

REVOLUTION? NOBODY SAID ANYTHING ABOUT A REVOLUTION!

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I had read it several times early last year and I read it again recently just to be sure. Nowhere does the Mission Report suggest anything about a revolution in Romania! However, four short months after arriving in Bucharest, I found myself "hunkered down" at home watching tracer bullets from machine guns arch gracefully over our house through the night sky. Advice had been given to stay away from the windows, for fear of flying glass, but when you have 20 foot high windows in your livingroom, it's not an easy task. Christmas Eve, alone with the cat (since Harriet had been evacuated to Vienna to join our daughter Jennifer, coming from Canada) and the BBC on the short wave, was not a high point, but it was nothing compared to the sacrifice made by many Romanian families for Christmas 1989.

As everyone knows, of course, the revolution in Romania was a violent, bloody upheaval, very much in contrast to earlier events in neighbouring Warsaw Pact countries. In retrospect however, this was not surprising, considering the iron grip Ceaucescu had on this country, and the poverty and repression he had inflicted upon his people. The resentment, fear and hatred towards Ceaucescu's special "securitate" forces had years to ferment, and when the explosion came, it is little wonder that the people were prepared to make whatever sacrifice necessary to gain their freedom. Many had very little left to lose. As unpredictable as the revolution itself had been, so was the continued fighting of Ceaucescu's loyalists, even after his capture and execution.

Not only did the revolution depose a tyrant, it wrought irreversible changes for every Romanian, as well as for temporary visitors.

It is difficult to prioritize all the changes that have taken place, but I think the most significant to the Romanians is the freedom to talk, both among themselves and with foreigners. They had lived with the absolute fear that informants were everywhere and that any derogatory comment could be overheard and reported. Shortly after the revolution, while shovelling snow from the driveway, my neighbour came over to tell me that he had always wanted to say more than hello when we passed, but he had been afraid to do so. He has a brother in Montreal and just wanted to talk about Canada. What a sad situation it was. Others have said that the slightly increased availability of food and heat are just bonuses compared to the main reward of freedom to communicate.

The impact of the revolution on our work in the Commercial Division has also been quite dramatic. Pre-revolution, the cornerstone of Canada's commercial activities was the Cernavoda nuclear project, which was labouring along under increasing political interference. However, the revolution has opened up commercial opportunities in many other sectors that had been allowed to degenerate through lack of maintenance and refusal to import spare parts, new equipment, technology, etc. Entrepreneurs are quickly surfacing, and in fact, even before the shooting died down, we were receiving calls from people offering their services and looking to work with Canadian companies here or in their country markets. It has also caused a flood of people wanting to immigrate to Canada or just to visit. And, of course, this has put a severe strain on our Consular Division.

There has been a refreshing change in the reporting of news and the provision of commercial information. In fact, it's almost

