

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## **EAST OF BUCHAREST / A FOST SAU N-A FOST (2006)** CORNELIU PORUMBOIU

### OVERVIEW

**AUTEUR** Corneliu Porumboiu is one of the Romanian New Wave film directors. He was born in Vaslui, Romania, in 1975. He first studied Management at the National Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest between 1994 and 1998. After this, he enrolled in The Theatre and Film Academy (UNATC) Bucharest which he graduated from in 2003. He has won several awards, the most important of which are: Un certain regard at the Cannes Film Festival for *The Treasure* (2015) and the same honour at the Cannes Film festival for *Police, Adjective* (2009).

**FILM** *East of Bucharest* is a 2006 comic drama by Romanian director Corneliu Porumboiu. It received the *Camera d'Or* at the Cannes Film Festival in 2006, as well as numerous Gopo awards in Romania. The movie's original title is 'It Was or it Wasn't', which questions the reality of the Romanian Revolution in 1989 that toppled communist rule. In a way, Porumboiu shows how this could have happened through the character of Mănescu. The title could also allude to the fact that nothing really changed in the country after the Revolution. Porumboiu also shows the way the social classes were reformed (or not) after the Revolution. The movie is thus an analysis of Romanian society in the aftermath of the Revolution.

**BACKGROUND** The film parodies the numerous TV shows that were made about the Revolution, with countless conspiracy theories, mainly saying that the Revolution did not really occur, that it was orchestrated by the Russian military and the Romanian security forces. The new regime seemed a replica of the previous one, since most of its leaders were members of the Communist Party or of the former Security Service. Indeed, numerous TV shows, newspaper articles and documentaries were made to show that the Revolution was not real, that those people died for no reason or even that nobody even died. This approach exonerated the new regime for any problems. Porumboiu mocks this approach but also condemns the laissez-faire of public opinion influencers, who were lenient towards the new regime, trying to ingratiate themselves with it, rather than trying to expose it as a fraud. Moreover, the leaders of the mass-media were themselves involved in the Communist regime.

### SYNOPSIS

*East of Bucharest* foregrounds the tales of three men involved in a TV show talking about the Romanian Revolution of 1989. It takes place in a small town after the revolution. In the first part of the movie, we see various events from their day-to-day lives. We learn that Mănescu is a history teacher with a drinking problem, who is married with a needy and nagging wife. Jderescu is a well-off television owner, married, with a daughter. He also has an affair with one of his employees, a TV anchor and reporter. Emanoil Pişcoci is an old man who lives alone in a shabby apartment. He occupies himself during the Christmas season by acting as Santa Claus for children. In the second part of the movie, we practically watch a TV show 'live', in which people talk about what happened on the day of the Revolution. But this point is completely missed out, as Jderescu deviates from the topic to unimportant and irrelevant subjects. The show turns into an interrogation whether Mănescu is lying about his presence in the square on the day of the Revolution. Mănescu's statements are questioned by all the phone callers who, moreover, erode Mănescu's credibility by calling him a liar and a drunkard. At the end of the show, Pişcoci is finally taken into account and asked to give his version about what happened. He insists on talking about his relationship with his wife, whom he seems to have loved very much. At the end of the show, all three men are frustrated because none has obtained what they had hoped for. Jderescu has not managed to convince anybody that there was not a real revolution. Mănescu is upset and exhausted. And Pişcoci is lonesome and nostalgic.

## CHARACTERS

*Tiberiu Mănescu* – a history teacher

*Virgil Jderescu* – a television-station owner

*Emanoil Pișcoci* – an old man

*Mrs Mănescu* – Mănescu's wife

*Mrs Jderescu* – Jderescu's wife

*Chen* – Mănescu's friend

*Costică Bejan* – a big company owner and previous security officer

## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### **Tiberiu Mănescu**

Tiberiu Mănescu is a history teacher. He is disenchanted and unhappy. Because of this, he has a drinking problem. However, he is aware of the realities around him.

*Unhappy* Tiberiu Mănescu is an unhappy man. He is sad because of the life he is leading. As a history teacher, he has low wages and is always in debt. His personal situation makes him unhappy, but also the situation of the country, where nothing seems to have changed after the Revolution.

*Insecure* Although he is certain of what he has seen and experienced first-hand, Mănescu becomes insecure when he is drilled by Jderescu and the TV watchers regarding his whereabouts the day of the Revolution. He is not sure of the exact time he was in the square, so he cannot ascertain whether he was there before Ceaușescu fled.

*Aware* Mănescu is aware of the realities of post-revolution Romania. He has seen how people who had served the Communist Party, are now in very good positions, which are, in all cases, much better than his. He has lost all hope, and this awareness of the impossibility to do anything makes him deeply sad.

### **Emanoil Pișcoci**

Emanoil Pișcoci is a retired man, who used to play Santa for kids during Communist rule. He is a friendly and tolerant man, but he is unhappy because he lives alienated from the world.

*Kind* Emanoil Pișcoci is friendly and kind. He is well-mannered and tries to answer as politely as he can Jderescu's questions. When he is asked to be present at the TV show at the last moment, he kindly acquiesces.

*Tolerant* Pișcoci is also tolerant. Despite the fact that he is almost ignored during the TV show, he gives his account as best he can, referring to his personal problems the day of the Revolution. He tolerates Jderescu's rudeness towards him and keeps a polite way of coping with it until the end.

*Alienated* Emanoil Pișcoci lives alienated from the world. He lives alone, after his wife died. Although he used to be an outgoing and popular man – playing Santa for the children during Communism – he now lives far from his family with only the occasional neighbour dropping by to ask him a favour.

### **Virgil**

**Jderescu** Virgil Jderescu is the owner of the television where the TV show is produced. He is the type of nouveau riche, who is determined to climb up the social ladder. He is suspicious all the time about Mănescu's statements. He is also disorganized and leads the TV show to a dead end.

*Suspicious* Jderescu keeps drilling Mănescu on the veracity of his whereabouts on the day of the Revolution, questioning his sobriety as well as his good intentions. He makes Mănescu feel bad and puts him on the spot. We realize his exaggerated suspicion indicates the fact that he wants to show that there wasn't really a revolution at all.

*Determined* Jderescu is determined to be successful and to climb up the social ladder. He has even changed his profession for this purpose and started a television. He is determined to make a good impression even if it means putting someone else on the spot or bowing to those in power.

*Disorganized* Jderescu – be it intentionally or unintentionally – is disorganized. He leads the discussion to dead ends and insignificant issues. He picks on trivial things and develops them, obfuscating the more relevant matters, such as the fact that there were indeed people protesting against the Ceaușescu regime that day.

### **Mrs Mănescu**

Mrs Mănescu is Mr Mănescu's wife. She is the type of wife who is always complaining about her husband. She is also moody.

*Complainer* Mrs Mănescu is unhappy with Mănescu's drinking problem and, in particular, with the fact that he does not bring all his salary money back home. She reproaches Mănescu for his drinking problem and demands to have the whole salary, up to the last penny.

*Moody* Mrs Mănescu is the type of woman who will throw tantrums now and then in order to obtain what she desires. She makes a scene with Mănescu on the day of the TV show, threatening to kick him out of the house, should he return home without all the money from his salary.

### **Mrs Jderescu**

Mrs Jderescu is a generous and organized woman. She has everything prepared for Jderescu the day of the TV show.

*Generous* Mrs Jderescu is a generous woman. She asks Mr Jderescu for an allowance for his daughter as she needs to buy skis to go to a holiday resort. Mr Jderescu refuses obstinately, but she insists, for the sake of the daughter.

*Organized* Mrs Jderescu is the typical housewife who takes good care of the household. Everything is taken care of the day of Jderescu's show – shirt ironed, meal prepared, etc. She is well-organized and makes sure nothing is lacking.

### **Chen**

Chen is a sensitive and helpful man. He is a Chinese man who has come to do business in Romania. He is Mănescu's best friend.

*Sensitive* Although Chen is Mănescu's best friend, the latter keeps insulting him when he gets drunk. The night before the TV show, Mănescu had told Chen to go back to his country. Chen is visibly affected by this when Mănescu goes to him to ask for forgiveness, but he does forgive Mănescu. Not only does he forgive his friend, but he agrees to lend him money. On the TV show, he is the only one who takes Mănescu's defense and has kind words to say about his friend.

*Helpful* Chen is also helpful. When Mănescu asks him for money, he gives him a good sum. Moreover, on the TV show, he is the only one to take up the defense of Mănescu and to create a good image of him. It is interesting that the only person that takes Mănescu's side should be a foreigner.

### **Costică Bejan**

Costică Bejan is a former security official and now the owner of a big company. He is mentioned by Mănescu in his statement, which enrages Bejan, who calls in. He is uncooperative and unfriendly.

*Uncooperative* Bejan wants to hide the truth at all costs. Mănescu accuses Bejan of beating him and his friends the day of the Revolution. Bejan denies this, calling Mănescu a liar and a drunkard.

*Rude* Bejan even threatens to sue the television should they mention his name in any way again. He is rude towards both Mănescu and Jderescu and tries to impose himself rather than talk in a nice way.

## THEMES

**Class** The theme of class is an important one in the movie. The director explores several social classes through his characters. Tiberiu Mănescu represents the intellectual class; Emanoil Pișcoci represents the retiree class; Virgil Jderescu represents the upper-middle class. Bejan represents the old security officials who became the upper class in the new regime. The intellectual class appears as poor and decrepit, through a teacher of history who is an alcoholic and who teaches his classes with disgust. The intellectuals are also regarded as almost pariahs by the others, on the margin of society. They run into debt all the time and their teachings are regarded with suspicion. The retiree class is not far from the intellectuals in status. They also live in poverty and are forsaken by a society they had, however, served well in the past. Virgil Jderescu, representing the *nouveaux riches*, the new upper-middle class appearing in Romania after the Revolution, comes through as an opportunist, a man who poses as well-meant, but who works, together with the old regime, to obliterate memory. The old (Communist) regime is represented by Costică Bejan, who used to work for the security services and now is the owner of an important company. He has great power and Jderescu fears him. The movie thus foregrounds several class types in post-revolutionary Romania.

**Education** Porumboiu criticizes the state of education in post-revolutionary Romania. Tiberiu Mănescu, a history teacher, is forced to give a test to his students so that they will all pass. He asks them which subject they know best and, when they say the French revolution, he sets that as the question on the test. Mănescu goes to the back of the class and sits in a desk next to a student. He is wasted from the previous night's drinking and can't wait to end his class. He is not motivated by his salary either, which is very low. To top it all off, a colleague comes in and asks him for the money Mănescu owes him. Porumboiu also criticizes the students, who do not seem to study anymore. The education system seems degraded, with a precarious future. The students do not respect their teachers because nobody seems to respect them, Porumboiu implies. It is a problematic state of affairs where neither teachers nor students do their jobs properly. The educational system is led by demotivated and disenchanting people and the recipients of this quasi-teaching are not interested in learning or becoming intellectuals in a country where the intellectuals are no longer respected or remunerated properly.

**Technology** Romanian technology is derided in the movie through the way the interview is filmed. In the years immediately following the Revolution, technology was not very advanced in the television or mass-media sector. In the movie, the cameraman films the interview in a wrong way, from beginning to end. For instance, he forgets to move the camera from one interviewee to the other when each speaks. He forgets to make a close-up of the anchorman when the latter speaks. Moreover, the way things are organized in the television are rudimentary and ridiculous. When Mănescu asks Jderescu what he will do if someone asks an inconvenient question, Jderescu responds that they have a sign—he scratches his nose—and will end the conversation with any unwanted guest. Mănescu is surprised by this and asks what happens if he really feels like scratching his nose. At which, Jderescu remains perplexed, and eventually says that that will not happen. Thus, tech is ridiculed and derided in the movie, with the purpose of undermining the television industry's credibility and in order to show how backward technology and television was in the early '90's.

**Injustice** There is a sense of injustice done to Mănescu for upholding his perspective on the Revolution. When he says he was in the town square before Ceaușescu left on his helicopter, he is met with anger and distrust by the TV watchers. A woman says he is a drunkard and that he had been drinking the night before the Revolution with his pals. Another man says that he passed by that place and that he had seen no one there at the indicated time. Mănescu's credibility is further undermined by Costică Bejan's phone call, saying that Mănescu is a lowlife who is lying about the fact that he (Bejan) has worked for the security services. Bejan says he didn't work as an officer there but as an accountant. Bejan threatens to sue the television studio should they continue mentioning his name. Jderescu becomes afraid and silences Mănescu. Moreover, after this episode, Jderescu grows increasingly suspicious and derisive of Mănescu, which puts the latter in a painful position. The director shows the injustice that has been suffered by the victims of Communism by calumny, slander and lies.

**Revolution** The 1989 revolution in Romania is the central theme of the movie. The title in Romanian, which translates, literally 'It Was, or It Wasn't', hints at the fact that some people believed or wanted others to believe that the revolution was fake. It also alludes to the idea that nothing really changed in Romania

after the Revolution and that the country is still ruled by the previous ruling class. In the movie, it takes a ridiculous form, doubting whether the revolution really happened in a small town. Jderescu makes the point that if there was no one in the square before Ceaușescu left, then there was no revolution in their town. Obviously, this is a trivial point, which Pișcoci signals, but nobody listens to him. Jderescu's point thus moves the conversation to insignificant details, and the main point, that people went out that night to protest the communist regime, is completely missed. Everything—heroism, patriotism, love—is turned into the ludicrousness question of whether the square clock worked properly at the time in order to prove who was in the square before the president fled.

**Investigation** The movie is a misguided investigation of the events during the Romanian Revolution in 1989. It is misguided because the point of departure is wrong – Jderescu's point diverts the subject to unimportant matters and scandal, which TV watchers are more than happy to engage in. Normally, having invited people who participated in the revolution, there should have been a detailed account of how things went that day, but all we get are a few irrelevant glimpses. The only important point is made by Mănescu, when he says that security officers beat the protestors in the square, but nobody believes him. The 'investigation' thus leads to a dead-end all the time. Moreover, the witnesses come to be blamed and publicly judged for their deeds (like Mănescu for his drinking problem). Mănescu is called a liar also and he becomes almost a culprit in the investigation. The real culprits, like Bejan, are now well-off and influential and come out of the affair clean-handed. Thus the investigation on whether the revolution took place is another fraud in the long list of post-revolutionary frauds.

**Memory** Memory plays an important part in the movie. The director questions the value of any memory that is based on deceit, manipulation and lies. Mănescu remembers perfectly the events of the day of the Revolution, but he is not taken seriously because of his drinking problem and because there are people engaged in covering up the truth. Pișcoci is sentimental about his memories. He cares more about his relationship with his deceased wife and conveys the story from this perspective. Jderescu seems to be too biased to preserve an accurate memory of the events. The rest of the callers are either interested to slander Mănescu or to cover up for Bejan. So, memory is not only unreliable but tainted with lies and layers and layers of deceit. There are people who died during the 1989 Revolution, so this attempt to turn it into nothingness is offensive and unfair. Mănescu remembers how he and his friends were beaten the morning of the Revolution in the town square by security officers. However, everyone denies this fact because, as is well-known, the Communist regime cultivated conspiracy theories. Such people are the ones who are calling on Jderescu's show. The film director implicitly criticizes this fact.

**History** In this context, history and its writing become problematic. History is written by the winners, and the winners of the 1989 Revolution are not the revolutionaries themselves but the old political class (in particular the security officers) now turned into potent businessmen and businesswomen. Their history is a falsified one, where the revolutionaries were not there on the day of the Revolution, and there was no mass killing or rebellion from the people. The whole revolution becomes, from their perspective, a fake, an attempt by the Russian forces to overthrow Ceaușescu. This version of history takes away the blame from them and their crimes, and makes way for their new leadership. Although there are still people like Mănescu invited to TV shows to retell their version of the Revolution, they are doubted and questioned in the same way and there are countless other TV shows which put forward the thesis that the Revolution was a fraud. History is thus manipulated to serve those in power at the moment. Porumboiu makes an important case in his movie for the preservation of unfalsified history and to respect those who were victims.

**Past** In this way, the past is refurbished so that the new leaders' lives before the Revolution are masked. Bejan is a case in point. He used to work for the Security Service, as Mănescu points out, but now, as an important businessman, he claims that he only worked for their accounting department. However, everyone knows that whoever was associated in the slightest way with the Security Service was fully part of that service. Jderescu also seems to have something to hide, namely his lack of adequacy for his post and incompetence. At the same time, the past of the people who are not in power is revealed and exposed shamelessly with the addition of slander and mockery. This is typical of the strategy of mystification. The new leaders have constructed new pasts for themselves so they will appear innocent in the eyes of the population, especially since most of them are also involved in current politics. Only Mănescu and Pișcoci preserve their past lives, where Mănescu was a teacher with a drinking problem and

Pișcoci a worker who used to work as Santa at Christmas time. The reinvention of the past is part and parcel of the new policy to hide the truth and protect those in power.

**Appearance** Under these conditions, appearance superimposes itself over reality, confiscating the truth. Jderescu appears as an honorable man in society; however, he is cheating on his wife. Mănescu, who is supposed to be a leader of popular opinion, is dominated by his wife at home. Pișcoci, a helpless and old man, is invited on an important TV show. Chen, who is deemed as mercantile and cheap, is the only one who stands up for his friend, Mănescu. Bejan, who is an important businessman and an appreciated personality in the community, used to work for the Security Service. In this way, all the moral values of a nation are lost and the emphasis is placed on appearance. This has deep implications for contemporary Romanian culture, which is losing its past values and now focuses on appearance. Porumboiu criticizes this focus and exposes its unreliability.

**Power** Power is held by the current leaders of the country, most of whom are previous communist politicians or secret police officers. They assert this power and abuse it, especially Jderescu and Bejan. Both of them try to intimidate Mănescu through drilling, undermining and threats. Jderescu condemns Mănescu and does not lose any opportunity to cast suspicions about what Mănescu has to say. Bejan ridicules Mănescu and calls him a liar. Their attitudes are aggressive and oppressive, and they assert themselves through deceit and intimidation. They are also wealthy, which helps consolidate their power. Jderescu is the owner of a TV station and Mănescu is the manager of an important corporation. Therefore, people like Mănescu or Pișcoci stand no chance in front of them. Moreover, they have been trained in the art of manipulation and deception. Porumboiu exposes them for what they are but also implies that their power is very hard to take away.

**Poverty** While those in power live in wealth, the other ones, represented by Mănescu (an intellectual) and Pișcoci (a retiree) live in poverty. Their poverty is a sign of the abuse on the part of the *nouveaux riches*. They have become overly rich, while the intellectuals, the retirees and the workers live in poverty. There is a stark contrast between the two social groups from this perspective. We see Mănescu with his many debts which he is never able to pay off. We see Pișcoci living in a shabby apartment and not even being able to afford to have his own Santa costume. When Pișcoci goes to Chen to ask for parts of the costume, he bargains for every little part and considers Chen to be asking high prices, although Chen probably has the lowest price on the market. These conditions of existence are humiliating both for Mănescu and for Pișcoci. The film shows that after the Revolution, only very few became richer, while the great mass of the population lives in poor conditions.

**Love** The absence of love is remarkable in *East of Bucharest*. Mănescu and his wife have a loveless marriage where the wife abuses the husband and the husband is afraid of the wife. Jderescu is better at keeping a good appearance, but, in reality, he has an affair with another woman, which is equally loveless and solely based on sex. His mistress says she wants to go to Bucharest and spend New Year's Eve with friends. Jderescu is only mildly upset by this and he does not seem to be very involved in this affair. The only love story that we only hear about is Pișcoci's relationship with his deceased wife. In the past, to be precise, the day of the Revolution, Pișcoci had an argument with his wife. In order to impress her, he went to the Botanical Garden and stole some beautiful flowers which he then brought home to his wife. This is truly a gesture of love and we can tell from the way Pișcoci talks about his wife that he truly loved her. To him, the events of the Revolution are less important than the fact that he managed to make up with his wife.

**Marriage** Marriage seems to be hopeless in this movie. Love fades away and becomes a power relationship, as is the case with Mănescu's marriage. Or love is a fake mimicry of married life, as is the case with the Jderescu family. Or love is tainted by small misunderstandings and fights, as with Pișcoci's story. Mănescu's wife truly dominates him and demands him to bring back home every last penny from his salary. Mănescu, for his part, drinks a lot of the family money and comes back home drunk in the wee hours. This is not an easy situation to bear for his wife. Jderescu and his wife epitomize another type of marriage in the movie. It is the business-like marriage, where the two parties involved have an implicit agreement to respect and treat each other well, while the husband has extramarital affairs. In this case, the wife is a mere accessory – like a servant – who cooks, irons and washes for her husband and nothing

more. The only true marriage is that of Pişcoci but it is an unfortunate one because he lost his wife a long time ago. Marriage is a pure formal act, a contract between loveless husbands and wives in the movie.

**Addiction** There is a strong emphasis placed on Mănescu's drinking problem and alcohol addiction. When he does not have any money left, he goes to his usual bar and asks for alcohol, promising he will pay for it later that day. But the bartender refuses, saying that he is already in debt after last night's drinking when Mănescu became so drunk that he offered to pay for drinks for everyone in the bar. Mănescu is visibly annoyed by this refusal and when he gets to school, he is nervous and angry and cannot contain his alcohol dependence. We can wonder why an intellectual such as Mănescu has become addicted to alcohol. We know he had a drinking problem before the TV show, at least from the days of the Revolution. The truth is that because of the dire living conditions during Communism, because of the restrictions and persecutions, many people took up drinking and became addicts. Porumboiu shows how a bad political system can ruin the personal and professional lives of people, along with their reputation. Mănescu is typical of this class of people who were aware of the atrocity of the communist regime and, knowing they cannot do anything to change it, took refuge in alcohol.

## SCENES

### ***DAILY LIVES***

***MĂNESCU WAKES UP*** A man wakes up in his apartment and drinks from a huge bottle. He has slept on the couch. His wife comes in and they have an argument. He then takes a phone call.





*JDERESCU IN HIS APARTMENT* We see another middle-aged man getting ready to go to work. He is with a middle-aged woman, who gets everything ready for him. She even reminds him about a document he had forgotten.



*PIȘCOCI IN HIS APARTMENT* An old man sits alone in his shabby apartment. He is upset by the firecrackers thrown by the kids in his neighborhood in front of his door. The phone rings, but he does not take the call. Someone knocks at the door.





*MĂNESCU AND HIS WIFE CONTINUE THEIR ARGUMENT* Mănescu is told off by his wife for his heavy drinking. She also reproaches him not bringing all the money back home. She threatens to kick him out of the house should he not bring in all his salary.



*MRS JDERESCU ASKS FOR A FAVOR* Back in the Jderescu's apartment, Mrs Jderescu, while preparing breakfast for her husband, asks for a favor. She asks that their daughter be given an allowance to go on a trip to the mountains. Jderescu refuses.



*PIȘCOCI IS ASKED TO ACT AS SANTA CLAUS* Pișcoci opens a door and he sees a neighbor with her child in her arms. She has come to ask Pișcoci to act as Santa for her son that year. Pișcoci agrees.



*MĂNESCU GOES TO THE PUB* With no money in his pocket, Mănescu goes to his local pub to have a drink. He learns that he'd spent all his money the previous night by giving everyone drinks. The bar attender refuses to give him another drink until he pays for those drinks.



*JDERESCU MAKES A PHONE CALL* Jderescu has been trying to reach one of the guests on the TV show he is hosting. He makes another phone call, but the guest does not answer. Jderescu gets angry. He decides to call someone else as a guest for the TV show.



*MĂNESCU IN HIS CLASS* Mănescu goes to school, where he oversees an exam with his students. He teaches history and asks the students what lesson they know best. They answer, 'The French Revolution.'



*JDERESCU MEETS HIS MISTRESS* Jderescu has an affair with a woman who works for him as a reporter and TV anchor. She tells him she will go to Bucharest to spend New Year's Eve there. He gets upset.



*JDERESCU PICKS UP HIS TWO GUESTS* Jderescu goes to pick up his two guests in his car. One of them is Mănescu and the other is Pişcoci, the old man who acts as Santa. Pişcoci asks Jderescu to drop him on the way at the market so that he can buy a Christmas tree.



**MĂNESCU APOLOGIZES TO CHEN** Learning that he had insulted his best friend, Chen, the previous night, Mănescu goes to Chen's shop in order to apologize. He also needs to borrow some money. Chen forgives him and gives him the money.



### **TV SHOW**

**THE TV SHOW PREPARATIONS** Jderescu and his guests arrive at the TV studio. Jderescu is about to broadcast a show on the 1989 Romanian Revolution titled 'It Was or It Wasn't'. Mănescu asks Jderescu what happens if they should receive an inappropriate phone call. Jderescu answers that he will simply scratch his nose and they will cut the call.





*THE BEGINNING OF THE TV SHOW* The TV show begins awkwardly, as the cameraman has difficulty filming as required. He should either do a close-up of Jderescu or a widescreen shot of the three men. Instead, he cuts the image in two, obscuring Pişcoci, who is forced to come closer to Jderescu so that he gets into the frame.

*JDERESCU MAKES AN INTRODUCTORY SPEECH* Jderescu begins to speak in order to present the TV show. Instead, he makes all sorts of nonsense deviations and examples to the point it is hard to follow exactly what he is saying.



*MĂNESCU GIVES HIS ACCOUNT* Mănescu is asked to give his account of what happened on the day of the Revolution. He says that he and his friends – one of whom is dead and the other living abroad – were the first to protest in the square that day. He adds that they were beaten by security officers and names one of the officers as Bejan, who is now a businessman.

*THE FIRST PHONE CALL* After Mănescu's account, a woman calls in to say that Mănescu is a liar because he is a drunkard and that he had been drinking all night with his friends in the square pub. Mănescu admits that they had drunk that night but that they had also protested the following day.



*THE SECOND PHONE CALL* A man calls to say that he was a gatekeeper in the square at the time of the Revolution but that he had seen no one there that day. The man on the phone admits he was away for some twenty minutes.

*JDERESCU MAKES A POINT* Jderescu makes the point that the protest should have been before Ceaușescu's leaving, otherwise it cannot be called a revolution. They all try to approximate the time Mănescu should have been there. Pișcoci takes Mănescu's side, saying that the clock in the square never worked properly.

*THE CONCLUSION OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE SHOW* Jderescu says it is time for an advertisement break. Before that, he gives another nonsense speech, completely digressing from the topic. He gives proverbs and literary examples unrelated to the present topic.



*JDERESCU ARGUES WITH THE CAMERAMAN* During the advertisement break, Jderescu scolds the cameraman for his poor filming. He shows the cameraman where he went wrong, adding that they all learn their craft in his television studio only to desert him and go to Bucharest in the end.



*BEJAN CALLS IN* The show begins again. This time it is Bejan, the security officer, himself making the phone call. Bejan tells Mănescu off for naming him on the show and tries to shatter his credibility by calling him a drunkard and a liar. He also threatens to sue the television should they pronounce his name again on the show. Jderescu listens meekly.



**MĂNESCU SULKS** Mănescu becomes disgusted by the way he is treated on the show and sulks. In the meantime, Jderescu does not stop drilling him in a very suspicious manner. Mănescu sticks to his point of view but does not seem to want to speak anymore.



**PIȘCOCI FINALLY TELLS HIS VERSION OF THE REVOLUTION** Jderescu finally asks Pișcoci to tell his version of what happened during the Revolution. Pișcoci tells an endearing tale about how he wanted to make up with his wife by stealing a flower from the botanical garden. Upon returning, he says he saw many people coming to protest in the square.



*THE TV SHOW ENDS* The TV show ends on Jderescu's quasi-poetical ramblings. Both Pișcoci and Mănescu are upset by the way they were treated on the show. They have nothing more to say.



*THE POST-REVOLUTIONARY TOWN* We see images of apartment buildings and other older and newer buildings in the same decayed state they were in before the Revolution. The street lamps light up one at a time.

