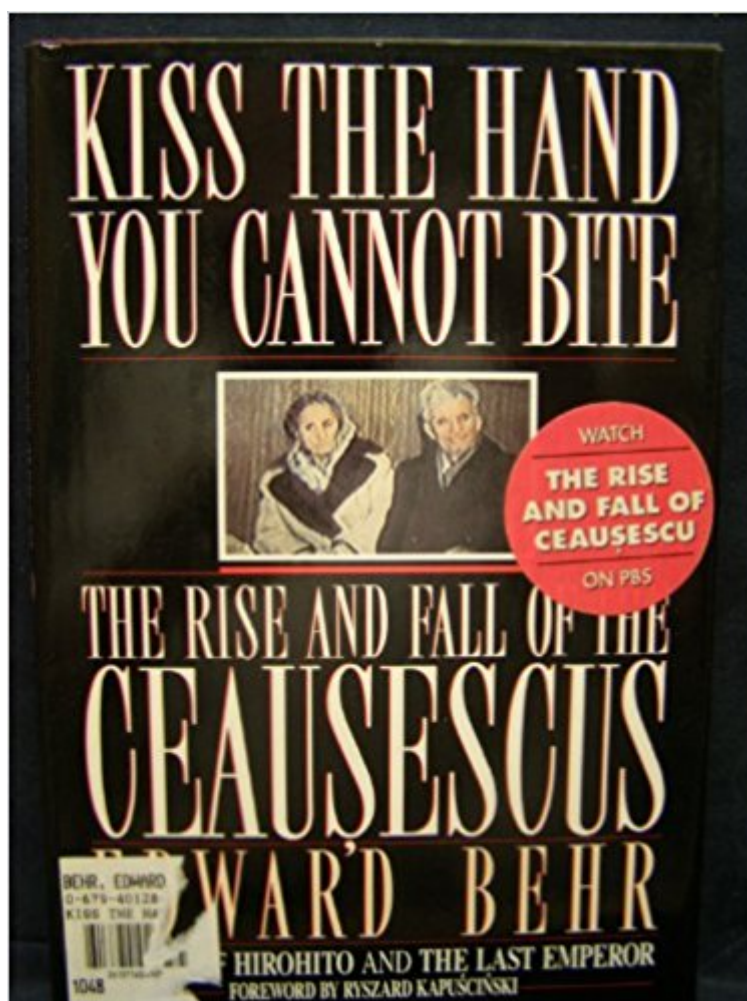


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Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite: The Rise And Fall Of The Ceausescus



Synopsis

Book by Behr, Edward

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Behr's probing analysis of the historical roots of the Ceausescu dictatorship in Romania goes a long way toward explaining the pathological behavior characterizing the rule of "the communist Dracula" and why his regime endured. "A man like me," Nicolae Ceausescu boasted, "comes along only once every five hundred years." Behr (Hirohito) makes clear what manner of man Ceausescu was, how he ruled his country and the important role his wife, Elena, played in the regime. The picture that comes into focus is that of an evil-minded, paranoid and petty couple, at once canny and stupid, who relied on a huge state security apparatus, the Securitate , to spread fear among their extraordinarily submissive subjects. The book includes a full account of the popular uprising in December 1989 and the arrest, trial and execution of the Ceausescus. Behr notes that the bulk of the officers and officials of the Securitate remain in place; thus the dead "Dracula" continues to cast his shadow over the land. This is a rare close look at one of the most grotesque of the Communist personality cults. Photos. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I understand why someone would not like the book, but I enjoyed it. The author goes back and digs up a lot of background, including things that do not directly relate to Ceausescu himself. If you enjoy history, you will love the book; but if you are simply looking for a quick read that rapidly skims over the rise of a dictator in order to get to his fall, this is not the book you are looking for.

I enjoyed this book a great deal simply as a educational look at the forces that allowed people like the Ceausescus to come to power and the inevitable forces that drove them out of it. It was obviously immaculately and meticulously researched and the author certainly sweeps you along in the emotion of nearly every narrative. I'm strictly an armchair history buff with no particular specialty, although I read a lot of English Tudor stuff. I've been going hit and miss through Russian history and some German things, and after watching the documentary, "The Rise and Fall of the Ceausescus," I was interested enough to seek out this book. I'm glad I did see the documentary first for my own assistance, because it gave me some help with some of the general points of reference and helped keep some of the events in line for me. I didn't come into the book with any strong opinions about the reasons for why the Ceausescus did what they did or for Romanian politics in general, just because I was only a casual reader of this region's history. Just judging this book on the merits of its writing, apparent research, narrative, sources and correlation with what I do know, this is really a top notch book. Very easy to read, engrossing and worth the effort to find since it now seems to be available on the secondary market only.

The 20th Century will forever be remembered as one of supreme cruelty, and few nations can speak to this better than those who fell beneath the Iron Curtain. Romania, a proud Eastern European nation with a mix of Italians, Bulgarians and Hungarians among the native peoples, was a centerpiece to this. At the close of WWII, Communist forces rose up in Romania and neighboring nations, installing a home-brewed oppression under the guidance and repression of the Soviet Union. Romania's Communist experience was punctuated by distinct periods, the worst of which was the Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu rule of the 1970s and '80s. With this background, Edward Behr does a fabulous job guiding the reader through a social and political history of Romania from its invasions of pre-1000 A.D., to the power-sharing rule under the Turks in later years, to the imported German royal family in the Industrialization of the latter 1800s. The nation was pulled in different directions by various interests - Hungarians, Transylvanians and Bessarabians (Moldovans) looking for dominion. Into this cauldron, Nicolae Ceausescu was born. Behr takes us through his childhood and upbringing, where the uneducated and unintelligent child was little more than a street thug who discovered, and followed without question, the Marxist-Leninist doctrine. He served powerful men within the Romanian Communist Party during the 'dark' years as a forbidden political party, was jailed for several years, and emerged at the end of WWII in the shadow of Romania's Communist rulers. His loyalty gained him titles, privilege and eventually, the position of First Secretary. As Behr describes it, what began with hopes and indications of a break with Soviet

doctrine, dissolved into Ceausescu's fascination with the cult of personality, his fear of betrayal, and Elena's pressures to keep them living at the peak while most Romanians suffered horrendously. This book is well-written, very readable and an excellent overview of the troubles Romania has faced. While there are several interview snippets with members of the Ceausescu regime, and indications that Behr was given access to files of the Securitate (the Romanian secret police), there is nothing in the way of documentation. However, I have no reason to doubt that Behr traveled repeatedly and extensively in researching his book. Here's hoping that future authors follow this up by providing details on the Romanian Communist central planning function, and its fundamental break with the economic reality of the country.

I read this good book, here in Brazil. This book is mainly about the rise and fall of the Communist couple Ceausescu in Romania. This book has these advantages and many others: 1- This book makes a clear connection between Ceausescus' lack of education and complete megalomania decades later. 2- Behr exposes Nicolae's personal main bad qualities: Corruption, stuttering, bad temper, ignorance, vanity, bad taste and erratic behavior as a terrible leader. 3- This book exposes centuries of Romanians' complacency and historical tendency to compromise, without ever romanticizing these features. 4- This book shows that a group of yes-men and above all Ceausescu's wife, Elena, were following centuries of same features in government of Romania. Things like nepotism, corruption, lack of scruples, bad taste, huge and useless palaces, etc. the very leadership principles of Romania for many decades before Ceausescu's government. 5- Communism itself produced the Ceausescu couple government. In fact, this book shows that Communism is a system where the correct values is totally reversed, and Behr makes this clear with detachment and professionalism. 6- This book shows how easily former Nazis of Iron Guard became complete communists. See page 111, as an example. 7- Romanian Communist Party grew more than one hundred times, between 1944 and 1947. See page 106. 8- For Communists, the past is something they exchange at their will and lies are normal tools for Communists. See page 100 as an example. 9- The fake "scientific works" of Elena Ceausescu are exposed. See pages 140 and 141. Her evil genius is exposed on pages 182 to 184. Elena Ceausescu's bad education is covered. 10- After the first chapter, the firsts chapters of this book are about Romania before Communism. They are very good and undisposable. Many things that happened before Communism were repeated decades later, under another ears and other names. 11- Penury under Communism is exposed many times in this book. 12- Rest of Ceausescu's family is exposed. After Ceausescu's fall, one relative of he got suicide. Even with these and about two dozens others great

things in this book, I won't give five stars for it, because:1- This book claims that Potsdam Conference decided the Romania's fate. In fact the Romanian fate for Communism was decided during the Yalta Conference months before and by Soviet occupation about one year before Potsdam Conference.2- About the Antonescu's execution, this book tells a lie, on page 108, about that execution.3- There's a mistake about the First Oil Crisis' year (page 167).4- This book makes an useless critic to Iom Pacepa's book "Red Horizons" on page 214.5- The first chapter is very good written, but it is in the wrong place. This chapter is about the Ceausescu's downing, capture and execution. The correct place of this chapter would be at the end chapters of this good book. This book must be read together with the Pacepa's book "Red Horizons".

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