

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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The Paper Will Be Blue / Hârtiava fi albastră (2006)

RADU MUNTEAN

Contents

Overview
Synopsis
Characters
Character
Analysis
Themes
Scenes

OVERVIEW

Auteur Radu Muntean (b. 1971) is a Romanian film director and screenwriter and a prominent figure of the Romanian New Wave that emerged after the fall of the communist regime in Romania in 1989. The son of a reputed director, filmmaker and TV producer, Muntean obtained his film directing degree from the Theatre and Film Academy (Bucharest) in 1994. Apart from his highly valued work in the cinema (documentaries, short movies and feature films), Muntean has also applied his artistic expertise to the advertising industry and directed numerous commercials for which he has won national and international awards in industry-related festivals.

Film In 2007, the movie won the Gopo Awards (a highly prestigious national award in Romania, similar to the Academy Awards in the US) for Best Sound and Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Andi Vasluianu for Aurel). It was also nominated in numerous other categories (Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Feature Film, Best Cinematography).

The international recognition of the movie includes awards such as Antalya Golden Orange for Best Feature Film, the Film Festival Cottbus Special Prize for Best Director, and the Jury Special Prize at the Namur International Festival of French-Speaking Film and Marrakech International Film Festival.

The omnipresent character of *The Paper Will Be Blue* is the 1989 Romanian Revolution. In Muntean's own words, the movie 'does not aim to render a History Channel historical-type perspective, but to reconstruct the emotions of the ordinary people taking part in those events.' As he goes on to explain, 'It is the story of a generation's lost innocence and of a mass revolt that revealed the best and worst in us equally: the spirit of solidarity as well as the selfishness and meanness pent-up in decades of frustration.'

The characters and story are fictitious but inspired by real events that involved two Special Counter-Terrorism Units whose intervention vehicles were all shot up. The soldiers' bodies were then defiled for a week because they had been mistaken for terrorists. Later on, they were said to have been shot in confusion.

The title of the movie is a password circulating within the militia's patrol units during the night of the story events, which plays a major role in the plot.

CINEMATIC NARRATION

The technique employed in the movie is the road narrative, which vividly conveys a realistic glimpse into the social unrest and the streets full of people who have come out in the streets to protest against Ceausescu. Following Lt. Neagu's patrol vehicle, Costi's walk on the street, taking the underground and then getting on a truck full of revolutionaries, the mobile camera captures the protagonists' personal histories and emotions and re-creates the atmosphere of the 1989 Revolution. The constant interplay between the light (e.g., torches & candles lit up in the street for the dead, smoldering little fires in the street) and the dark (e.g., the night & dark rooms) heighten the uncertainty and chaos of that period. The narrative

unfolds in a circular mode, with the beginning and the end mirroring each other: it starts with two of the main protagonists' deaths, followed by a sequence of flashbacks to return to the opening setting and event.

SYNOPSIS

The Paper Will Be Blue follows the night of 22nd to the morning of 23rd December 1989, the year Romanians rose in revolt against communism and Ceausescu's totalitarian regime. In the first days of the revolution, the army made a common front with the civilian revolutionaries, whereas the militia—which was directly subordinated to the Secret Services ('Securitate') and the Communist Party—was in some kind of limbo until Ceausescu and his family were captured. In the service of the militia, Lt. Neagu and his squad (Costi, Bogdan, Dragos and Vasile) are given the mission to maintain order in the suburbs of Bucharest. They drive through the city in a militia patrol vehicle at night, and Lt. Neagu regularly asks Vasile, the radio communication operator, to check for updates, new passwords and connect him with Lt. Voinescu. Costi decides to fight for the Revolution cause and, despite Neagu's attempt to stop him, gets on the Underground heading toward the TV station. On his way there, he meets Aurel on a truck with revolutionaries, and they get off together to make room for a wounded soldier. Craciun, the revolutionary who helps the soldier get on the truck, takes Costi and Aurel to a villa nearby and gives them guns to fight. As a result of a misunderstanding, Costi and Aurel are taken hostages on suspicion of being terrorists, and freed only after Costi's identity is confirmed. In the meantime, Lt. Neagu and his squad look for Costi at the TV station, and then go to his house and wait for him there. Costi eventually gets home and rejoins his squad. Very early the next morning, Costi and Bogdan do not wait for their password to be checked by soldiers in the area and they are shot dead by the patrol vehicle.

CHARACTERS

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Costantin Andronescu (Costi)</i> | A militia soldier |
| <i>Lt. Neagu</i> | A militia lieutenant |
| Dragos | A militia petty officer |
| Vasile | A radio communication operator |
| <i>Bogdan</i> | A militia soldier and Costi's friend |
| <i>Craciun</i> | A revolutionary civilian |
| <i>Mrs. Andronescu</i> | Costi's mom |
| Angela | Costi's fiancé |

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Costi

In his early twenties, Costi is not afraid to speak his mind and acts as his conscience rather than rules dictate. He is a non-conformist and rebellious character, who cannot be stopped once he sets his mind to something, no matter the consequences.

Rebellious As soon as he makes the decision to defend the TV station, Costi no longer accepts that, as a soldier, he must obey orders from higher ranks (Lt. Neagu and Dragos). Lt. Neagu disarms him, ironically urging him, 'Now you can go right down to the TV station and fight', but that does not discourage Costi. Seeing that his friend Bogdan will not follow him either, Costi walks away despite Neagu's desperate orders and threats.

Bold Costi's decision to join the Revolution in spite of his superiors' orders shows his bold character. When Dragos ironically calls him 'Rambo', asking, 'You want us to go to the TV station to get shot in the head?', Costi does not take into account that Dragos is higher in rank than he and answers back in a straightforward manner: 'I wanna go there and fight! You can stay here, and hide like a rat!'

Reckless The first scene of the movie shows Costi and Bogdan getting out of the patrol vehicle to smoke and getting shot dead by some soldiers nearby, several seconds later. The final scene shows how imprudent Costi was, given the chaos of the time. Their vehicle is pulled over by some Army soldiers. A

man's voice on the radio asks for the password and orders them to wait to be identified. Costi fidgets on the seat and says, 'Comrade Lieutenant, we're going out a little till they make up their minds'. Dragos orders him to wait and Lt. Neagu says, 'You're not listening to me again!' But Costi insists, 'Only for two minutes because I am all stiff. He gets out of the vehicle, followed by Bogdan, and they are killed.

Lt. Neagu

Lt. Neagu is a militia officer with years of military training and experience. He generally treats his young subordinates in a kind and protective manner, but he can also be authoritative when necessary. His temperate personality helps him remain sensible despite the chaos around him.

Humane Given the revolutionary context and the fact that he is a militia officer, Lt. Neagu treats his soldiers in a humane way. He is concerned for their safety and state of mind: 'Boys, trust me, I know how you feel. Look, each of you say what's on your mind.' When he goes looking for Costi at the TV station, the considerate side of his character is even more emphasized in contrast with Colonel Argaseala's arrogant and stern attitude. Neagu's reference to his soldiers as 'kids' makes the colonel yell at him: 'What kids? Where? Are you on drugs? Have you been drinking?'

Partial Neagu has a very partial attitude towards Costi. When it is just the two of them alone, Neagu asks Costi to 'stop making it difficult' for him in front of his comrades. When meeting Voinescu, Neagu explains that he cannot report Costi because he was assigned to him by General Axinte. Even when Colonel Argaseala suggests that he 'just report him at roll call in the morning', Neagu replies, 'Believe me, I can't report him; it's a special situation.'

Cautious As they drive through the suburbs, Dragos observes out loud that it is 'peace and quiet', which makes Neagu comment sarcastically on Costi's need for 'action', 'terrorists, all that crap'. Neagu goes on to advise Costi, and, implicitly, the rest of his soldiers: 'Keep your heads down till this whole mess is over. Because you never know how things will turn out.' Before making the decision to look for Costi at the TV station, Neagu instructs his soldiers to avoid the area: 'You'd better figure something out because I'm not going by the TV station.'

Dragos

Even though Dragos is also young, he does not share Costi's enthusiasm for the Revolution. He is not willing to take risks and readily complies with Neagu's instructions to avoid the dangerous areas of the city. Dragos is a hardened cynic, who would prefer to be at home drinking beer and watch others fight on TV, as he himself says.

Gruff Dragos's antipathy towards Costi becomes evident when the latter tries to convince everyone that 'now's the time to get rid of them all'. He asks Costi in a gruff voice, 'And what are you proposing, Rambo? You want us to go to the TV station, get shot in the head?' Later, he uses the same tone with Bogdan, who thinks that they should look for Costi at the TV station: 'What do you want, you fool? Do you want to die? Why didn't you follow him to the TV station?'

Cynical Dragos does not trust that Costi has gone to fight at the TV station, and he keeps saying that they should look for him at home. After not finding Costi at the TV station, Neagu returns to the vehicle and Dragos exclaims triumphantly: 'Didn't I tell you the so-called revolutionary just went home? Told you.' At some point, his cynicism goes so far to even say, 'We're lucky it's warm outside, else no one would've started the fucking Revolution.'

Frustrated Dragos is evidently frustrated with Costi's special status. When Neagu stops him from hitting Costi for talking to him disrespectfully and calling him 'a rat', Dragos points out Costi's family privilege: 'The doctor [Costi's father] must have given away a lot of packs of Kent and coffee to have his son do this military service in Bucharest'. Later, as they try to find Costi, Dragos's frustration with the situation comes out again when he refers to him as a 'rich bastard'.

THEMES

REVOLUTION The overarching theme of the movie is the revolution that led to the fall of communism and the overturn of Ceausescu's regime in Romania in December 1989. The movie recreates the events of the chaotic night of December 22nd to 23rd. Unfounded rumors about terrorists' attempt to destabilize the country spread, causing the futile death and injury of hundreds of people. Army soldiers fight an invisible enemy, identified as 'terrorists', and the Militia has been given the mission to patrol the streets and ensure the public order. When the revolution started, the two forces did not work together. There are instances showing trucks carrying revolutionaries shouting 'Down with Ceausescu' and encouraging the civilians in the street to join the revolution. Overall, the camera eye reconstructs the atmosphere of the revolution by zooming in and out of street fires, random shooting, smoke, patrols carried out by army or militia soldiers separately and street violence. For example, civilians throw objects at Neagu's vehicle and strike it with clubs while calling them 'terrorists', as in the scene in which Costi leaves his squad to defend the TV station.

DEATH The opening scene of the movie introduces the theme of death as unexpectedly and violently as it happened during the 1989 Romanian Revolution. Costi and Bogdan get out of the patrol vehicle to smoke a cigarette and stretch their stiff bodies after a night of patrolling when all of a sudden some soldiers nearby open the fire on them without asking them to identify themselves. Bogdan is shot dead instantly. Costi tries to run away, but he cannot escape the hail of gunfire and drops dead a few meters away from his friend. This death scene reflects a brutal reality of the Romanian Revolution when innocent people were randomly shot dead in the street and their bodies defiled if they were suspected to have been 'terrorists'. The tragedy was even more appalling since nobody knew who the terrorists were and a psychosis had been provoked by rumors. The chaos of those days led to numerous deaths and injuries, as the case is with Costi and Bogdan's violent deaths at such a young age (both in their early twenties).

CONFUSION One of the most relevant scenes to illustrate this tragic situation is the one with the shooting from the window of the villa that Craciun and some soldiers occupy. At one point in the firing exchange, Costi looks out of the window and sees an injured soldier, forced to retreat from behind the truck they have been targeting. When Craciun comes upstairs to check Costi and Aurel's claim, he looks at the soldier who was there with them. The soldier, however, does not back up their story and says, 'It ain't got shit to do with it, man. What, I've been shooting here for an hour for nothing?' Consequently, Craciun starts suspecting that Costi and Aurel may be terrorists. In a few minutes, the two are taken hostages, threatened with death for their anti-revolutionary action and freed only after Lt. Deleanu eventually receives confirmation of Costi's identity.

VIOLENCE The first days of the Romanian Revolution of 1989 brought about a lot of gratuitous violence, with dramatic consequences especially for innocent people. This is what the very beginning of the movie also shows: an apparently calm atmosphere, two young men (Bogdan and Costi) getting out of a patrol vehicle to stretch their legs and have a cigarette. Then, a sudden barrage of bullets causes their death so quickly that they do not even have the time to react and defend themselves. Costi tries to run away, but he also drops dead a few steps from his friend. Furthermore, in the scene in which Costi leaves for the TV station on his own, a group of protesters call Lt. Neagu's soldiers 'terrorists' and head towards them in a menacing way. In an attempt to prevent violence from escalating, Lt. Neagu orders his soldiers to get into the vehicle, and the scene ends with the militia vehicle driving off as it is chased by angry protesters. Costi is yet again a victim of violence when he is taken hostage by Craciun and his men. He is beaten, tied up and threatened with death because Craciun does not believe him when he says he has seen army soldiers coming out from behind the truck they have been shooting at.

PARANOIA During the 1989 Romanian Revolution, paranoia reached a level of paroxysm, having a heavy impact on the events and actions of those days. In a context of constantly changing passwords, precarious radio communication, and fast spreading rumors of 'foreign terrorists trying to destabilize the country', the result is tragic: army soldiers fight against one another (e.g., when Costi tries to warn Craciun about it, he is taken for a 'foreign terrorist' and 'threat to social order'), soldiers shoot without waiting for a commander's order or password. One of the most illustrative scenes is Costi and Bogdan's death. Their vehicle stops in an area under army surveillance and Lt. Neagu is asked for the password. Costi and Bogdan do not wait for the password to be confirmed and get out of the vehicle to smoke. The soldiers

nearby open fire in a matter of seconds and kill them both. In the background, a man's voice shouts anxiously: 'Hold your fire! Who's firing? Hold your fire, I said! When one of the soldiers approaches Costi's body with his gun directed towards him, the same voice says hysterically: 'Don't touch him! Careful!'

CORRUPTION Apart from following the most dramatic days of the Romanian Revolution of 1989, Muntean also touches on the scourge of corruption that afflicted the Romanian society during the communist regime. There are several instances that make reference to this kind of dishonest practice undertaken for private gain. A notable example involves Costi, who is the son of a renowned doctor in Bucharest. As Dragos points out, Doctor Andronescu has pulled some strings for his son to do his mandatory military service with the militia in his hometown rather than in a remote area of the country. Lt. Neagu gives Costi special treatment for the same reason. When Lt. Neagu gets to talk to Voinescu face to face and complains about his problem with Costi, Voinescu says, 'You should've pulled your gun.' Neagu replies helplessly, 'How could I? He came to me through general Axinte. He'd kill me if he found out. He'd retire me.' Aurel also boasts that he has managed to elude military service with the help of some cartons of expensive cigarettes and brandy. Corruption affects all walks of life.

RACISM Another pre-and post-revolutionary problematic aspect of Romanian society is the blatant racism against minorities (identified as 'cohabiting nations' during the communist regime), especially the Roma. Aurel's darker complexion, for example, contributes significantly to Craciun's suspicion that he and Costi may be 'infiltrators'. In Lt. Deleanu's office, the soldier frisking Costi and Aurel for weapons thinks aloud that Aurel is an Arab. Aurel reacts vehemently, 'What Arab...? I'm from Berceni [a suburb of Bucharest]!' Craciun and his soldier knock Aurel to the ground and strike him hard several times while Costi shouts, 'Stop hitting him; he's a gypsy, not an Arab!' In the basement a little later, the soldier also asks Craciun if the two are Arabs. Sitting on the floor with their hands and legs tied up and waiting for Craciun's verdict, Aurel spits at Costi and blames him for their situation. Costi swears at him angrily, 'Fuck you, you stinking gypsy. Motherfuckin'...You're all cowards.' Similar racist remarks are made in the scene in which Costi is on the protesters' truck and Aurel tells everyone that Costi has left his combat unit to fight with them. A Roma man standing close to Costi asks him to exchange their jackets, and another one exclaims, 'Look at the gypsy, now he's militia!' The Romanian now wearing Costi's militia jacket, turns to the others, shouting, 'Hey, all eyes on me, or else you're dead meat!', to which Aurel shouts, 'What about that, a monkey in uniform!' And all the men start laughing.

YOUNG vs OLDER GENERATION Lt. Neagu and Costi belong to different generations, with the former looking in his forties (most likely born and living in communism all his life) and the latter, in his twenties (born in communism, but now witnessing a long-awaited change). The clash between the two generations is evident in the scene showing Lt. Neagu and his soldiers inside the patrol vehicle, listening to the radio for news and updates. When Costi enthusiastically asks Vasile to check if he 'can pick up Radio Free Europe', Lt. Neagu reacts angrily, 'Soldier, I thought I'd told you to stay put and shut your big mouth!' Hearing the news of the TV station siege, Bogdan also comments, 'We should've been there, not chasing around', but Lt. Neagu rebukes him sternly: 'So that's what's eating you both.' He then reiterates, looking at Costi, 'It's not you they called for.' Given his higher rank and military experience, Lt. Neagu takes safe actions, sticking to orders, not letting himself get carried away by the spirit of the times like Costi. Just a little before he decides to disobey Neagu's order to get into the patrol vehicle, Costi asks him: 'Comrade Neagu, why don't we switch sides and fight with the people?' Tired and fed up with Costi's rebellious behavior, Neagu says: 'You have to understand that things aren't so ...Let's not go into it.'

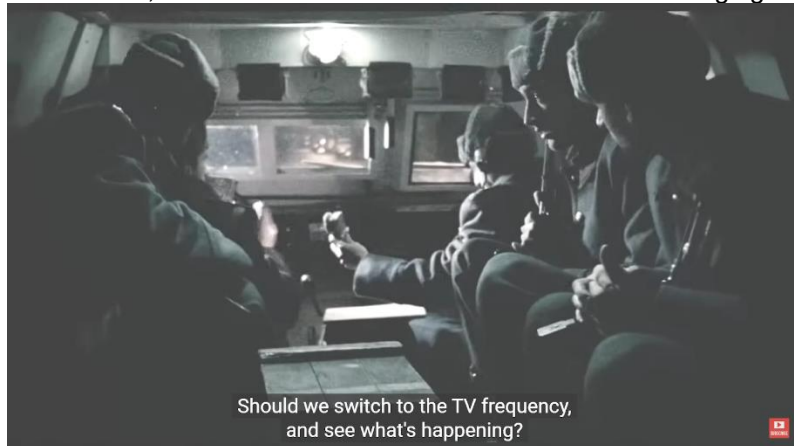
CHANGE The theme of change relates to the socio-political process that the Revolution entails. During the night, when Neagu and his soldiers drive through Bucharest on their mission to keep order in the suburbs, Costi and Bogdan are shown smoking by the stationary patrol vehicle. Bogdan is wearing earplugs and Costi takes one out of his friend's ear to listen to the news. However, he hears music and asks Bogdan 'where it is coming from'. Bogdan answers that he does not know but says, 'That's what they're playing on the radio'. In a bright tone, Costi says, 'See? Things are changing'. He continues to talk about changes that will affect their department, too: 'The secret police department has already been shut down and that the Internal Affairs will be next'. A little later, during a brief private conversation with Neagu, Costi again insists that 'things are changing' and suggests that they should all go defend the TV station. Neagu insists on the importance of sticking to their mission, but Costi is determined to play an active part in the revolution.

While walking away, Neagu threatens him with imprisonment for defection. Costi calls Neagu a 'commie sonof a bitch' and threatens him back, 'And after we win, you'll be the ones behind bars'.

SCENES

CHAOS IN THE MILITARY

Street patrol Lieutenant Neagu and his squad are in an armored vehicle on a street patrol in the Colentina suburb of Bucharest. He asks Vasileto double check if he can pick up any new messages from the other units. They switch to the TV frequency and hear an Army commander urging Romanians to come out in the streets to help him defend the National Television Station and 'prevent any hostile acts'. We see Costi and Bogdan standing by the stationary patrol vehicle smoking. Costi wonders whether Ceausescu was captured and Bogdan hands him one of his earplugs to check for himself. Some music can be heard on the radio, which makes Costi remark that 'times are changing'. 0

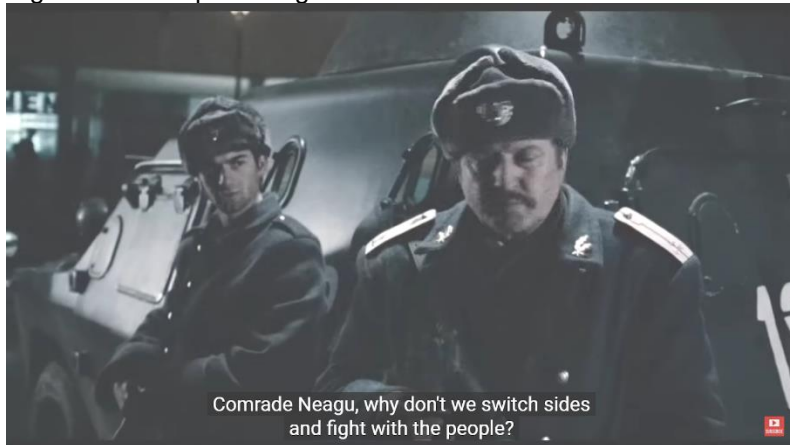


Car checking Dragos stands in the street, shotgun on his shoulder, and stops the cars passing by for an ID check. At one point, he stops a red Skoda and asks the young woman driver to show him her ID. He then flirts with her and tells her that he will take her out the next evening if he gets permission.



Attempting contact Lt. Neagu and the radio operator are in a car, trying different radio frequencies to get in contact with Lt. Voinescu. They can hear two militia officers checking each other's location. Lt. Neagu intervenes, saying the password and asking to talk to Voinescu. One of the officers orders him to get off the frequency. The radio operator assumes that the frequency password may have been changed, so Lt. Neagu decides to try again later.

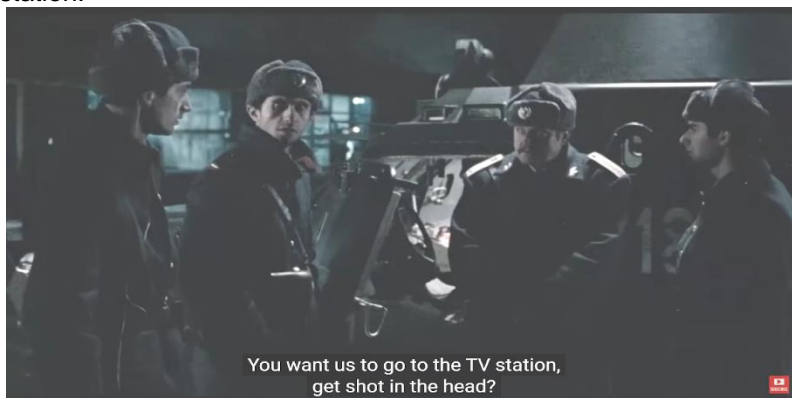
A private conversation Lt. Neagu and Costi smoke by the patrol vehicle and watch some revolutionaries who cheer Ceausescu's fall and shout 'liberty'. Costi upsets Lt. Neagu when he asks why the militia does not fight together with the people. Lt. Neagu scolds Costi for constantly putting him in a difficult position and urges him to stop causing trouble.



An update from Lt. Voinescu Vasile comes to inform Lt. Neagu that he has managed to get through with comrade Voinescu. Neagu gets in the vehicle to talk over the radio to Voinescu, who reiterates that the order from the headquarters is for them to 'only patrol and not get involved'. Neagu also gets an update on national television where about one hundred people are said to have died.



A confrontation Hearing the news of the 'disaster' at the TV station, Costi excitingly suggests that they should go there to help. This irritates Dragos, who orders Costi to 'stand straight' and show more respect to him as his superior. Costi will not give his idea up and insists that he wants to go and fight at the TV station.



Insubordination Lt. Neagu orders Costi to surrender his shotgun and ammunition and dares him to go fight with his bare hands. Costi is not discouraged by Neagu's action and asks his friend Bogdan to join him. Bogdan tries to make his friend reason, but Costi says, 'You're afraid, that's it!' and, to his colleagues' disbelief, he walks away.



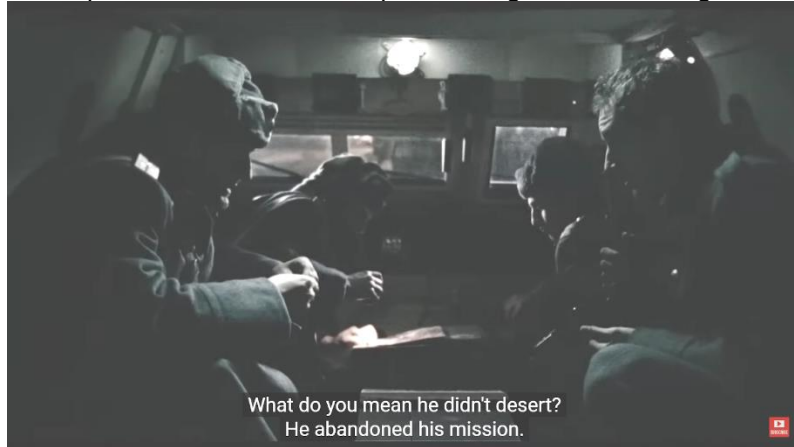
A moment of chaos Lt. Neagu threatens Costi with his handgun, ordering him to return, warning him that he will be seen as 'deserter', but Costi will not listen. In the meantime, some revolutionaries approach the patrol vehicle shouting 'terrorists' and Dragos fires his shotgun to scatter the group. Lt. Neagu orders him to stop shooting, rushing everyone to safety into the vehicle while Costi walks away.



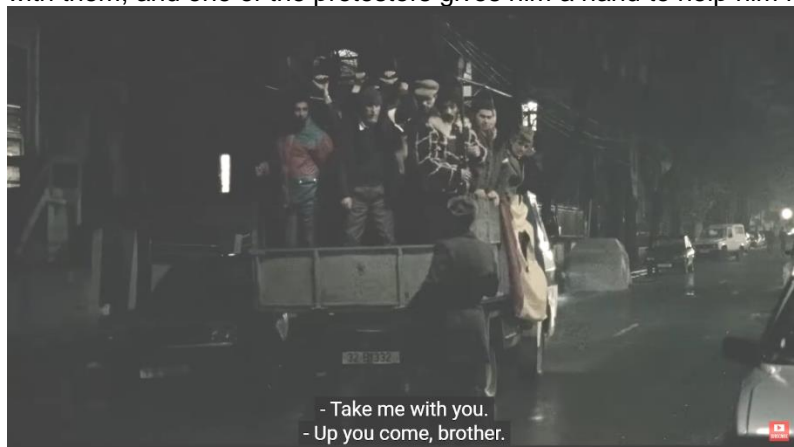
Phoning home Costi takes the Underground in the direction of the TV station and gets off at Victoria Station [closest to the National Romanian Television]. He calls his mom and asks her about 'what is going on TV'. He then tells her that he is on his way to defend the TV station and that he will come home only after they 'have won'.

In the street Costi sees lots of people in the street, some listening to the radio for news, others shouting for freedom. He stops for some moments to listen to the news. A truck full of protesters drives past encouraging everyone to join the fight. Costi runs after it, but the truck does not stop.

Neagu's concerns Inside the patrol vehicle, Neagu and his squad check the map to see which areas of the city to avoid. Neagu is in shock because of Costi's behavior which he fears will bring about serious consequences for him as his superior. Dragos tells Lt. Neagu that they will certainly find Costi at home.



Joining a group of revolutionaries Costi shows the way to the television station to a group of protestors in a truck, but they say they cannot go that way because there is a roadblock. Costi asks them to take him with them, and one of the protestors gives him a hand to help him hop on the truck.



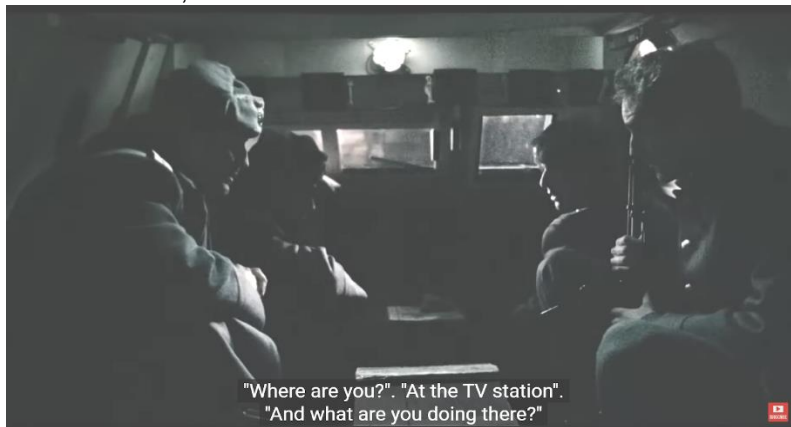
Chatting with the protestors On the truck Costi talks with some of the protestors about the military service. Aurel, one of the protestors, says two bottles of Metaxa (an expensive type of brandy) granted him an exemption from the military service. Costi complains about his comrades who refused to fight for the revolution. The men all start shouting loudly, 'Down with communism.'



A clothing exchange Aurel tells the other protesters that Costi has fled the base to fight along with them. They all cheer and one man suggests that now that Costi is a civilian they should exchange clothes. Costi agrees and gives the man his army jacket and cap while he gets the man's jacket and hat.



Hesitation Lt. Neagu tries to talk to comrade Voinescu again, but he cannot get through. Bogdan suggests that they should go to the TV station to look for Costi. Dragos snaps at Bogdan, 'Why didn't you follow him to the TV station?' Neagu is worried that disobeying orders from headquarters will get him into serious trouble, so he hesitates to make a decision.



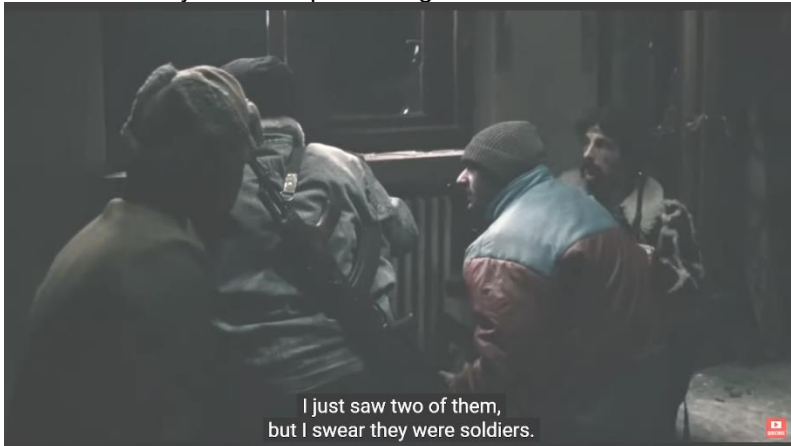
An injured soldier The protesters' truck is stopped by a group of men who carry an injured soldier. The group is led by a revolutionary named Craciun, who asks the protesters to take the injured man to hospital, otherwise he will die until morning. Aurel and Costi get off the truck and tell Craciun that they are going to defend the TV station. Some shooting suddenly starts, so Craciun asks them to follow him inside a villa nearby.



Guns and shooting Craciun takes Costi and Aurel to a room on the top of the villa and gives them guns and ammunition, instructing them to use them wisely. Costi, Aurel and a soldier, who was already there, shoot in the direction of a truck by a tree outside the villa. The unnamed soldier manages to injure one of the enemy. Costi and Aurel look out of the window and see that the injured man was actually an army soldier.



Enemy identification Costi goes to tell Craciun that they have been fighting against army soldiers. Craciun comes to the room upstairs to check the veracity of Costi's claim, but cannot see anything outside. He orders everyone to stop shooting until new orders.



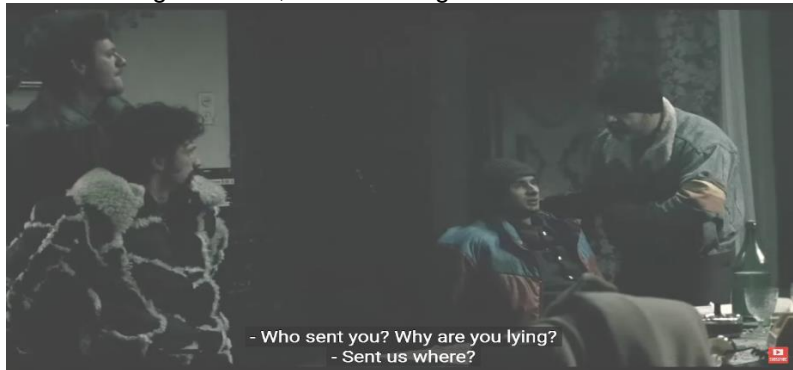
At the TV station Lt. Neagu and his squad arrive at the TV station where lots of civilians and army soldiers are gathered. Their militia vehicle is pulled over and checked by some army soldiers. Neagu is escorted by an Army sergeant inside the building to talk to the colonel in charge of crisis management. Soldiers inside the TV station retaliate against the gunshots coming from outside the building. The sergeant takes Neagu to the office where Colonel Argaseala runs the entire defense operation. Neagu explains Costi's situation to the colonel and asks for permission to look for 'his kid' in the building. The colonel dismisses Neagu with contempt and orders him to return to the unit and report the case.



Dragos's gloating Lt. Neagu returns to the vehicle and lets his soldiers know that he could not find Costi at the TV station and that they are going to look for him at home. Dragos gloats about being right about Costi, who he has thought from the very beginning is not brave enough to go fight at the TV station.



Suspicion and accusation A soldier comes upstairs to tell Costi and Aurel that Craciun wants to talk to them downstairs. Lt. Deleanu pretends to talk on the phone and pass it to Costi to say again what he has seen. Craciun and the soldier brutally attack Costi and Aurel and tie them with their belts. Deleanu accuses them of being terrorists, but Costi begs him to call his mother to confirm his identity.



Voinescu and Neagu's meeting Lt. Neagu's vehicle stops in the Triumphal Arch area. Lt. Neagu and Lt. Voinescu meet in the street and share their news. Neagu complains about his fugitive soldier and the radio that keeps cutting off. When he asks whether the militia fights along the Army now, Voinescu replies bitterly, 'Who the hell knows?' A soldier hands a new password to Voinescu, who also shows it to Neagu.



Hostages in the cellar Craciun instructs a soldier to keep a close eye on Costi and Aurel, who are now held hostages in the cellar. Craciun threatens that they will have a 'fair trial' and then be executed to set an example to other terrorists. The soldier asks if the two are Arabs, and Craciun replies that the two have been trained to speak Romanian very well so that they can infiltrate themselves into the revolution.



Aurel's meltdown Aurel spits on Costi, saying that he does not want to die because of his 'visions'. Costi swears at Aurel, urging him to calm down and reminding him that they both saw the army soldiers. Aurel and Costi try to convince their guard that they got there by accident. They say they were going to defend the TV station when Craciun stopped their truck to ask for help for a wounded soldier.



A visit to Costi's place Bogdan introduces Lt. Neagu to Mrs. Andronescu, who is devastated to find out that Costi is not with them. Neagu tells Costi's mother that her son abandoned the patrol mission. She invites them upstairs and calls her husband to tell him about the visit. Neagu explains the situation to Dr. Andronescu over the phone.



The soldier's friendly gesture The guard gives the hostages a cigarette and unties Aurel's hands so as he can pass it on to Costi. They talk about the changes that the revolution will bring about (e.g., free meat, oranges, jeans, heat in everyone's flats). The soldier asks them how long they have been in Romania to speak the language so well.



The phone call Costi is brought upstairs in a room, where Lt. Deleanu and Colonel Costinas are. Craciun asks him to call his mother. Costi speaks to his mother and Lt. Neagu, who then explains the situation to the colonel over the phone. Lt. Deleanu shows Costi the door and orders him to go home. Aurel is also freed.



The wait Mrs. Andronescu has laid the table for Bogdan and Lt. Neagu. Costi's girlfriend, Angela, is also there. Lt. Neagu watches the TV in the living room when Vasile comes to report that they have received the order to return to the unit. Lt. Neagu says that they need to wait a little longer. Mrs. Andronescu invites Vasile to make a phone call home and have something to eat.



Back home To everyone's relief, Costi gets back home safely. Lt. Neagu says they must hurry back to the unit, but Costi's mom insists on them staying a little longer so that she can pack some food for them. When alone with Lt. Neagu, Costi apologizes for his behavior and the two shake hands. On the way out of the house, Costi and his girlfriend kiss and briefly talk about where they could spend the New Year's Eve.



Saying goodbye Mrs. Andronescu and Angela see Costi off to the patrol vehicle, followed by Lt. Neagu who carries the bag of food that Costi's mother gave him. Neagu assures Costi's mother that everything will be all right and that he will be back at home for the New Year's Eve. It is dawn when the vehicle drives off, leaving Mrs. Andronescu and Angela behind.



In the vehicle Lt. Neagu and his boys are back on the vehicle. Neagu takes a bottle of brandy out of the bag and promises the boys they will drink it together when they are released from the army. They smoke, talk about the quality of the cigarettes and listen to some music. Costi tells them about his adventure and they have a good laugh about it.



Getting pulled over An army soldier raises his hand to stop the vehicle. Lt. Neagu orders Vasile to try to pick up the radio frequency to see who those soldiers are. A man's voice asks for the password and Vasile reads, 'The paper will be blue.' There is a long pause until the man at the other end of the radio orders them to 'wait'. Costi becomes impatient and, despite the orders, tells Neagu that he will get out of the vehicle only for till a decision is made. Bogdan follows him.



The street shooting Costi and his friend get out of a military armored vehicle to smoke. As they praise the quality of the cigarette brand, they suddenly hear some gunshots, but cannot hide in time and get killed. Two soldiers approach Costi's body to check whether he is still alive while someone in the background orders them not to touch him.

