



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on April 25, 2019

Maduro Uses Threats to Keep Military Loyal, Frustrating Opposition

After months of offering amnesty to Venezuela's top military in exchange for their defection, the opposition to Nicolás Maduro's Marxist dictatorship [has largely failed](#) in its efforts. As of Wednesday, barely 1,500 of Maduro's 280,000-strong military have done so, escaping to Colombia to the west and Brazil to the south. Most of them have come from the lower ranks and the country's National Guard.



Those few who have successfully escaped told Reuters that rebellion "has been contained by intimidation and threats of reprisals against officers' families." Said one escapee, a female National Guard lieutenant who crossed into Brazil on foot, told Reuters, "Most military people that are leaving are from the National Guard. They will continue coming. More want to leave." But they are constrained by threats of reprisals against their families if they oppose Maduro. Those threats are being carried out by the *colectivos* — motorcycle gangs with automatic weapons — who terrorize any who might support Guaidó's opposition to the Maduro dictatorship.

An official who worked on President Trump's Venezuela policy told the *Washington Post*: "I think the administration, as well as the opposition, put too much hope in [Maduro's] military rising up.... We haven't been able to flip them. And we've been trying and trying." Another official, Juan Andres Mejia, a lawmaker from Guaidó's Popular Will party, agrees: "We know our message to soldiers is being heard and that there is discontent within [his] armed forces. But there's too much surveillance, blackmail and counterintelligence. The [amnesty] strategy hasn't produced the effect we were looking for."

This same frustration must have been felt by Ion Iliescu, the leader of the opposition during the Romanian Revolution in December 1989. He experienced firsthand the repression and tyranny imposed by Romania's communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu. The dictator imposed price controls on his people, which led to rationing. Protests were quashed by his Securitate (remarkably similar to Maduro's *colectivos*), which was responsible for mass surveillance, repression, and human-rights abuses of those perceived to pose potential threats to his regime. He suppressed and controlled the media and the press and had arrested any who dared to speak out about those abuses.

Those economic controls led to government deficits, which resulted in the buildup of enormous debts to foreign countries friendly to the dictatorship. In exchange, Ceaușescu exported desperately needed agricultural and industrial products in order to repay them.

The rationing led to shortages of food, water, oil, heat, electricity, medicine, and other necessities.

All of which led to the moment of crisis for Ceaușescu. His military turned on him following a speech on Christmas Day 1989 where he lost control of the crowd. Wikipedia tells the story: "Ceaușescu raised his right hand in hopes of silencing the crowd; his stunned expression remains one of the defining moments of the end of Communism in Eastern Europe."



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That “stunned expression” is available on YouTube. Wiki told what happened next:

The Ceaușescus were tried before a court convened in a small room on orders of the National Salvation Front, Romania’s provisional government. They faced charges including illegal gathering of wealth and genocide. Ceaușescu repeatedly denied the court’s authority to try him, and asserted he was still legally the president of Romania. At the end of the quick show trial, the Ceaușescus were found guilty and sentenced to death. A soldier standing guard in the proceedings was ordered to take the Ceaușescus out back one by one and shoot them, but the Ceaușescus demanded to die together. The soldiers agreed to this and began to tie their hands behind their backs, which the Ceaușescus protested against but were powerless to prevent.

The Ceaușescus were executed by a gathering of soldiers: Captain Ionel Boeru, Sergeant-Major Georghin Octavian, and Dorin-Marian Cîrlan, while reportedly hundreds of others also volunteered.

Following the elimination of the Ceaușescus, Ion Iliescu and his National Salvation Front took control of the government, and six months later held the “free and fair” elections they had promised the Romanian people. Iliescu was elected president overwhelmingly and over the next several years began instituting both economic and political reforms that brought Romania back from the edge of extinction.

It may be that Maduro’s opposition, headed by Juan Guaidó, is hoping that lightning might strike twice. He is calling for “the largest march in the history of Venezuela” in an effort to topple Maduro’s dictatorship: “We call on all the people to join in the largest march in the history of Venezuela to demand the end to the usurpation so this tragedy can end.”

While Ceaușescu’s reign ended on Christmas Day 1989, Guaidó is calling for the march to take place on May 1. It was on May 1, 1945 that Allied forces took over Hitler’s private mountain retreat in Bavaria and declared him dead. It was on May 1, 2011 that Osama Bin Laden was declared dead near Abbottabad in Pakistan. May 1 is the Socialist International Workers’ Day. And, perhaps most importantly, on May 1, 1776, the Bavarian Illuminati was formed by Adam Weishaupt.

Could lightning strike twice? There are calls for Guaidó’s protest to gather in front of Maduro’s presidential palace in Caracas. Perhaps Maduro might give a speech to quiet the crowd.

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