it is the population itself on which government will act either directly or through large-scale campaigns, or indirectly through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people, the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions or activities, etc. . . . the population is the subject of needs, of aspirations, but it is also the object in the hands of the government.<sup>51</sup>

Population superseded the family in ideological prioritization among the government's concerns. Although the family no longer served as the principal model for governance, it nonetheless remained a primary social institution through which the paternalist regime governed. In this respect, the family was "both a subject and an object of government."<sup>52</sup> As shall become clear, Ceausescu's appreciation of the family as ideological construct and political-cultural practice remained ambivalent throughout the long years of his rule.

Indeed, the family and women bore particular responsibilities in the interest of creating the "new socialist person" and communism's radiant future. As secretary general of the party, Nicolae Ceausescu constantly reminded the population: "We are building socialism with and for the people."<sup>53</sup> Control of reproduction—biological and social—was regarded as essential to the achievement of this goal. However, control of reproduction was also of fundamental significance to the interests and well-being of women and their families. As noted previously, childbearing generally

provokes consideration of economic possibilities. While cost-benefit analyses are not fully determinate of childbearing decisions, "rational choice" does play a role, and often an important one. As everyday hardships increased in Ceausescu's Romania, the interests of families and those of the state diverged all too frequently. Most women refused to bear the four or five children demanded of them by the state—in spite of the political demographic policies and incessant assertions such as: "All that occurs in our society has no other purpose than the country's development, the improvement of people's lives to a new level of civilization, the securing of conditions such that all members of society will fully enjoy the benefits of socialism."<sup>54</sup>

To "convince" the population of the state's paternalist largesse, the government deployed an arsenal of techniques (in the Foucauldian sense), including the institutionalization of legislation designed to enforce the political demographic policies and to alter fertility behavior, the elaboration of a propaganda apparatus, the implementation of multilevel surveillance practices, and the instrumentalization of both scientific knowledge and human capital in the interests of the state.<sup>55</sup> Marxist-Leninist regimes embraced scientific rationality as a means of legitimizing their modernization strategies; especially in Romania, the body was the favored vehicle through which success would be achieved.

With respect to the focus of this study, statistics, demography, and medicine were of foremost concern to socialism's vanguard. Statistics, or their amassing, were vital to state control of "the population."<sup>56</sup> Indeed, statistics served as powerful weapons wielded on behalf of "the population" in the name of progress. Birthrates, mortality rates, and material production rates were statistically calculated. The relationship between the population and economic indicators was "measured in terms of production outputs, on the one hand, and, on the other, the living standards of the entire population."<sup>57</sup> As reflected in production-oriented data, the fetishization of statistics became a primary tool of disinformation. These dissimulatory processes are discussed at length in the following chapters.<sup>58</sup> As Asad has noted, "Statistics reconfigure peoples into 'commensurable' social arrangements which can be compared." At the same time, he emphasized that "statistical practices can afford to ignore the problem of 'commensurable' culture."<sup>59</sup> Human beings, however, cannot afford to ignore the contexts in which they live. Over time, the disjunction between statistical representations and everyday living conditions in Romania became too great. The credibility of the former was deeply tarnished.

The collection and analysis of statistics became more a political than a scientific practice. In general, the social sciences were also vulnerable to political manipulation and control. Demography, sociology, history, ethnography, and folklore were all, if somewhat differently, required to do the regime's bidding. Data analyses, regardless of the domain, were to yield in-

terpretations consistent with the party line. It was recognized early on that social scientific research could potentially produce results contradictory to those projected by ideological conviction. Hence, the "allegiance" of social scientists was always open to question and subject to surveillance.<sup>60</sup>

Health professionals, crucial to the implementation of the pronatalist policies, were faced with a similar situation. It was doctors who ministered to the needs of the physical body; hence, doctors and their coworkers were held responsible for making certain that the political demographic goals were achieved. The mechanisms by which doctors manipulated laws, statistical categories, medical diagnoses, and patients themselves are examined throughout this ethnography of Ceausescu's state. However, both religion and medicine were practiced at the behest of the Communist Party. Those in power understood well the significance that both priests, and more important, doctors, held as mediating figures between the private lives and life cycles of citizens and the institutionalized interests of what may be viewed as the life cycle of state socialism.<sup>61</sup> Medical professionals armed with scientific knowledge and the hope they offered those in need of their attention were regarded as the ideal masters and servants of political demography. They were the ones who primarily tended to the pre- and postnatal health of mother and child. It was also recognized that medical practitioners were susceptible to the temptations of pecuniary reward for performing safe but illegal abortions. Yet again, diverse laws and policing techniques were instituted to discourage deviation from the socialist norm and to make certain that society's healers were also obedient model citizens.

The "construction of the new socialist person" and of socialist society depended on the careful monitoring and disciplining of the population. Surveillance and control were among the institutionalized mechanisms used to facilitate public compliance with the regime's projects. Political demography provided the ideological framework through which vital population growth was to be monitored and guaranteed. The population, simultaneously the subject and object of social experimentation, was to be molded with or without its consent into the socialist body politic.

#### THE POLITICS OF DUPLICITY IN CEAUSESCU'S ROMANIA

*Capul plecat sabia nu-l taie.*

*(The sword does not cut off a bowed head.)*

ROMANIAN SAYING

*Although not everyone who lies wants to conceal the truth, not everyone who conceals the truth lies. Generally, we conceal the truth not by lying but by keeping silent.*

AUGUSTINE, *Treatises*<sup>62</sup>

In Ceausescu's Romania, the penetration of the state's totalizing power became a "normal" feature of the sociopolitical ordering of life under socialism. The state's domination of the public sphere and usurpation of many

Foucault

Doctors  
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of the prerogatives of the private transformed its presence into a familiar aspect of the daily lives of every citizen.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, throughout most of his reign, Ceausescu did not rule by outright terror; Romania's secret police during his rule were not readily comparable to the death squads of El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras, or to the terror unleashed by Stalin. Rather, Ceausescu generally kept "his" population in check through the manipulation of diverse forms of symbolic violence, of which fear was a favored form.<sup>64</sup> Domination of the public sphere and penetration of the private were crucial to the successful wielding of symbolic violence and served as effective mechanisms for integrating individuals into the functioning of socialist society. When symbolic violence proved insufficient, physical violence was meted out to coerce compliance. It was not, however, the preferred method of disciplining the body politic. Nor was it necessary; a generalized internalization of the "socialist habitus"—to build upon Bourdieu's term—of the taken-for-granted ways of seeing and being meant that most citizens acted appropriately to fit the context. Self-censorship became a natural reflex; dissimulation, its communicative corollary.

However, the reflexive quality of these modes of acting and understanding simultaneously enabled and disabled the building of socialism. The social dynamics of everyday life were structured by the socialist system itself and contributed importantly to the longevity of the regime.<sup>65</sup> Duplicity and complicity were the hegemonic mechanisms through which social relations came to be organized and by which the organization of socialist society was perpetuated, yet ultimately destroyed. Duplicity is customarily defined as deceitful behavior, as "speaking or acting in two different ways concerning the same matter with the intent to deceive," "double-dealing." Duplicity involves willful, conscious behavior in which social actors are aware of their intentions. Herein enters complicity—often the social ally of duplicity—which refers to "being an accomplice; partnership in an evil action," of participating in the consequences of actions that give rise to certain results—in this case, to the endurance of Ceausescu's rule.<sup>66</sup> Complicity is more nuanced with respect to intentionality. Social actors may, out of fear, indifference, or alienation, actively or passively "aid and abet" that in which they do not believe or with which they do not concur.<sup>67</sup> Complicity, and notably degrees thereof, takes on special significance in a one-party police state in which the public expression of personal opinion is not countenanced. Ceausescu's Romania was such a state.<sup>68</sup>

Nonetheless, it cannot easily be asserted that the relationship between complicity, conformity, and the meaning of one's actions is entirely innocent. A now classic portrayal of the complexity of this relationship is Vaclav Havel's greengrocer, who displayed a "Workers of the World, Unite" sign in his Prague shop window. Whether the greengrocer believed in the message of this slogan remains unknown and, with respect to this discus-

sion, virtually irrelevant. That he displayed this sign as a matter of everyday habit demonstrated his conformity with the system. Or, as Derek Sayer has noted: "The form of power to which this act testifies relies centrally on the knowledge of everybody involved that they are 'living a lie.' . . . Had he not displayed that sign, he would be challenging the everyday moral accommodations, grounded in an equally everyday fear, which everyone engages in and which make everyday life livable—even if at the cost of a corrosive derangement of 'private' and 'public' selves."<sup>69</sup>

In Romania, domination of the public sphere functioned through widespread participation in the production of lies; Romania's socialist edifice was constructed on false reports, false statistics, deliberate disinformation, and false selves as well. The doctoring of statistics, which is discussed throughout this study, helped to maintain the fiction of ever greater socialist achievements. Ceausescu's personality cult was fed, in part, by the public display of loyalty in which virtually everyone played a role. Duplicity became a mode of communicative behavior; conscientious lying was customary practice. Each was a characteristic form of *dedublare*, which all together spun the threads of complicity.

*Dedublare*, Romania's version of *ketman*,<sup>70</sup> roughly means division in two, or dual or split personalities. In the context of Ceausescu's Romania, it generally referred to distinctive representations of the self: a public self that engaged in public displays of conformity in speech and behavior, and a private self that may have retreated to the innermost depths of the mind to preserve a kernel of individual thought.<sup>71</sup> *Dedublare* is a descriptively useful term; however, analytically, it masks the resulting psycho-social problem and drama of the double-self or the split between the "true" and "false" self.<sup>72</sup> This distinction, when sharply delineated by analysts or social actors themselves, makes it more possible to skirt the complex issues associated with complicity and the differentiation between degrees of complicitous behavior. Clearly, some people were engaged more actively and avidly than others in "kissing the hand(s) they could not bite." Hence, to argue that *dedublare* as a structurally determined survival mechanism was simply a reflexive rule of the game in which everyone actively participated relinquishes recognition of the self as a legitimate, responsible actor in favor of the self as victim of the arbitrary will of others (i.e., "fate," thereby paradoxically offering existential comfort).<sup>73</sup> People were manipulated by, but also manipulated, "the system." But when duplicity and complicity come to characterize society-wide relations, the system itself is fragile and structurally vulnerable to implosion.

The following chapters explore the dynamics of duplicity and complicity through an analysis of the politics of reproduction—social and biological—in Ceausescu's Romania. Chapters 1 through 5 set out the regime's official vision of socialist reality and the means by which it was to be

engineered into existence. Chapter 1 presents the context in which reproductive politics were shaped, situating them culturally, nationally, and internationally. A brief historical-demographic overview of Romania's population and of the political significance of human capital for socialist development serves as the backdrop against which socialist paternalism was constructed. Paternalism implies certain kinds of relations between the state and its citizens and bears critically on issues of gender equality. The state's attention to reproduction and the role of women and the family in the building of socialism rhetorically legitimated policies designed to incorporate women into the labor force and the political public sphere and to protect the future of the Romanian nation. However, it simultaneously undermined Ceausescu's ideological insistence on creating equality and "new socialist persons" through a strategy of homogenization. A cursory discussion of the dynamics of official rhetoric is juxtaposed against a parallel discussion of the social practices of everyday life, underscoring what has been characterized variously as the contradiction between theory and practice, or representation and reality.

As chapters 2, 3, and 4 make clear, domination over "the masses" or the population was organized through regulation of the public sphere. Laws, decrees, and policies objectified the political will of the regime and established a framework for the institutionalization of political interests and power relations. Institutionalization provided functional structures through which citizens participated in the actual workings of power and in the trappings of building socialism. It also provided the structures through which discipline and conformity could be monitored. Chapter 2 focuses on the elaboration of anti-abortion legislation throughout 23 years of the Ceausescu regime. The rationales allegedly motivating legislative actions are discussed in detail, as are the immediate practical effects of their implementation. Chapter 3 examines the related social welfare, pronatalist and pro-family policies that girdled the banning of abortion in political demography writ large: the anti-abortion legislation was the instrumental centerpiece of a comprehensive, multidimensional political program to transform reproductive relations in society. Chapter 4 explores the explicit institutionalization of political demography. The means by which medical practitioners—the principal mediators between the state and women—were institutionally constrained are contrasted with the means by which medical practitioners circumvented these constraints. The multiplicity of surveillance techniques employed by and against a complex web of institutional workers (from janitor to director) sheds light on the everyday work-related mechanisms that ensnared persons to greater or lesser degrees in carrying out the will of the regime.<sup>74</sup>

The former socialist states of East Central Europe were self-congratulatory in their logorrhea. Each state "spoke" incessantly through its mouth-

piece, the propaganda apparatus. In chapter 5, Romania's pronatalist propaganda is analyzed in order to understand how rhetorical forms were used to mobilize the population around issues pertaining to the birthrate, population growth and decline, and the essential roles of women, children, and families in the building of socialism and the future of the nation. Disinformation saturated the public sphere. Ultimately, the gaping disjunction between what was represented as socialist heaven on earth by the propaganda apparatus and what was experienced as widespread impoverishment in all aspects of daily life contributed to the collapse of the regime.

Chapters 6 and 7 scrutinize the political demographic policies, especially the banning of abortion, from the vantage point of their lived consequences. Chapter 6 provides oral commentaries and histories obtained from doctors and women regarding the meaning of delegatized abortion in their professional and personal lives. Doctors and other specialists discuss various aspects of abortion-related practices and how they themselves circumvented the law in what they considered to be their own best interests—which often coincided with those of their female patients. The experiences of two physicians who had been arrested for performing abortions illuminate the Kafkaesque quality of their lives and the manner in which professional and private relations were manipulated. These accounts are followed by a series of personal narratives by and about women's encounters with abortion. Clearly, women's struggles with their bodies, their sexuality, and their reproductive functions reverberated throughout their familial, social, and professional relationships. In these accounts, the family emerges for many as a site of solidarity and resistance, but also of betrayal. Intimate opponents and unexpected allies are revealed to be constant protagonists in the sagas of reproductive politics, underscoring the vulnerability and lack of predictability that were characteristic of everyday life in Ceausescu's Romania.

Chapter 7 turns to the legacies of political demography, specifically those related to the criminalization of abortion, which will continue to haunt Romania's population long after the memories of daily life under the regime have faded. Demographic consequences manifested by disturbingly high maternal and infant mortality rates are reviewed, as is the infant AIDS epidemic, which captured international attention. The reclaiming—however partial—of the public sphere from the clutches of the regime brought to light other social effects that resulted in large part from the state's demand for increased numbers of children. The heart-wrenching circumstances of Romania's orphans and abandoned children contributed to the outpouring of humanitarian aid as well as to an influx of potential adoptive parents wanting to provide homes for these unfortunate children. Trafficking in babies and children flourished until the Romanian government intervened legislatively.

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International adoption is but one component of the global politics of reproduction, and, as the Romanian case illustrates, there are both positive and negative sides to it. In the context of radical economic change from the penury of Romania's recent past to a market economy, contracting for the purchase and sale of unborn or newborn babies raises difficult questions about the institutionalization and shifting complexity of what has been labeled "stratified reproduction." Ginsburg and Rapp describe the latter in terms of "the power relations by which some categories of people are empowered to nurture and reproduce, while others are disempowered."<sup>75</sup>

On December 25, 1989, Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu were executed. The second decree of the provisional government abrogated the anti-abortion laws; indeed, the liberalization of abortion was an essential feature of the liberation of Romania's population. The tragic consequences of the criminalization of abortion serve as a subject for reflection in the concluding chapter. Romania presents us with an explicit and extreme case study of what happens when abortion is banned and equal access to contraceptives and sexual education is not provided to all women. Ceausescu's political demographic policies affected the majority of Romania's population.

Elsewhere in the world, the conjoining of duplicity with the politics of reproduction too often results in policies whose effects are disproportionately experienced by poor women unable to "buy" a reasonably safe abortion, or to acquire the knowledge and means to regulate fertility effectively. Anyone who assumes that the majority of women who resort to abortion do so in their own selfish, immoral interests would be well advised to read on with an open heart and mind. The extended research upon which this book is based does not even minimally support such suppositions. I do not advocate abortion as a method of fertility regulation, but neither do I advocate the criminalization of abortion. The empirical consequences of the latter do not vary across cultures, religions, histories, or political systems. Abortion is a fact of everyday life. Its criminalization has never stopped its practice; instead, banning abortion has elevated duplicity and hypocrisy to the level of allegedly moral and political imperatives. Women, children, and families are not abstract public goods. Impassioned rhetoric about the sanctity of life as an abstraction divorced from the realities of everyday circumstances does not alter those everyday realities. To this, the following analysis of the politics of reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania stands as tragic witness.

# Gail Kligman: The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania (Berkeley, U of California Press, 1998)

## CHAPTER 8 Coercion and Reproductive Politics Lessons from Romania

*Romania's experience in the realm of reproductive health can guide policy makers, health system administrators, and reproductive health professionals throughout the world. The high number of maternal deaths during the past 25 years vividly illustrates the consequences of restrictive reproductive health policies: In their determination to control their fertility, Romanian women risked their health and lives; as a result, vast numbers of women died or were permanently injured. Romania's experience also clearly demonstrates the difficulty of reversing the effects of misinformation or lack of information.*

C. HORD, H. DAVID, F. DONNAY, AND M. WOLF,  
*Reproductive Health in Romania: Reversing the Ceausescu Legacy*<sup>1</sup>

*Everyone who has had a happy sexual life or children they love should try and understand the world of Norma McCorvey and Ceausescu's Romania. Maybe then they will comprehend what happens when safe abortion is not available.*

EDITORIAL, *The Lancet*<sup>2</sup>

The Ceausescu regime endured 24 years, during which the inhabitants of Romania became increasingly alienated from their country's leadership as well as from each other. The legacies of this period discussed in the preceding chapter primarily highlight the negative consequences of the paternalist state's demographic policies. An ethnography of Ceausescu's rule as gleaned through an analysis of these policies has shed light on the problematic and paradoxical aspects of the relationship between regime politics, social relations, and reproductive practices, and between the body and the body politic. This concluding chapter discusses in more general terms the lessons that may be drawn from experience with coercive reproductive policies, of which banned abortion was the legislative centerpiece. First, however, a summation of the politics of duplicity, which at once both fed the Ceausescu regime and depleted it of basic human resources, is in order.

### A MOVEMENT OF RAGE: AGAINST THE REGIME

The institutionalization of political will designed to engineer the construction of socialism shaped and was shaped by everyday social experience.

In practice, the rhetorically antagonistic us-versus-them dichotomy noted throughout this analysis was not as sharply defined in daily life as this heuristic classificatory device suggests, either in Romania or elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> But unlike other countries in the region, Ceausescu's regime steered the Socialist Republic of Romania on a course of ever-increasing hard-line politics and daily hardship. Duplicity as communicative style and complicity as communicative act marked the public servitude of "the population" and the disintegration of any notion of civil society as well as of the self. As one person reflected, "If I had to define my life before 1989 with one word, it would be 'duplicity.'"<sup>4</sup> In Romania, the "spoiler state" was particularly adept at fulfilling its mission of "spoiling individuals."<sup>5</sup> Dissimulation and lying served as important regulatory mechanisms for a system whose legitimacy had long since not rested on revolutionary zeal.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, lying protected the official version of socialist reality; on the other, it also protected the actual reality that people lived. Persons attempted to adjust their behavior according to their interests and those of the system. They lied to retain their positions.<sup>7</sup> They spent large sums greasing the goodwill of persons with redistributive power in the attempt to care for their extended families or to arrange an illegal abortion. Yet the unflinching rhetorical dedication of the regime to the needs of its children rang hollow, particularly by the 1980s.

People knew that the official discourse consisted of lies and that they themselves lied; the communicative system was transparent to all. And, as Kundera has written: "Ah, the beauty of transparency! The only successful realization of this dream: a society totally monitored by the police."<sup>8</sup> Whether society was totally monitored by the police is open to debate; but it is widely assumed to have been. Therein emerges the regulatory function of lying: it increased everyone's vulnerability to the arbitrariness with which power was wielded.<sup>9</sup> This arbitrariness was also diffused at all levels of society. The much-dreaded Securitate was organized hierarchically, its ranks swelled by low-level informers. The everyday fear among the populace was tied to the gnawing uncertainty that anyone—a friend, colleague, or family member—could be an informer who sold the lives of others to fortify his or her own interests. To quote again from Kundera, "When it becomes the custom and the rule to divulge another person's private life, we are entering a time when the highest stake is the survival or the disappearance of the individual."<sup>10</sup>

Not everyone participated in all lies all of the time. Some issues remained abstractions until they affected one's personal life directly. The banning of abortion, for example, was not especially noteworthy until a mother, sister, wife, or lover needed one. Then, people often became willfully entangled in a web of lies and deception. Although virtually everyone lied, no one knew when or to whom they might be held accountable for doing so. Lying transformed individuals into the pawns of power; heightened

vulnerability made people susceptible to manipulation, particularly if the well-being of their families was at stake. Again, it was made clear that failure to cooperate could be translated into reprisals against family members: A child would be denied entrance into school, a spouse could lose his or her job.<sup>11</sup> To jeopardize the security of another for what was represented as one's selfishness was a responsibility most ordinary persons were reluctant to take. Uncertainty often mocked self-dignity. Fear and distrust of *puterea* (roughly, the power elite) and of each other were the constants of social relations as well as the end products of compromised, vulnerable selves.

In keeping with the reciprocal dependency between the regime and its citizens, it must also be recognized that the vulnerability felt by the population was mirrored in the growing vulnerability of the state. As so nicely characterized by Jan Gross: "Superiors and subordinates alike contributed to perpetuating the regime. . . . This novel society required both the participation and the vulnerability of all . . . all were custodians and wards simultaneously."<sup>12</sup> Distrust of the publicly loyal masses found expression in repressive and coercive measures. Those at the top were themselves increasingly at risk for greedily embracing Mephistopheles in exchange for privileged lifestyles that could be ruined without notice. Most notorious among the Faustian troops were the secret police, themselves instruments of the very power they manipulated in their own self-serving "ideological" defense. The Securitate supplied muscle to what had become, for all practical purposes, an illegitimate system heavily dependent on administrative repression for survival.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, mass participation in the falsification of empirical realities made it more difficult for people to trust in common sense, let alone that which was officially claimed as "truth." Rumors, phantoms, and conspiracies acquired credibility in an environment in which plausibility had lost critical meaning.<sup>14</sup> Everyone participated in their creation.

Public posturing by and for everyone became both *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi*. The beneficial achievements of Ceausescu's socialism were celebrated by the propaganda apparatus. Bounty was rhetorically weighed in inverse proportion to the actual material conditions of daily existence. As the latter steadily deteriorated, the former flourished. Building socialism, creating new socialist persons and families with many happy and healthy children were speech acts performed to the script of Ceausescu's "golden era."

However, the intentional power of words does not automatically transform them into tangible realities. By the mid-1980s, the gap between what was said and what was experienced had become irreconcilable. Romania's inhabitants could not live adequately on the fantasized stage set that the Socialist Republic of Romania had become. Alienation from the regime became widespread across all spectrums of society, including the privileged. Almost everyone felt the tightening squeeze in which they were clapsed. They

felt themselves repeatedly betrayed by the paternalist regime—Romanian at that—which had vowed the satisfaction of their needs in exchange for filial loyalty. Although the public performance of socialist (sur)realism continued unabated, people's dependence on informal networks and secondary economic activities increased.<sup>15</sup> The public and private were interpenetrated from below as well, with the public sphere being pillaged by those who nonetheless ritually recognized the power in it.

If seeing is believing, then the Ceausescus were blinded by the luster of the radiant future that their golden era allegedly presaged. While communism in the rest of Eastern Europe was collapsing peacefully, appearance suggested the inviolability of Romania's insulation from outside "forces of destruction." Fatally seduced by the very power they coveted, complacent in their fully distorted selves, the Ceausescus did not recognize the fragility of the false world constructed in their images.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, they became victims of the political economy of duplicity and dissimulation they themselves had commanded. First in Timisoara, then in Bucharest, inhabitants of Romania did the unspeakable: They spoke their hearts and minds. *Jos Ceausescu! Down with Ceausescu! Timisoara!*

"In the beginning was the Word . . ." and so the beginning of the end finally erupted in the belly of the beast, in Bucharest. What had endured 24 years publicly crumbled in 24 hours.<sup>17</sup>

Maybe something will happen by itself? It will never happen as long as we daily acknowledge, extol, and strengthen—and do not sever ourselves from—the most perceptible of its aspects: Lies. . . . And the simplest and most accessible key to our self-neglected liberation lies right here: Personal non-participation in lies. Though lies conceal everything, though lies embrace everything . . . let them embrace everything, but not with any help from me. This opens a breach in the imaginary encirclement caused by our inaction. It is the easiest thing to do for us, but it is the most devastating for the lies. Because when people renounce lies it simply cuts short their existence. Like an infection, they can exist only in a living organism.<sup>18</sup>

A ritualized performance of public support for "Ceausescu-Romania" turned into a "movement of rage" against the paternalist regime of socialism in one family.<sup>19</sup> In a dramatic variation on a classic theme, the nation's children murdered their parents.<sup>20</sup> Paradoxically, in liberating themselves from Ceausescu's dictatorship, the atomized and alienated citizens of Romania momentarily realized the power of the population.

With the abrogation of Decree 770 by the provisional post-Ceausescu government, abortion became and remains legal in Romania. Without question, the heartbreaking and chilling irony of Ceausescu's pronatalist policies was that illegal abortion became the predominant method of fertility regulation among a beleaguered population. In view of the real conditions—and limitations—of daily life in Ceausescu's Romania, a woman's decision to

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seek an illegal abortion was a rational one. Insensitive to the lived experiences of most Romanian citizens, the regime focused on formalist interpretations in all domains of everyday productive and reproductive life. The consequences of banning abortion without regard for the actually existing circumstances of daily life contributed to Romania's tragic achievement of having the highest maternal mortality rates in late twentieth-century Europe, a Europe not then embroiled in war.

The politics of reproduction in Romania are now different than during the Ceausescu period. Under Ceausescu's rule, the masses were forced to reproduce in the service of the state. Women's reproductive lives were blatantly exploited. Today, as Romania struggles through the rigors of economic and political transformation and as Romanian society becomes more explicitly class-differentiated, those women who are most vulnerable—poor and single women—have often been compelled to reproduce in the service of market demands. Poverty in particular constrains women's reproductive options in ways strikingly different from those of women with access to diverse resources, especially financial ones. Under Ceausescu, poverty became the generalized socioeconomic condition of Romania's population. In postcommunist Romania, as elsewhere in the region, poverty has become the mark of an increasingly class-differentiated society. Not surprisingly, poverty has also become increasingly feminized, as it is in the West<sup>21</sup>

#### BANNED ABORTION: LESSONS FROM ROMANIA

What may be learned from Romania's stringent reproductive policies? Why do health professionals from democratic countries insist on the importance of understanding the ramifications of Ceausescu's banning of abortion? To be sure, the personal dramas confronted by average Romanian citizens coping with Ceausescu's dictatorship are of a different order of magnitude than those familiar to most middle-class citizens living in Western democracies. Yet the personal despair experienced by Romania's impoverished population may be more readily likened to that faced daily by the poor in the West. In these final pages, I suggest various links among reproductive politics, poverty, and the feminization of poverty. The connections between them must be acknowledged publicly rather than consigned to the abstraction of morally charged rhetoric about an idealized world in which few people have the privilege to live.<sup>22</sup>

The political control of human reproduction—whether promoted in terms of the regulation of population growth, sexual practices, abortion, or adoption—is now a universal policy concern. Government efforts to influence fertility behavior call attention to an important prerogative of the modern state: political intervention in private life, intimacy, and sexuality.

Technological developments have facilitated the bureaucratic regulation of the body as well as of medical practice, to positive and negative effects. Moreover, the enormous expansion of the state into the bodies and lives of citizens has radically blurred cultural boundaries between public and private interests. Until the twentieth century, fertility regulation was typically managed by and in the context of families, which were patriarchal in their social-sexual organization.<sup>23</sup>

The twentieth century has witnessed extreme manifestations heretofore unfathomed of the political control of fertility behavior. Analyses of such extreme case examples, of which Ceausescu's Romania is certainly one, make explicit their relations and mechanisms of domination. Analyses also shed light on processes related to fertility regulation in general that otherwise tend to remain hidden. Hitler's antinatalist policies were directed against those "unfit" to reproduce the Aryan essence; compulsory sterilization was used as a technique of biological genocide. The Communist Parties of China and Romania have subjected their populations to widely publicized and broadly penetrating anti- and pronatalist policies. Under totalizing or authoritarian regimes such as these, the reach of the state is maximal, and the rights of persons as individuals are broadly denied. Instead, persons as members of the social body (the "people-as-one") are considered properties of the nation-state to which they belong. Such regimes readily embrace coercion as a means of accomplishing designated goals.

However, coercive policies only "succeed" at great cost to human life. In Romania, the intent of the political demographic policies was to increase fertility and give birth to new socialist persons. But in the end, "Romania represents the most striking failure of a coercive public policy designed to influence reproductive behavior."<sup>24</sup> The construction of socialism and nationalism is among the rhetorical devices used to link fertility behavior to the state and thereby legitimate the state's control over human reproduction.<sup>25</sup> The paternalist state usurped the patriarchal and patrilineal "right" of men to "protect" women's sexuality and wombs, granting neither men nor women legal control over female fertility. However, the state's intrusion into its citizens' intimate lives inadvertently fostered male/female solidarity against the state and institutionalized illegal abortion. Elsewhere, and not only in communist countries, coercive policies designed to decrease fertility have also involved "terrible social sacrifices" for which "there is little evidence that they are more effective in reducing birth rates than serious programs of collaborative action."<sup>26</sup> Whether pro- or antinatalist, coercive policies have always been resisted and always at significant human risk.

The fundamental lesson of Romania's political demographic policies, the centerpiece of which was the re-criminalization of abortion, is that legal and safe abortions must be protected by law. The comparative, historical

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records of maternal mortality in countries where abortion is banned make clear that women will seek illegal abortions when effective options to prevent and terminate unwanted pregnancies are not available to them. In short, women risk their lives in order to gain control over their fertility. Clearly, access to contraceptive knowledge and methods by women *and* men is a critical aspect of responsible sexual and reproductive practices, and, of course fertility regulation.

The criminalization of abortion speaks loudly to the politics of duplicity across the globe. Criminalization has never eradicated abortion and invariably pushes abortion underground, making it invisible in the public sphere. Women the world over, as well as their families, partners, and friends, have responded creatively as well as despairingly to the criminalization of abortion. They have organized feminist abortion collectives, traveled as "abortion tourists" to countries where legal abortions are obtainable, and sought doctors or midwives working in the illegal, underground economy of abortion provision or back-alley abortionists.<sup>27</sup> Others have experimented with traditional and contemporary methods to self-induce an abortion. Again, whatever the means, women without recourse to legal and safe alternatives will pursue the termination of unwanted pregnancies illegally.

It is important to underscore that protecting abortion as a legal right (in all countries) is not synonymous with advocating abortion as a method of fertility regulation. In general, abortions involve surgical intervention, and all surgical interventions open the body to the possibility of secondary complications. Although the development of RU486, the so-called abortion pill, may dramatically alter abortion techniques, it is unlikely to be accessible to all or even most women. This raises a critical issue regarding abortion rights. Abortion must be legally protected as a last resource. Yet, just as the legal protection of abortion does not mean that abortion should be promoted as a method of fertility regulation, so the existence of legal abortion does not enable all women to have access to safe abortions performed by qualified medical or nonmedical personnel. The right to abortion constitutes rhetorical equality for women; however, the availability of and access to legal abortion in actuality remain stratified. Poor women are generally disadvantaged on both counts.

In this respect, the Romanian case is instructive. During Ceausescu's rule, only a privileged minority of women had relatively easy access to the staples, let alone luxuries, of everyday living; these same women were better positioned to acquire modern contraceptives or clandestine abortions by trained providers. By contrast, the majority of Romania's women of childbearing age struggled along with their families to furnish the basic necessities of daily life. Many of these same women struggled through the ordeals of unsafe, illegal abortion, becoming the victims of such practices. Here, in

the United States, the lives of poor women are similarly stressed in an everyday sense, and it is they who will be most egregiously affected by any re-criminalization of abortion.

For those who would revisit *Roe v. Wade*, Romania's recent history stands as a tragic and poignant lesson. Those who uphold absolute "moral" or political values (as was the case in Romania) over the all too real exigencies of daily life privilege ideology over lived experience. The fervent rhetorical defense of the sanctity of life denigrates the sanctity of the embodied self while eschewing any consideration of the empirical factors that constrain women's and families' childbearing *and* child-rearing possibilities. Re-criminalizing abortion would further alter an already transformed war against the poor into a war against poor women in particular.<sup>28</sup> Despite claims made by anti-abortion advocates, there is no empirical evidence suggesting that women seek abortions for frivolous or primarily selfish reasons.<sup>29</sup> However, incontestable historical and comparative evidence repeatedly demonstrates that criminalizing abortion reconstitutes illegal abortion as an unsafe method of fertility regulation.

The social inequalities that limit the reproductive or contraceptive options of poor women cannot be reduced to class-biased notions of the sexual irresponsibility of poor women—often women of color. Because poor women often lack access to reliable means of contraceptive knowledge and practice, the consequences of their sexuality and fertility behavior are less shielded from bourgeois public scrutiny than those of women with more resources. Poverty stigmatizes women's sexuality, childbearing and child-rearing, just as it also contributes to the stratification of those aspects of women's lives.

Poverty calls attention to women's reproductive capacities in complex, paradoxical ways. For example, it is poor women, often of color, who are typically entrusted with the care of children other than their own; these women are customarily valued for their presumed "natural" mothering skills. Yet these same women are denigrated for their purported lack of sexual control and mothering skills when it comes to their own offspring. It is also poor women who rent their bodies more frequently for the pleasure of men, or to bear children for those unable to do so. And poor women are often expected to give up their babies for international adoption under the guise of humanitarianism. The politics of reproduction and of duplicity are yet again coupled in relations that mask the unequal gender hierarchies—male and female—which lend shape to the stratification of reproduction across the globe. Class and race intermingle to disproportionately disadvantage certain women.<sup>30</sup> Regarding abortion and the politics of reproduction in general, poor women are decidedly more vulnerable to circumstances beyond their control.

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As the Romanian case demonstrates, ignoring the social conditions of reproduction—the actually existing constraints or opportunities of everyday life—has profound social consequences. Unwanted pregnancies too often result in neglected children deeply scarred by the lack of love and support as well as by the harshness of their young lives.<sup>31</sup> And while the banning of abortion is especially problematic for poor women, it is no longer clear—should abortion again be criminalized in the United States—that women with the resources to afford illegal abortion services would be readily able to do so. The changing practice of medicine in the United States will necessarily and adversely affect the provision of illegal abortion: For example, the increasing centralization of care-delivery systems facilitates their surveillance, thus reducing the possibility of furtive and illegal work in hospitals.<sup>32</sup> Malpractice insurance combined with limited training of abortion techniques in medical schools and extremist violence against abortion providers reconfigure in unprecedented ways the context in which illegal abortions may be obtained, compromising the safety of the procedure. Furthermore, it can only be assumed that legal action against nonmedical abortion providers such as midwives and feminist collectives will be instituted to discipline their activities. Hence, if abortion is re-criminalized in the United States, travel abroad would become a preferred option for women with the means to do so. The hypocrisy of abortion tourism warrants no additional comment than that noted in the introduction.

Herein lies another grim lesson from Romania's experience. All of the techniques of the modern state were brought to bear on the systemwide institutionalization of repressive reproductive politics, for which the banning of abortion served as legislative catalyst. Law became the instrument of and for oppression. The modern state depends on legal rationality to legitimate and extend its control throughout society. The rule of law run amok, as was the case in Ceausescu's Romania, offers an important cautionary tale about the power of law to subvert, and pervert, its own objectives. History has already demonstrated that democracies are not immune to tyranny by law.

In this respect, the criminalization of abortion poses persistent and vexing problems: Law by and for whom? Democracy by and for whom? The criminalization of abortion defines women's legal rights as citizens as essentially circumscribed by biology. All women, unless infertile, can potentially become pregnant. Hence, because of their fertility, women are created unequal before the law. In sharp distinction, men's legal rights as citizens and their participation are not fundamentally constrained by their sex.<sup>33</sup> The criminalization of abortion is a critical means by which the patriarchal control of women is formalized and legitimated by law, whether in the paternalist states of the former Soviet sphere or the patriarchal ones of the West.<sup>34</sup>

For example, a "moderate" ideological position on the re-criminalization

of abortion in the United States proposes certain exceptions under which an abortion might be performed. Two of these exceptions, rape and incest, are especially revealing of male presumption and reflect the duplicity of anti-abortion rhetoric. These exceptions in particular unmask the reality that they represent: women's bodies are not considered to be their own property, even when they are adults. Rape and incest, the latter of which is assumed to be more prevalent in father-daughter relations, breach basic taboos associated with the ideal-typical bourgeois family. Only when women are demonstrably victimized by male sexual violence that violates the norms of patriarchal propriety (that is, when the limits of male self-control are breached) may women be exonerated from bearing a resulting pregnancy.<sup>35</sup> The circumstantial exception to a law that otherwise denies women control over their reproductive lives serves to remove the evidence against the perpetrator and what would amount to the enduring shame of being viewed as a criminal.<sup>36</sup> The exception proves the rule, so to speak: the criminalization of abortion legally protects male domination of female sexuality and fertility and deprives men and women of accountability and responsibility for their actions.

Indeed, rape and incest, when proven, highlight a truism of human reproductive and sexual history: men are rarely held accountable for their uncontrolled sexual behaviors.<sup>37</sup> Historically, virility has been projected as a powerful representation of maleness. Yet, it is not virility and male sexual irresponsibility that have been targeted for taming, but rather women's allegedly inherent libidinous desires that have required male control and "protection."<sup>38</sup> Women—not men—customarily must answer for their sexual conduct. The misplaced sexual urges and excesses of men, from rape to the refusal to use condoms as a routine matter of safe sexual practice, are generally tolerated and excused. Self-indulgent rationalizations suffice to account for a man's "right" to endanger the well-being of a partner in pursuit of his own immediate pleasure.<sup>39</sup>

Unwanted pregnancies are not the mysterious products of divine conception. Indeed, conception without sex obviates the issue of unwanted pregnancy. This method of conception has been made possible by the new reproductive technologies that have emerged from scientific intervention. The factors that contribute to unwanted pregnancies are many and complexly related. However, to date, women bear the primary burden of such pregnancies. Men must take responsibility for their sexual interests and activities.<sup>40</sup> Social change rather than reinvigorated social control is necessary. Just as democratization of household labor is a necessary condition of women's equality, so too is the democratization of sexual and reproductive responsibility. Until responsibility for sexual and contraceptive behavior becomes gender-neutral, women will remain unequal in the public and private spheres of everyday life.

However, the slow change in the division of household labor suggests that optimism about the democratization of sexual and contraceptive knowledge and practices is idealistic. This makes the necessity of legal abortion ever more urgent. But keeping abortion legal has attendant responsibilities. For example, physicians must have the right of conscientious objection with respect to performing abortions, just as women must have the right of full information and access to safe abortions.<sup>41</sup> There must be forthright efforts to educate all citizens regardless of their gender, race, class, and ethnicity about contraceptive options, and to create the foundations of a political and cultural environment that encourages citizens to take responsibility for their lives, as well as for their fertility choices.<sup>42</sup>

Again, re-criminalizing abortion will not stop abortion, just as prohibiting liquor and drugs has not stopped their manufacture, distribution, and consumption.<sup>43</sup> Nor would banning abortion strengthen "the family"; banning abortion would, however, create an unenforceable policy, the consequences of which would differentially hurt poor women and give rise to a culture of hidden pain and overt hypocrisy. Madison understood that the test of democracy lies in its treatment of its minorities, society's most vulnerable members, among whom are women and children.<sup>44</sup> As long as women lack the freedom to control their reproductive lives fully, they will be unable to participate in the public sphere as full and equal citizens, and in their private lives as full and equal partners.

Demanding that women bear children, as was the case in Romania, and legislating that they do so, as some hope will again be the case in the United States, are facile and misguided approaches to social and human reproduction. Pronatalist or, for that matter, antinatalist cultures need not be coercive or restrict other social arrangements. The criminalization of abortion reduces the experienced realities of everyday life to abstractions, the results of which are detrimental to health, liberty, and the quality of life. The value of life-as-lived is thereby transformed into life as a material to be maximized, for example, for reproduction of the labor force or for the will of God. From such an ideological or theological perspective, there is ultimately nothing sacred about life other than its being. "Meaningful lives" become meaningless in these terms, the prerogatives of the privileged.

Detailed analysis of the political demographic policies of the Ceăușescu regime, of which the criminalization of abortion was the central legislative act, has made it possible to focus on the social implications and human costs of restrictive reproductive legislation and policies, especially as they affect the lives of women and children. When reproductive legislation and policies are formulated according to abstract principles rather than in consideration of actual socioeconomic factors that influence the quality of human life, then the lived consequences are too often tragic, particularly for women and children. Ceăușescu's Romania offers a glaring case study of the conse-

quences of banning abortion and limiting the availability of and access to the resources that make everyday life livable. The Romanian case must be borne in mind by those who would ban abortion in the United States (or elsewhere). Otherwise, for those of us in the United States, the American dream will become an American nightmare to which we will all bear witness, and for which we will all share responsibility.