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Romania and the Warsaw Pact: 1955-1989



By:
Dennis Deletant
and
Mihail Ionescu

Translations by Viorel Buda, Cornel Ban, and Mircea Munteanu

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Preface

Romania and the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1989

This publication of documents on Romania and the Warsaw Pact, accompanied by the CWIHP Working Paper No. 43 by Dennis Deletant and Mihail Ionescu, is the result of cooperation between the Parallel History Project (PHP) and the Cold War International History Project (CWIHP). It appears simultaneously on their respective websites.

The cooperative venture dates back to 2002, when the PHP took the initiative by obtaining previously classified documents from Romanian archives selected by a group of Romanian historians¹ under the aegis of the Romanian Institute for Political Studies of Defence and Military History, headed by Mihail Ionescu. The CWIHP provided for the facsimile publication and partial translation of those documents in two volumes, edited by Mircea Munteanu.

The volumes became available for the conference on “Romania and the Warsaw Pact,” organized in Bucharest on 3-6 October 2002 by the Institute for Political Studies of Defence and Military History and co-sponsored by the PHP jointly with the CWIHP.

The CWIHP subsequently funded the translation of the remaining documents from the two volumes by Cornel Ban and Mircea Munteanu while the PHP funded the translation of additional documents, obtained through the good offices of Marius Oprea, senior researcher at the Romanian Institute for Recent History, translated by Viorel Buta and edited for publication by Dennis Deletant. The credit due to the respective translators is indicated on each document.

The documents themselves are preceded by two introductions. The first, by offering an overview of political and economic policy in Romania under Communist rule, provides background for the analysis in the second of Romania’s trajectory within the Warsaw Pact.

In the translation of the documents, words or punctuation marks enclosed in [...] have been added by the editors.

¹ Alexandru Dutu, Mihail Ionescu, Costin Ionescu, Corneliu Mihai Lungu, Camelia Moraru, Alexandru Osca, Petre Out, Adrian Pop, Dumitru Preda, Carmen Râjnoveanu, and Mihai Retegan.

Introduction

Romania, 1948-1989

An historical overview

Dennis Deletant

Romania was cemented into the Soviet bloc from a military point seven years before the establishment in May 1955 of the Warsaw Treaty Organization. The rationale for this assimilation can be found in the statement made by Soviet Foreign Minister Veaceslav Molotov after the conclusion of the treaty of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance between Romania and the Soviet Union on 4 February 1948. The treaty was based on the idea of common defence against 'Germany or any other Power which might be associated with Germany either directly or in any other way'. Its full significance was explained by Molotov, who said that the treaty was 'especially important now when the fomentors of a new war from the imperialist camp are endeavouring to knock together political and military blocs directed against the democratic states'.¹ The treaty secured the Communist regime in Romania for any external threats, thus taking the first fundamental step towards establishing totalitarian rule.

The second step to totalitarianism was the consolidation of the single mass party composed of an elite and dedicated membership. This was achieved by dissolving the major opposition parties, the National Peasant and National Liberal parties in summer of 1947, and by the forced merger of the Social Democrat Party with the Communist Party on 12 November 1947 as the result of Communist infiltration. At the last SDP Congress on 5 October 1947, a resolution on merger with the Communist Party was passed by acclamation. According to figures presented at the Congress the SDP at that time had some half a million members, only half of whom appear to have joined the newly-fused party which was known as the Romanian Workers' Party and had a combined membership of 1,060,000.

The Romanian Workers' Party held its First Congress on 21-23 February 1948 and

¹ G. Ionescu, Communism in Romania, 1944-1962, London: Oxford University Press, 1964, p.148.

Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was re-elected Secretary General and Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, and Teohari Georgescu as the other three members of the secretariat. Emphasis was now given to the elite character of the Party and stricter membership requirements were introduced. Prime importance was attached to ideological training, which not only helped to reinforce the sense of belonging to an elite, but also inculcated loyalty to the Party and cocooned its members from insidious external influences. The feeling of elitism and exclusivity served to increase coherence and unity within the Party, although both were threatened by internal dissension. That threat was removed by Gheorghiu-Dej's purge of Georgescu, Luca and Pauker in 1952.

A third step in the imposition of the Soviet totalitarian model in Romania was the adoption of the constitution of the People's Republic in April 1948 and the introduction of Soviet-inspired judicial system. The constitution followed the pattern of the 1936 Soviet constitution. The Party moved swiftly to transform Romania, following the Soviet model and employing Stalinist norms and practices. The nationalization in June 1948 of industrial, banking, insurance, mining, and transport enterprises not only allowed the introduction of centralized quantitative planning, but also destroyed the economic base of those stigmatized as class enemies. If confiscating private share holdings and threatening their owners was relatively straightforward, the nationalization of agriculture posed more complex problems. On 2 March 1949 land ownership was completely removed from private hands. This permitted the liquidation of the remnants of the old landowning class and of the 'kulaks', a Soviet term defining as 'rich peasants' those who hired labour or let out machinery, irrespective of the size of their holding. The land, livestock, and equipment of landowners who possessed property up to the maximum of fifty hectares permitted under the 1945 Land Reform was expropriated without compensation. Virtually overnight the militia moved in and evicted 17,000 families from their homes, deporting them to resettlement areas. The confiscated land, totalling almost one million hectares, was either amassed to create state farms or was organized into collectives the latter which were in theory collectively owned. In fact, collectives were also state run, since the Ministry of Agriculture directed what crops were to be grown and fixed prices. Members of the collective were allowed to keep small plots of land not exceeding 0.15 of a hectare.

The collectivization of agriculture required extensive coercion. Resistance to collectivization resulted in some 80,000 peasants being imprisoned for their opposition; 30,000 of them were publicly tried. Collectivization was completed in 1962 and its results put 60 percent of the total 15 million hectares of agricultural land in collective farms, 30 percent in state farms, and left 9 per cent in private hands. The latter was upland whose inaccessibility made it impractical to collectivize. [this might be a good place to at least en passant compare Romania with the other soviet satellites.]

A new secret police, the *Securitate*, was set up by the Communist Party. Its role, defined under its founding decree no. 221 of 30 August 1948, was 'to defend the democratic conquests and to ensure the security of the Romanian People's Republic against the plotting of internal and external enemies'.² Defence of the 'democratic conquests' meant the maintenance of the Communists in power and thus the new Romanian People's Republic officially certified itself a police state. The top leadership of the *Securitate* were all agents of the Soviet security police, their activities supervised by counsellors from the Soviet Ministry of State Security.

At the time of its emergence in the politics of postwar Romania, the Communist Party leadership fell into three groups, categorized to whether they had stayed in the country, or in Moscow during the War, and, if the former, then whether they were in gaol or were operating in successful clandestinely. The first group, conventionally called 'the native faction', was led by Gheorghiu-Dej and was composed largely of workers and activists jailed during the strikes of the 1930s. This group spent the war years in the Târgu-Jiu internment camp and included Gheorghe Apostol, Nicolae Ceausescu, Miron Constantinescu, Alexandru Draghici, and Teohari Georgescu. The second faction comprised some members of the pre-war Communist leadership who had taken refuge in Moscow to escape arrest—hence their name 'the Moscow bureau'. This group was led by Ana Pauker, a member of the Executive Committee of the Comintern and head of the External Bureau of the RCP. Pauker forged close links with Molotov and Vyshinski; her

² Organizarea si functionarea Organelor Ministerului de Interne de la Infintare pâna în prezent, Bucharest; Ministry of the Interior, 1978 (mimeographed), p.106.

associates included Vasile Luca (Laszlo Luka), Leonte Rautu (Lev Oigenstein), and Valter Roman (Ernst Neulander). The third group was made up of veteran Communists who had remained in Romania and acted clandestinely. Its leading members were Stefan Foris, a Hungarian who was confirmed as secretary general of the RCP by the Comintern in 1940, Remus Koffler, Constantin Pârvulescu, Iosif Ranghet, Constantin Agiu, and Lucretiu Patrascanu. These three factional divisions to a large extent mapped out the targets for the purges.

Dancing to Stalin's tune eventually allowed Gheorghiu-Dej the chance to consolidate his faction's hold on the Party by removing the principal members of the 'Moscow bureau', Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca, from the leadership. Yet Gheorghiu-Dej would not have been able to do this without his consummate ability to create options for action as insurance against Stalin's next move. Pauker's downfall was linked to the drive to 'verify' Party membership, which was designed to eliminate Iron Guard elements. The investigation lasted from November 1948 till May 1950. The resulting purge removed 192,000 'exploiting and hostile elements' from the Party ranks. It had been Pauker who had granted them membership in 1945 when she was in charge of the mass recruitment programme.

By 1950, Zionism had replaced Titoism as the heresy of the day and by this token Pauker was suspect. She was further undermined by elections to Party organizations held on 13 March 1951. In the spirit of 'Romanianization' of the Party, which was the corollary of the anti-Semitic drive being launched in all the satellite parties on Stalin's orders, Gheorghiu-Dej managed to have elected figures his own placemen. In May 1951, at the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Party, Gheorghiu-Dej recognized Pauker and Luca as the oldest serving members of the Party leadership but they acknowledged Gheorghiu-Dej as the sole leader.

The arrest of Rudolf Slansky, the Secretary General of the Czechoslovak Communist party, on 24 November 1951 as part of a Zionist 'conspiracy', sent one signal to Pauker that despite her close relations with Stalin and Molotov she was not immune, and another to Gheorghiu-Dej that she was not untouchable. That said, the degree to which pressure

from Stalin and/or an internal power struggle within the Romanian Party leadership was responsible for the attacks on Luca, Pauker and Georgescu at a Central Committee plenum held on 29 February and 1 March 1952 which resulted in their eventual purge, still resides in the realm of speculation.

The struggle for power within the Romanian Communist Party

Gheorghiu-Dej's pre-eminence in the Romanian Party was sealed by his appointment, on 2 June 1952, as President of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister), a post which he combined with that of Secretary General of the Party. He thereupon intensified the attack on Luca, Pauker and Georgescu. In a speech delivered on 29 June, he blamed Luca for 'retarding the development of heavy industry', for protecting thousands of kulaks by disguising them as middle peasants, and for encouraging capitalism and profiteering. Pauker was condemned for obstructing the organization of cooperative farms and Georgescu for allowing the abuses committed by Luca and Pauker to take place. Pauker and Georgescu were spared arrest but the political liquidation of the former proceeded rapidly. A rumour campaign was launched by the *Securitate* that she had contacts with Western intelligence agencies through her brother who lived in Israel, and that she had money deposited in a personal bank account in Switzerland. She was dismissed from her posts. Her association with Stalin and Molotov may well explain her gradual elimination from public life as contrasted with Luca's abrupt arrest. The manner of her exit from politics, as well as the fact that she was succeeded as Foreign Minister by Simion Bughici, also a Jew, shows that her demise had little to do with the anti-Semitic drive which was at its height at the time in the rest of Eastern Europe. She lived a secluded life in Bucharest until her death in 1960.

Luca was less fortunate. He was tortured, perhaps in order to extract a confession implicating him with Patrascanu on charges of spying for Britain and the United States, but Stalin's death on 5 March 1953, and the trial and execution of Beria in December removed the pressure on Gheorghiu-Dej for a major show trial and ushered in a power struggle in the Kremlin. The struggle confused the Party leaderships in the satellite states but did not affect the master-servant relationship. In internal and external policies

Romania, like the other East European satellite states, continued to imitate the Soviet Union. Gheorghiu-Dej showed himself to be both cunning and cautious in handling the repercussions of the Soviet political succession. By continuing with the trials of 'spies' and 'terrorists' he could arm himself against possible criticism of relaxing 'vigilance' against 'imperialist' enemies and earned himself some time to see which way the wind was blowing in Moscow.

It became clear that separation of power was to be the order of the day when Khrushchev became First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in September 1953 and Georgi Malenkov was made Prime Minister. Yet this very separation of power in the Soviet Union gave Gheorghiu-Dej more room to manoeuvre, and he resisted Soviet pressure to separate his own powers as General Secretary and Premier by introducing collective leadership until April 1954. Before doing so he took perhaps the most cynical decision of a career littered with shameful deeds of repression. In order to eliminate a possible rival to his personal power whom he anticipated might receive the support of the 'reformist' Soviet leadership, he ordered the trial of Lucretiu Patrascanu, who had been held in custody since 1948, to be finally staged. Patrascanu was found guilty of 'espionage' in favour of Britain and the United States and executed in April 1954.

A clear sign that there had been no concession to Khrushchev's sanitized socialism was Gheorghiu-Dej's reassumption of the position of First Secretary and the reelection at the Second Congress of the Romanian Workers' Party in December 1955 of the same figures to the Political Bureau as had been chosen in May 1952 when the purge of Pauker and Luca had taken place.³ Two new members were added, Ceausescu and Draghici, thus confirming the parallel rise of the two up the Party ladder. It was not long, however, before Gheorghiu-Dej had to face the implications of another reappraisal of the Stalinist legacy by the new Soviet leader.

Khrushchev's secret speech at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956 threw Gheorghiu-Dej completely off balance and it took

³ M.E. Fischer, A Study in Political Leadership, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1989, p.51.

him a month to regain his composure. Gheorghiu-Dej had led the Romanian delegation to the Congress (the other members were Iosif Chisinevski, Miron Constantinescu, and Petre Borila) and his first comment on the Congress was made on 23 March in a report of the Romanian delegation to an enlarged plenum of the RWP Central Committee which was only published in abridged form in *Scînteia*, six days later. Gheorghiu-Dej admitted only that Stalin had soiled his reputation by indulging in the personality cult and by allowing the security police to use terror; he added that Stalin's 'departure from the Marxist-Leninist concept of the role of the personality' had a 'negative influence'. Nothing was said about Khrushchev's secret speech.⁴

Gheorghiu-Dej tried in his report to anticipate and deflect criticism of his own allegiance to Stalinism by pointing to, although not naming, Pauker, Luca and Georgescu as the real Stalinists in the Party. Since the dismissal of these leaders the Party, he alleged, had taken decisive steps to democratize itself, citing the second Party Congress of December 1955 as the beginning of the new phase by which collective leadership and internal democracy had been reintroduced. In an allusion to the use of terror by the security police, he recognized that although the security forces had achieved great successes, especially in unmasking Western spies, they had gone beyond the bounds of legality during, it was implied, the period of Georgescu's office. The only way to counter this was to consolidate Party control of the *securitate*. Draghici emerged unsullied but ironically the arguments marshalled by Ceausescu twenty-one years later to denounce Draghici and to call for a return to legality by the Ministry of the Interior were startlingly like those presented at this plenum by Gheorghiu-Dej.

Gheorghiu-Dej's vulnerability over the indictment of Stalin was exposed by the attack made on him during the plenum by two other delegation members, Constantinescu and Chisinevski, who accused him of following Stalinist principles and employing Stalinist methods. The convergence of their opposition to Dej brought the two together. Chisinevski was perhaps driven by his friendship with Ana Pauker upon whose shoulders Gheorghiu-Dej was attempting to place the burden of past mistakes. Chisinevski himself

⁴ G. Ionescu, Communism in Romania, 1944-1962, London: Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 259.

was heavily implicated in the Patrascanu affair, as was Constantinescu. Constantinescu possibly saw the Khrushchev speech as an opportunity for discussion on the need for liberalization in the Party and country.⁵ For Gheorghiu-Dej, on the other hand, the demolition of Stalin's personality cult was most unnerving in view of his pliancy in the hands of the Soviet dictator, and he did his best to play it down, reserving it, as a US source remarked, as 'matter for party cabal and not for public discussion.'⁶

Gheorghiu-Dej's caution in this respect is shown by his convocation of a secret meeting at the Floreasca sports' hall at the end of March 1956, only a few days after the Central Committee plenum. The audience of three thousand represented the Party elite. The meeting was chaired by Gheorghiu-Dej and it was announced that note-taking was forbidden. He read out a shortened version of Khrushchev's secret speech to the Soviet Twenty-Second Congress, commenting that the speech had no relevance to the Romanian Party since 'thanks to the consistent Marxist-Leninist policy of the Central Committee' the excesses of the personality cult had been eliminated in 1952. In the six speeches that followed, all made by minor figures in the Party, only one showed a discordant tone, calling for an assessment of the Party leaders' actions in the light of Khrushchev's criticisms. Gheorghiu-Dej's speech fixed the Party line for the next few years; it placed the RCP amongst the most hardline of the Communist camp. The meeting itself was of major significance. It was the only one in Romania in which Khrushchev's text was presented in public; it showed the resistance of the Party leadership to the process of destalinization; and finally, it highlighted the weakness of opposition to Gheorghiu-Dej within the Party. By refusing to embark on destalinization with the backing of the Party cadres, Gheorghiu-Dej managed to reinforce his own control of the Party and to bind it more closely to his person.⁷

The Impact of the Hungarian Uprising

The Hungarian uprising allowed the Romanian leadership to amply demonstrate its

⁵ Ibid., p.261; see also V. Tismaneanu, 'Miron Constantinescu or the Impossible Heresy', Survey, vol.28 (Winter 1984), p.182.

⁶ S. Verona, Military Occupation and Diplomacy. Soviet Troops in Romania 1944-1958, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992, p.88.

⁷ G. Haupt, 'La Genese du Conflit Soviéto-Roumain', Revue Française du Science Politique, vol.18 (1968), no.4 (August), p.676.

fidelity to the Soviet Union. The revolt began with a massive popular demonstration in Budapest on 23 October 1956 during which the Stalin monument was destroyed and the national flag hoisted with the emblem of the People's Republic removed. The repercussions were soon felt in Romania. On 27 October, there were student and workers' demonstrations in Bucharest, Cluj, Iasi and Timisoara. The emphasis of the student protests was upon the abolition of the teaching of Russian in schools and universities. At the polytechnic in Timisoara a group of students, namely Caius Mutiu, Teodor Stanca, Aurel Baghiu, Ladislau Nagy and others, backed by a lecturer Gheorghe Pop, held a secret meeting where on 28 October 1956 at which they decided to convene a general meeting of students from all the educational establishments in Timisoara to discuss the meagreness of food in the student canteens and shortcomings in the teaching. The meeting was arranged over the heads of the polytechnic administration and the Party organization and took place at the faculty of mechanical engineering on 30 October. More than 1000 students attended. According to a report prepared by the Party Regional Committee at the time the Party representatives, headed by Petre Lupu and Ilie Verdet, were jeered and forced to leave the hall, whereupon the army units were called in to seal off the polytechnic campus and arrests were made.⁸ The protests, however, made their mark. On 5 November, Miron Constantinescu addressed a student meeting in Cluj and promised that the compulsory classes in Russian at universities would be abolished and living conditions raised. Two weeks later he was made Minister of Education.

On 29 October, railwaymen at the Grivita yards in Bucharest held a protest meeting calling for improved conditions of work and in Iasi there were street demonstrations in support of better food supplies. An exceptionally poor harvest had drastically cut food production and queues in Bucharest and the other main towns were commonplace. Gheorghiu-Dej and a Romanian delegation cut short a visit to Yugoslavia on 28 October to address the crisis. Thousands of arrests were made in the centres of protest, especially amongst students who participated in meetings in the Transylvanian capital of Cluj and in Timisoara. One of the largest meetings took place in Bucharest. In the clamp-down persons amnestied in 1955 were also re-arrested. Khrushchev himself alluded to the

⁸ NU, no.108 (6-13 May 1993), p.9.

demonstrations in an address to the Moscow *Komsomol* on 8 November 1956 when he said that there were 'some unhealthy moods' among students 'in one of the educational establishments in Romania' and he congratulated the RCP on having dealt with them quickly and effectively.⁹ On 30 October, the Timisoara, Oradea and Iasi regions were placed under military rule as Soviet troops were brought in across the Romanian border in the east and concentrated on the frontier with Hungary in the west. To placate the workers the government announced on 29 October that the minimum wage would be raised, and special concessions were given to railwaymen in the form of free travel. On 2 November, Gheorghe Apostol addressed a railwaymen's meeting and promised help. Gheorghiu-Dej, himself a railwayman, stayed away.¹⁰

Convergence of interest with the Soviet Union and not just slavish obedience determined the stance adopted by Gheorghiu-Dej and his colleagues. They had two main concerns: a successful revolt in Budapest against Communist rule might spread to the two-million strong Hungarian community in Transylvania, thus sparking an anti-Communist rising in Romania; and a non-Communist Hungary might lay claim to parts of Transylvania. Their fears had been fuelled by the participation of Hungarian students and workers in demonstrations in Cluj, Timisoara and the Autonomous Magyar Region. Khrushchev and Malenkov paid a secret visit to Bucharest on 1 November 1956 to discuss the Hungarian crisis with Romanian, Bulgarian and Czechoslovak leaders and, according to some Western reports, Khrushchev demanded that Romanian troops be used to crush the Budapest revolt. Gheorghiu-Dej and Bodnaras allegedly replied that, owing to a large Hungarian minority in the Romanian army and general sympathy for Hungary, the army could not be relied upon for such an operation.¹¹ Romanian reluctance to play a direct military role could also have been attributed to the fear of irreparably antagonizing the Hungarian minority in Romania, but such a stance is contradicted by the memoirs of Khrushchev who claimed to have received offers of military assistance from the Romanian and Bulgarian leaders.¹²

⁹ G. Ionescu, op. cit., p.272.

¹⁰ G. Ionescu, op. cit., p.269.

¹¹ Observer, 25 November 1956, quoted from S. Verona, Military Occupation and Diplomacy. Soviet Troops in Romania 1944-1958, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992, p.103.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.103.

One thing is clear. Gheorghiu-Dej and Bodnaras pushed for firm military intervention against Imre Nagy's government and the Soviet troops based in Romania had been among the first to cross the Hungarian border on 26 October to reinforce the Soviet presence. A key figure in the Romanian Party's support for Soviet intervention in Hungary was Emil Bodnaras. During the uprising, he was appointed Minister of Transport and Communications and in this capacity he supervised the widening of roads of strategic importance to Soviet troops for their transit through Romania. He was probably instrumental in making arrangements for the detention of Imre Nagy in Romania for on 21 November he and Gheorghiu-Dej paid a visit to Janos Kadar, the new First Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party, and on the following day Nagy was abducted by KGB officers and flown to Bucharest where he was granted what the Romanian Foreign Minister Grigore Preoteasa termed 'asylum'. In fact, he was held, along with other members of his government, in a *securitate* safe house in a locality just north of Bucharest, where their interrogation was coordinated by Boris Shumilin, chief KGB adviser 'for counter-revolutionary affairs', and not allowed the visits from UN officials promised by Preoteasa to prove that he was not under duress.¹³ Shumilin permitted Valter Roman, a senior RCP member, to question Nagy's associates.¹⁴ Many other prominent supporters of Nagy were interrogated in Romania, among them the Marxist critic Georgy Lukacs.

Gheorghiu-Dej's concern over the reaction of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania to the uprising led him to pursue a policy of integration and his first step was to dilute the provision for Hungarian language teaching in schools, making it more difficult to receive a Hungarian-language education up to university level in Romania. At the apex of the system of primary and secondary education in Hungarian stood the Hungarian-language Bolyai university in Cluj, the Dr Petru Groza agricultural college in the same city, and the Medical-Pharmaceutical Faculty at Târgu-Mures. After 1956 the system was whittled

¹³ C. Andrew and O. Gordievsky, KGB. The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev, London: Sceptre Books, 1991, p.435.

¹⁴ Judit Ember, Menedekjog-1956, Budapest: Szabad Ter Kiado, 1989, pp.146-48; Matei Calinescu and Vladimir Tismaneanu, 'The 1989 Revolution and Romania's Future', Romania After Tyranny, ed. by Daniel N. Nelson, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1992, p.42, note 41.

away. Hungarian-language instruction began to be moved from single-language schools to dual language ones.¹⁵ This effectively blurred the distinct status of the language and was carried to its logical conclusion with the merger of the Bolyai university in Cluj with the Romanian-language Babes university in the same city in 1959.

Romania was the Soviet Union's most active ally during the Hungarian crisis. Its support of the Soviet Union went beyond beyond the political arena into the domain of practical assistance and open encouragement. Gheorghiu-Dej and Bodnaras were the first foreign leaders to visit Budapest after the Soviet invasion and in their official communiqué they opined that the Soviet action 'was necessary and correct.'¹⁶ The Romanian government echoed Soviet propaganda, denouncing the 'counter-revolution' as the work of 'reactionary Fascists' provoked by 'Western imperialists'. Additional bases were provided on Romanian soil to the Soviet forces, roads were widened, and railway traffic interrupted to carry military transport. Soviet satisfaction with Romania's role during October and November 1956 stood to the country's advantage two years later when Khrushchev decided to withdraw Soviet troops.

The Withdrawal of Soviet Troops from Romania

According to Khrushchev's memoirs it was Bodnaras who, as Minister of War, first raised the question of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania during the Soviet leader's visit in August 1955.¹⁷ Khrushchev was convinced that the matter had already been discussed by the Romanian Party leadership and Bodnaras was no doubt chosen to broach the subject because of his impeccable credentials: his past services to the Soviet Union, the confidence and respect which Khrushchev acknowledged he enjoyed amongst

¹⁵ Whereas in the school year 1955-1956 there were 1,022 primary schools in which education was offered solely in Hungarian, by 1958-1959 this number had dropped to 915. In that same period the number of primary schools giving instruction in both Romanian and Hungarian increased from 38 to 124. In the sphere of secondary education a parallel decrease in Hungarian-language provision took place: in the same interval of time the number of 493 schools had fallen to 469, whereas the number of dual-language ones had risen from 10 to 77 (R. King, Minorities under Communism. Nationalities as a Source of Tension among Balkan Communist States, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1973, p.153).

¹⁶ S. Verona, Military Occupation and Diplomacy. Soviet Troops in Romania 1944-1958, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992, p.103.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83. See also Bodnaras's account in the US State Department Memorandum of Conversation between Emil Bodnaras, Vice President, Romanian Council of State, and Harry G. Barnes, American Ambassador to Romania, US Embassy, Bucharest (document 21 in this volume).

the Soviet leaders; and the senior position he occupied (he was one of the three vice-premiers). Khrushchev records that Bodnaras justified the subject by pointing out that there was little threat to Soviet security interests because Romania was hemmed in by other Socialist countries and that there was 'nobody across the Black Sea from us except the Turks.'¹⁸ To suggest such a move so soon after Stalin's death was certainly extremely bold and may imply, as Sergiu Verona writes, 'some sort of clairvoyance and possibly even some political gambling.'¹⁹ The international situation in 1955 did not permit the Soviet leader to act on the idea straightaway but the idea of withdrawal had been planted in his mind and he used it at the time he regarded most appropriate.

That judgement had to be made firstly, in the context of a wider scenario composed by Khrushchev for his policy of a new opening towards the West, and secondly, with regard to the Romanian Party's ability to ensure internal security. The key foreign policy element was the unilateral Soviet move to withdraw a limited number of troops from Eastern Europe as a whole which, Khrushchev hoped, might prompt a similar response from NATO. It was no coincidence that the Soviet announcement of the withdrawal from Romania was made on the same day, 24 May 1958, as that of Soviet troop cuts of 119,000 in Eastern Europe. Romania's strategic position, flanked as it was by other Warsaw Pact states, made it a safer proposition for the Soviet Union on security grounds for a troop withdrawal, and any fears about Romania's reliability as an ally had been dispelled by its actions during the Hungarian revolution. By the same token, the precautionary measure of keeping a large number of Soviet troops in Hungary after the revolution allowed Khrushchev to partially offset any overall reduction of Soviet troops in the area.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Op. cit., p.85. The résumé of the Romanian politburo meeting of 3,4,6 and 12 April 1956 corroborates Khrushchev's account. Much of this meeting was taken up by an attack on Gheorghiu-Dej launched by Miron Constantinescu who accused the party leader of ignoring the opinions of other politburo members. Constantinescu based his charge on, amongst other things, Gheorghiu-Dej's 'failure' to carry out a decision of the politburo in August 1955 to raise the question of Soviet troops in Romania. Constantinescu claimed that Gheorghiu-Dej made Bodnaras raise the issue with Khrushchev 'against his will' ('Arhivele secrete si istoria comunismului românesc,' Sfera Politicii, no.25 (February 1995), p.18). In interview given to the review Lumea Magazin, (no.8, 1994), Paul Niculescu-Mizil, a senior Communist under Ceauşescu, stated simply that Gheorghiu-Dej instructed Bodnaras in 1955 to propose to Khrushchev the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania.

On 25 July 1958, the last of the 35,000 Soviet troops left Romania. The most significant impact of Soviet withdrawal upon the Romanian leadership was its psychological one. Romania was still tied firmly within the Soviet bloc. Soviet air and naval bases remained on Romanian territory, and Soviet divisions in southern Ukraine and across the Prut in the Moldavian Republic could descend at once in an emergency. Nevertheless, whatever the Soviet motives for the withdrawal, Gheorghiu-Dej could regard it as a concession wrought from the Soviets and with the confidence thus gained could embark, albeitly cautiously, on policies which placed Romanian above Soviet interests.

A New Period of Terror

To compensate for the Soviet withdrawal, and to allay Soviet fears that it might demolish the underpinning of the Romanian regime Gheorghiu-Dej approved the immediate introduction of stringent internal security measures in order to maintain the Party's control. Amendments were made to the penal code which were even more draconian in their remit than the provisions for the death penalty enacted in 1949. Under decree 318 of 21 July 1958 new crimes attracting the death penalty were defined. Article 9 of the code imposed the death penalty on any Romanians contacting foreigners to perpetrate an act 'which could cause the Romanian state to become involved in a declaration of neutrality or in the declaration of war'. This was clearly designed to deter those who might be tempted by the example of Imre Nagy in Hungary who, during the 1956 revolution, proclaimed his country's neutrality and thus, implicitly, its withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. That temptation might prove even greater in the absence of a Soviet occupation force. The definition of 'economic sabotage' was enlarged to include theft and bribery, as was that of so-called 'hooligan' offences committed by juveniles. By the autumn of 1958 the first death sentences for the new crimes were applied.²⁰ The application of these new measures, especially that of decree no. 89 of 1958 which ordered the arrest of former members of the Iron Guard, led to a rapid rise in the numbers of political prisoners. If in 1955 there were, according to official figures, 6,406 persons imprisoned for offences against state security (this does not include those imprisoned without trial for which official figures are not available), this number had fallen to 6,211 in January 1958 only to

²⁰ G. Ionescu, *op. cit.*, p.290.

rise in December of that year to 10,125, and in January 1960 to 17,613.²¹

A further decree of 1958 signalled another wave of purges from government employment of former officers in the royal army, former landowners, persons with a record of 'political' crime, and children of all the above. On a much more petty scale, divulging the location of Romanian archives also attracted the death penalty.²² It was not just the exceptional severity of these new measures which sent a clear signal to the Romanian people that the regime of terror was not to be relaxed; the failure to publicize them in the press or on the radio (the provisions were merely printed in the *Monitorul Oficial*) generated uncertainty about the legislation and so amplified the fear inculcated into the population. The apparent randomness in the legislation's application by the instruments of the police state served perfectly to enhance the regime's control by terror at, ironically, the moment when the most public Soviet symbol of power, the Red Army, was withdrawn.

Autonomy from the Soviet Union

Behind the irony lies the explanation: Gheorghiu-Dej was making a distinction between the Soviet model and the Soviet Union. In opting for the former, Gheorghiu-Dej took his Party and the country on a new course of autonomy from his Soviet overlord by refusing to accept for Romania the role within Comecom of 'breadbasket' for the industrialized members such as East Germany and Czechoslovakia. There is also a paradox here, as Michael Shafir has pointed out. Gheorghiu-Dej's commitment to the Leninist-Stalinist values of industrialization turned him into a 'national communist.'²³ Furthermore, this same consistency as a Stalinist eventually led to a diminution of institutionalized terror.

The rift with Moscow was produced gradually and unevenly, with fluctuations in its development. The campaign to establish Romania's new course was at once active and reactive. It was not only in furtherance of Gheorghiu-Dej's aim to distance Romania from the Soviet Union, thereby gaining greater popularity for his party, but it was also a

²¹ *Cartea Alba a Securitatii*, vol.III,1958-1968, Bucharest: SRI, 1994, p.107, note 75.

²² G. Ionescu, op. cit., p.290.

²³ M. Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics and Society*, London: Frances Pinter, 1985. p.48.

reaction to two major developments which posed a threat to Romania's new course. The first was Khrushchev's plan, presented in Moscow on 3-5 August 1961 to members of Comecon, to give the body a supranational planning role which, if accepted by Romania, would have obliged her to remain a supplier of raw materials, and to abandon her programme of rapid industrialization, thus risking economic chaos at home. Such a move would have made the country susceptible to further economic exploitation by the Soviet Union, which was precisely what Gheorghiu-Dej had sought to avoid by embarking on the policy of industrialization.

The second major development was the Sino-Soviet rift, which first emerged at the Eighth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party in June 1960. Gheorghiu-Dej used the Chinese formula of equality of all socialist states to justify his own autonomous policies towards the Soviet Union and received Chinese backing for his rejection of the Comecon plan.²⁴ The rift was indispensable to Gheorghiu-Dej's challenge to Khrushchev²⁵, but the Romanian leader was careful to preserve neutrality in the dispute. In an effort to mediate in the conflict a Romanian delegation visited Peking in February 1964 but it returned empty-handed and this led only to further arm-twisting by Khrushchev to bring the Romanians back into line. One source states that Khrushchev formally, but not publicly, raised the question of territorial revision in Transylvania during the Romanians' stopover in Moscow on their return from China, and even indicated a willingness to hold a plebiscite in Bessarabia as well as in Transylvania.²⁶ This linkage of the Transylvanian issue with the Sino-Soviet conflict unnerved the Romanians and pressure from Moscow was stepped up in the same month when a plan to create an economic region encompassing much of the Moldavian SSR, half of Romania, and part of Bulgaria was launched in the Soviet capital. Known as the Valev plan after its author who was a professor of economics at Moscow university, it met with a hostile response from the Romanian government which publicly condemned it in the Romanian media.

²⁴ R.R. King, 'Rumania and the Sino-Soviet Conflict', Studies in Comparative Communism, no.4, 1972, p.375.

²⁵ Stephen Fischer-Galati, The New Rumania: From People's Democracy to Socialist Republic, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967, pp.78-103.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.101.

These signals from Khrushchev, coupled with the realization that the Chinese were unable to help the Romanians economically, drove the Romanians into a public declaration of their autonomy which, apart from pre-empting any move by the Kremlin, would also stake a claim to Western political and economic support against Moscow. The Romanian policy was formally legitimized in the *Statement on the Stand of the Romanian Workers' Party Concerning the Problems of the World Communist and Working Class Movement* which was published in *Scînteia* at the end of April 1964. At the same time the Party's Central Committee authorized the publication of a manuscript by Karl Marx relating to the Bessarabian problem in deliberate response to the Soviet threats.

Khrushchev's removal on 14 October 1964 as Soviet leader offered Gheorghiu-Dej a further chance to consolidate his break with Moscow. Exploiting the change in the Soviet leadership, he summoned the Soviet ambassador on 21 October and requested him to withdraw the KGB counsellors from Romania. Moscow reacted quickly and furiously. On the following day, the Chairman of the KGB, Vladimir Yefimovici Semichastny, sent a telegram to Draghici reminding him that Romania lived 'under the Soviet protective umbrella' and that it would regret Gheorghiu-Dej's move. A similar telegram from General Aleksandr Sakharovsky, the head of the First Chief Directorate and former MGB adviser in Bucharest, landed on the desk of General Nicolae Doicaru, the head of the DGIE. In November, Sakharovsky arrived unexpectedly at Bucharest, followed by Semichastny.²⁷

The discussions between Gheorghiu-Dej and Brezhnev in connection with the withdrawal of KGB counsellors from Bucharest allegedly went on until the end of November and also involved Aleksandr Shelepin, who until December 1961 had been KGB chairman and had been moved to head the Committee of Party and State Control which oversaw the work of the KGB. Sakharovsky was particularly wounded, since he had nursed the *securitate* into being in 1948, but eventually the Soviet leadership relented and in December 1964 the counsellors were withdrawn, being allowed to take all the contents of the flats which they had requisitioned. Thus the Romanian security and intelligence

²⁷ I. Pacea, Mostenirea Kremlinului, Bucharest: Editura Venus, 1993, p.253.

services became the first such agencies of a Warsaw Pact country to get rid of its Soviet counsellors, and, as regards the Foreign Intelligence Directorate, the DGIE, the only foreign intelligence agency in the Eastern bloc to enjoy this privilege down to the collapse of Communism in 1989. This did not mean, of course, that it ceased to collaborate with the KGB.

Gheorghiu-Dej's rift with Moscow, by striking the chord of deep anti-Russian sentiment felt by most Romanians, attracted some support for his regime. Drawing on the inherent anti-Russian sentiment offered Gheorghiu-Dej a simple way of increasing the regime's popularity whilst at the same time putting a distance between himself and his Soviet master. A series of anti-Russian measures introduced in 1963, which involved closing the Russian Institute in Bucharest, eliminating Russian as a compulsory school subject, and replacing the Russian names of streets and public buildings with Romanian ones, signalled the wider autonomy from Moscow. With these changes in Romania's relationship with the Soviet Union came a notable shift in the severity of police rule.

The Relaxation of Terror

According to official statistics, the number of persons sentenced to imprisonment for crimes 'against state security' (i.e. against the one-party state), stood in January 1960 at 17,613. The first notable decrease occurred between January and December 1962 when the number fell from 16,327 to 13,017 as many former Iron Guardists were freed. In the next twelve months, following pardons decreed by Gheorghiu-Dej in 1963 (nos. 5 and 767), the figure fell to 9,333 and in 1964 (no. 176 of April and no. 411 of July, most of the remainder were released.²⁸ The amnesty marked the end of an era of political terror which had cost the lives of tens of thousands of Romanians, ranging from the pre-Communist political, economic, and cultural elite, but the instrument of that terror, the *securitate* remained intact, unreformed, and ubiquitous. It, and its powerful and ambitious head, the Minister of the Interior Alexandru Draghici who had held office since May

²⁸ According to the official history of the *securitate*, 10,014 political prisoners were released as a result of the application of the decrees 176 and 411 of April and July 1964. These figures do not tally if we accept the same history's claim that in January 1964 there were 9,008 political prisoners, unless of course more than a thousand persons were arrested in 1964! (*Cartea Alba a Securitatii*, vol.III, 1958-1968, Bucharest: SRI, 1994, pp.33, 425. According to official figures, in 1965 only 258 persons were arrested by the *securitate* for 'actions hostile to the state'; in the following year, 294 were arrested, and in 1967, 312.

1952, remained a constant reminder of the past and a threat to the future.

In late January 1965, the first signs of serious illness appeared in Gheorghiu-Dej. He was treated for cancer of the lungs but despite this the disease spread to his liver and foreign doctors were called in. On the afternoon of 19 March, the party secretary lapsed into a coma and died. Three days later, on 22 March 1965, Nicolae Ceausescu emerged as the first secretary of the Romanian Communist Party.

The Rise of Nicolae Ceausescu

The party was still inextricably linked with the terror of Romania's post-war history. Born the third of ten children, on 26 January 1918, into a poor peasant family in the north-east of Oltenia, Ceausescu himself could point to a youth spent on the wrong side of authority. After leaving home at the age of eleven to find work in Bucharest, he joined the Communist Party as a teenager and went to gaol on four separate occasions between 1933 and 1938 for his political convictions (since 1924, the Party had been outlawed). By 1936 he was a secretary of a regional committee of the Union of Communist Youth and two years later was promoted secretary of the UCY's Central Committee. In September 1939 he was tried *in absentia* and sentenced to three and half years in gaol. He continued to work underground until July 1940, when he was finally caught.²⁹

During the war Ceausescu was held in various prisons until, in August 1943, he was moved to the internment camp at Târgu Jiu where he remained until the overthrow of Antonescu in August 1944. It was here that he met senior members of the Romanian Communist Party, among them Gheorghiu-Dej, Chivu Stoica, who became president of the Council of State when Ceausescu was later elected first secretary, and Ion Gheorghe Maurer, who served as prime minister under both Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceausescu. After release Ceausescu occupied a number of party posts before being made regional secretary for Oltenia in November 1946 in preparation for the general election due that month. Ceausescu's experience of local Party work undoubtedly made him particularly useful to Gheorghiu-Dej as the planks in the platform of Communization of Romania were put into

²⁹ Mary Ellen Fischer, Nicolae Ceausescu. A Study in Political Leadership, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1989, p.2.

place. When the programme for the collectivization of agriculture was announced in March 1949, Ceausescu was moved to the Ministry of Agriculture as a deputy minister. In the following year, he was transferred to the same position in the Ministry of Armed Forces, with special responsibility for the 'Higher Political Directorate of the Army', the party body set up to bring into being a People's Army. It was in this capacity that Ceausescu served an invaluable apprenticeship for ensuring his complete control of the armed forces when he later acquired dictatorial power.

When Gheorghiu-Dej purged his major rivals in May 1952, he promoted Ceausescu to full membership of the Central Committee, and after the execution of Patrascanu in April 1954, he made both Ceausescu and Draghici candidate members of the Politburo, and full members in the following year. The growth in party membership that Gheorghiu-Dej called for at the 1955 Party Congress was supervised by Ceausescu in his capacity as Central Committee secretary for organization and cadres. This control exerted by Ceausescu over party appointments for much of the following decade gave him a powerful base on which to seek election as party leader after Gheorghiu-Dej's and, subsequently, to consolidate his position.

On paper Ceausescu was but one of a number of senior party officials who could put a case for election to the leadership. Yet only he, Draghici, Chivu Stoica and Gheorghe Apostol were not ruled out from the post by virtue of their ethnic origin, the other Politburo members being of Bulgarian (Coliu), Ukrainian (Bodnaras) or German (Maurer) background. The manoeuvres which enabled Ceausescu to emerge as first secretary were not made public and it was only after 1989 that some light was shed upon them. Although Gheorghiu-Dej appears to have designated Apostol as his successor, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, who had been elected President of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister) as recently as 12 March, proposed Ceausescu as first secretary. Maurer gave the reasons for his choice in a number of interviews after Ceausescu's overthrow, the principal one being that he regarded Ceausescu as having the courage to stand up to the Russians; at the same time Maurer let it be understood that he regretted his action.³⁰

³⁰ See the interviews with Apostol, Maurer and Alexandru Bârladeanu in 'Cum a venit la putere Nicolae Ceausescu', Magazin Istoric, vol.29, no.7 (July), 1995, pp.3-7.

Draghici, as the long-serving Minister of Internal Affairs, was feared by everyone, Stoica was not considered up to the job, and Apostol was deemed too headstrong. According to one inside source, Maurer did a deal with Ceausescu: Ceausescu would support Maurer's nomination as Prime Minister (he did so on 12 March) and, in exchange, after Dej's death, Maurer would propose Ceausescu as first secretary.³¹ In this way Maurer outmanoeuvred Apostol. Stoica was bought off with the post of president of the Council of State.

Most surprised by Maurer's proposal was Draghici, who considered himself as close to Gheorghiu-Dej as anyone else in the politburo. What Draghici failed to appreciate, or did not want to appreciate, was that his election as first secretary would have compromised the party, for as Minister of the Interior he had presided over too many crimes and abuses. It was precisely the relaxation of terror, instituted by Gheorghiu-Dej, which characterized the early years of Nicolae Ceausescu's leadership of the Romanian Communist Party.

On succeeding Gheorghiu-Dej Ceausescu continued those policies which had earned his predecessor the description of a national communist: rapid industrialization accompanied by an autonomous line in foreign policy. In pursuing an autonomous foreign policy Ceausescu was able not only to offer the West an opportunity to exploit an apparent breach in the Communist bloc, but also to draw on his people's dislike for their Soviet overlord. Romania was the first country in the Eastern bloc to establish diplomatic relations with West Germany in 1967, and did not break diplomatic ties with Israel after the Six-Day War. Autonomy led axiomatically to greater popularity and, inevitably, to a cultivation of national sentiment, appeals to which were made in addressing the situation of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania and in raising the issue of Bessarabia.

The 'Problem of the National Minorities'

The Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 presented Ceausescu with his first major challenge concerning the Hungarian minority. The convergence of Soviet and

³¹ E. Mezincescu, 'Din nou despre fantoma lui Dej', România literară, no.41 (16-22 December 1992), p.14.

Hungarian interest was once again mirrored in the strong criticism which both governments levelled at Ceausescu for condemning the invasion. Fears that unrest among the minorities might be used as an excuse by the Soviet leaders to intervene in Romania led Ceausescu to make a rapid tour of the major urban areas with significant Hungarian populations at the end of August. His speeches in the two Hungarian counties of Covasna and Harghita were concessionary: ten major enterprises would be built there during the current five-year plan, for 'there can be no true equality of rights, the national question cannot be considered solved, if material conditions are not ensured.'³² Two telegrams from groups of Hungarian and German intellectuals in support of the party's attitude over Czechoslovakia were widely published.³³ In September, Ceausescu visited the counties bordering Hungary and Yugoslavia, obviously to nip any possible ethnic problems in the bud and to consolidate his position as a leader of all the peoples of Romania. Ceausescu's fear of an outbreak of minority discontent was probably exaggerated: the Hungarian contribution of troops to the invasion of Czechoslovakia aroused as much disapproval amongst Hungarians in Hungary as it did amongst the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, and a common fear of the Soviet Union helped to improve relations between the ethnic groups in Transylvania. This improvement was reflected in increasing the number of radio and television programmes in Hungarian and German, and in extending the print-runs of minority language publications. Greater representation of Hungarian and German interests was suggested by the establishment in 1969 of separate Hungarian and German Nationality Workers Councils.

Romanian sensitivity to the status of its German minority had grown as a consequence of the Polish government's decision to allow members of its own German minority to emigrate to West Germany after the signing of the non-aggression treaty between the two states on 7 December 1970.³⁴ The Polish decision prompted calls from the Germans in Romania to be allowed to emigrate in greater than hitherto numbers, to which the Romanian Government responded by launching a press campaign highlighting the

³² M.E. Fischer, op. cit., p.148.

³³ R. King, Minorities under Communism. Nationalities as a Source of Tension among Balkan Communist States, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973, p.165.

³⁴ Limited emigration of Germans from Romania had been permitted in the 1950s and 1960s to East Germany but the bulk of the 17,290 Germans who had left since 1950 had gone to West Germany after the opening of diplomatic relations between Romania and West Germany in 1967.

difficulties experienced by those who had already left. Ceausescu himself spoke out against German emigration, stressing that there would never be 'any agreement or understanding with anyone on the removal of of the population of German or any other nationality,'³⁵ while official spokesmen pointed to the advantage to the Romanian economy of the skilled German workers. No mention was made of the secret agreement reached by Ceausescu with West Germany at the time of the opening of diplomatic relations in 1967 for the payment in Deutsche marks to the Romanian Government of a 'head tax' on each German allowed to emigrate. The sums to be paid by the West German government ranged from 4,000 to 10,000 DM, depending upon the age and professional qualifications of the persons concerned.³⁶ These monies were transferred to the Romanian government in the form of credits. In addition, similar sums were also demanded unofficially by officers in the Directorate of Passports of the Ministry of the Interior in Bucharest, or by the local *securitate* commandants in the provinces via whom applications for emigration had to be made, from those seeking to emigrate. In practice, the ransom for the Germans of Transylvania and the Banat was paid twice, once by the West German government, and a second time by the family, and an idea of the sums involved can be gauged from the fact that almost 200,000 Germans emigrated from Romania between 1967 and 1989.

There were no such similar hard currency spoils to be made from the Hungarian minority. The Hungarian currency was a soft one and presented little interest. Second, from the ideological point of view, emigration of an ethnic minority from one fraternal socialist state to another, could be construed as a failure to solve the 'minority problem' in the state of origin. For the Hungarian government there was certainly every reason to discourage large-scale emigration of the Transylvanian Hungarians to Hungary: it would pose enormous social and economic problems since a considerable proportion of a population some one fifth the size of the total population of Hungary was involved.

Ceausescu Consolidates his Authority

³⁵ Ibid., p.166.

³⁶ An article in Der Spiegel on 21 October 1985 stated that the rate was 4,000 DM per child and 6,000 DM for a pensioner.

Ceausescu's denunciation of *securitate* abuses and the reforms of 1965-1968 created an atmosphere of optimism and an expectation of even broader liberalization. The events in Czechoslovakia during the 'Prague Spring' elicited a sympathetic response from the party since they conformed with the Romanian advocacy of the view that each Communist regime was entitled to determine its own policies without outside interference, explicit since the Comecon clash. In public statements and speeches, such as that made by Ceausescu at the plenary session of the Central Committee of in March 1968, this view was reiterated: 'No one can claim a monopoly of absolute truth as regards the development of social life; and no one can claim to have the last word in the realm of practice as well as in social and philosophical thought.'³⁷

However, one must be cautious not to draw too close a parallel between the Czechoslovak and Romanian experience of early 1968. None of the internal reforms emanating from the party in Romania, for example, the return to the pre-Communist division of the country into counties and the restructuring of education, weakened to any degree its leading role. This is not to deny that a measure of 'liberalization' was admitted by the Party. Indeed, Ceausescu in the same March speech invited intellectuals to participate in a discussion about political life in Romania in which they should not show 'the slightest apprehension or reserve in public debates about internal politics.'³⁸ Of equal importance for writers and intellectuals was the plenary meeting of 25 April of the Central Committee at which Lucretiu Patrascanu, executed in 1954, was rehabilitated and the abuses of the Minister of the Interior at the time, Alexandru Draghici, condemned.

At the same time, on the economic level, Romanians were beginning to enjoy the rise in living standards which the whole of Eastern Europe, except Albania, experienced in the late 1960s and the first half of the 1970s. Car ownership increased significantly as the Romanian version of the *Renault*, christened *Dacia*, began to roll off the assembly lines at a newly-built factory in Pitești; the number of cars sold annually jumped from 9,000 in 1965 to 25,000 in 1970, and 45,000 in 1975. Sales of television sets, refrigerators and

³⁷ Anneli Ute Gabanyi, Partei und Literature in Rumänien seit 1945, Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1975, p.148.

³⁸ Ibid.

vacuum-cleaners, most of them Romanian-made, also soared.³⁹ Although caution must be exercised in accepting all of these figures at their face value, in view of the propensity of factories to inflate production figures, they do reflect a trend which was evident to the population. A relaxation of the ideological controls governing popular entertainment allowed Romanian television to show Western television serials and sagas, most notably 'The Saint', which led to Bucharest streets being deserted between 8pm and 9pm on Saturdays evenings. The opening of a *Pepsi-Cola* bottling-plant in Constanta in 1968 represented the ultimate symbol of concessions to Western 'capitalism'. Of even greater importance for the population's moral given the severe shortage of accommodation for workers moved to the cities to provide the manpower for the new factories, was the regime's programme of apartment building and its toleration of private house constructions on rural plots. The number of dwellings built rose from 56,000 in 1955, to 133,000 in 1960, and 192,000 in 1965. In the period 1966-70, 648,000 flats and houses were completed, and from 1971-75, 751,000.⁴⁰

A consequence of the massive drive to industrialize under Gheorghiu-Dej had been the creation of what might be termed a middle class of technicians, scientists, and economic managers. The ability of the new class to articulate a group interest was linked to the degree to which the party leadership was prepared to relax its monopoly of central planning and to introduce a measure of managerial autonomy, as the New Economic Mechanism in Hungary was to show in 1968. However, any such reformist ideas that Ceausescu may have had were abandoned by him in 1967.⁴¹ The Central Committee's rigid control over central planning was maintained, thereby suffocating any collective voice that the technocrats might have found in influencing policy. Ceausescu's failure to reform therefore prevented any move towards market socialism and the development of even the most slender political constituency within the party which a more pluralistic economic approach might have spawned.

³⁹ The figures are:

	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975
Washing machines	0	31,000	84,000	109,000	149,000
Refrigerators	0	7,000	117,000	144,000	260,000
TVs	0	25,000	159,000	242,000	395,000

(Anuarul Statistic 1976, Bucharest: Directia Centrala de Statistica, p.369)

⁴⁰ Anuarul Statistic 1976, Bucharest: Directia Centrala de Statistica, p.330.

⁴¹ M.E. Fischer, Nicolae Ceausescu. A Study in Political Leadership, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1989, pp.109-13.

The Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968)

The stifling of the technocracy left the intellectuals in the forefront of public life. Ironically, it was the Warsaw pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 which allowed Ceausescu to discover that appeals to national sentiment were an efficient mechanism of social control and personal dictatorship. It persuaded him of the rewards to be gained by giving emphasis to national symbols and to his own importance. The huge rally in Bucharest on 21 August and its acclamation of Ceausescu's denunciation of the invasion proved to be his finest hour. It left an indelible mark upon him and whetted an appetite for the excesses of the personality cult. Significantly, Ceausescu's defiance on that day also prompted several prominent writers to join the Romanian Communist Party. Their action shows how superficial it would be to dismiss all postures of writers as being dictated by opportunism or self-interest.

The most forceful affirmation of independence from Soviet dictates was Ceausescu's refusal to participate in, and condemnation of, the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968. In view of the Romanian party's policy of 'non-intervention in the domestic affairs of another state', propounded in 1964 during its rift with the Soviet Union, Ceausescu's refusal to join the other East European members of the Warsaw Pact in their invasion of Czechoslovakia on 21 August was hardly surprising; his denunciation of the invasion was. It was an act of courage for which he and his country gained a worldwide respect. Ceausescu's defiance of the Soviet Union seems all the more remarkable if we are to believe claims from Romanian military intelligence, the DIMSM, that at the meeting of Warsaw Pact heads of state in the Crimea in July, to which Ceausescu and Dubcek were not invited, a decision was taken to invade Romania as well as Czechoslovakia, on 22 August.⁴² An invasion was averted only as a result of delicate crisis-management talks between Ceausescu and Leonid Brezhnev. Yet Brezhnev's determination to bring errant Warsaw Pact members to heel through the use of force left Ceausescu in no doubt that he might seek on some future occasion to put pressure

⁴² Maj. Gen. P. Sarpe, 'Consideratii cu privire la evolutia organului militar român de informatii de-a lungul vremii. Directia Cercetare-Locul si rolul sau în structura actuala a armatei române', 133 Ani de Existenta a Serviciului Militar Român de Informatii 1859-1992, Bucharest, 1992, p.9.

militarily on Romania by using the lever of Warsaw Pact exercises on Romanian soil. By insisting in spring 1970 that such exercises take place *only* on the basis of a bilateral convention between Romania and the Soviet Union ⁴³ – no such conventions had existed heretofore – Ceausescu sought to circumscribe the Soviet Union's military assumptions regarding its junior Warsaw Pact partner whilst at the same time erecting a legal obstacle to any Soviet-led use of force against Bucharest.

The Paradox of Foreign Policy

Ceausescu's reaction to the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia drew its political justification from the Romanian Central Committee declaration of 1964. This declaration remained throughout the period of Ceausescu's rule the fundamental premise upon which Romanian autonomy within the Warsaw Pact and Comecon was based. Romanian foreign policy under Ceausescu thus showed a continuity after 1968 which, by contrast, domestic policy lacked. In foreign policy, Ceausescu demonstrated the same skill, sensitivity and resourcefulness that had been displayed by Gheorghiu-Dej and Maurer in taking Romania on its autonomous course. In domestic policy, he showed the opposite, becoming tyrannical and insensitive to the needs of the population.

A fellow Communist who shared a cell with Ceausescu before the war detected in him, even at this early age 'an unlimited confidence in himself which was nurtured by his equally unlimited lack of confidence in everyone else and especially in those to whom he was professionally subordinated.'⁴⁴ That lack of confidence became manifest in his refusal to accept advice, a refusal which meant that he would accept only sycophants around him and these appeared in increasing numbers throughout the 1970s and 1980s. His intolerance of others drew him closer to his wife, Elena, a woman of unbounded ambition and vindictiveness, who exploited her husband's growing paranoia, thereby encouraging him to give reign to his prejudices and pretensions. Her pernicious influence

⁴³ See the Letter of General Ion Ionita, Minister of the Armed Forces, to Nicolae Ceausescu about planned Warsaw Pact manoeuvres in April 1970 (document 14 in this volume).

⁴⁴ Pavel Câmpeanu, 'Pe marginea unei recenzii. Mistere si pseudo-mistere din istoria PCR', 22, no.34 (23-30 August), 1995, p.12.

was most manifest in the preposterous personality cult which was generated around her husband and which, in the course of the 1970s, encompassed her as well as she began to assume more of her husband's powers. Inconsistency, unpredictability, capriciousness and obtuseness became the hallmarks of Ceausescu's rule. It not only humiliated the Romanians, but robbed them of their dignity in their everyday lives and reduced them in the 1980s to an animal state, concerned only with the problems of day-to-day survival.

The great paradox of Ceausescu's rule in this period is that his mismanagement of Romania's internal affairs contrasted so starkly with his conduct of foreign policy. At the beginning of the 1970s, Ceausescu could still bask in the applause and respect which the international community had accorded to him in August 1968 and he exploited this to the full. An appreciation of Romania's political usefulness as a thorn in the flesh of the Soviet Union prompted a period of increasing Western courtship of Ceausescu, exemplified by President Nixon's visit in August 1969. The Romanian leader returned the visit in December 1970. There followed a succession of economic favours. In 1971 Romania was admitted to GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs) and in 1972 it was accepted into the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Yet this Western cultivation of Ceausescu produced a second paradox: it took place at the very time when he was lapsing into what one observer has described as 'neo-Stalinism without terror'.⁴⁵ Whereas Romanians felt that Ceausescu had been moving forward at the end of the 1960s, they regarded him in the early 1970s as moving backwards.

Degeneration

An obvious question springs to mind, namely, 'Why did Ceausescu fail to live up to the promise he showed in the late 1960s?' One explanation given is that it was part of a strategy of consolidation adopted by Ceausescu.⁴⁶ By neutralizing the old guard of Alexandru Draghici, Gheorghe Apostol (sent as ambassador to Argentina), and Chivu Stoica, (removed as President of the State Council in 1967), Ceausescu was able to show he was a reformer. By the Tenth Party Congress in 1969, he had crammed the Executive

⁴⁵ J.F. Brown, Eastern Europe and Communist Rule, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1988, p.275.

⁴⁶ Michael Shafir, Romania. Politics, Economics and Society, London: Frances Pinter, 1985, pp.70-76.

Committee of the Party with his own supporters such as Manea Manescu, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Vasile Patilinet, Virgil Trofin and Ilie Verdet. Only Emil Bodnaras and Ion Gheorghe Maurer survived from the Gheorghiu-Dej leadership to accompany Ceausescu in the Presidium. Maurer retired from politics in March 1974, and Bodnaras died in January 1976, leaving Ceausescu surrounded only by 'yes-men' whom he had promoted. Each one of these figures became a victim of their patron's capriciousness, as 'rotation of cadres' became a principal plank of Ceausescu's political manoeuvring. By constantly shuffling his pack of pliant cardboard characters, the party secretary was able to prevent each one of them from establishing a serious party clientele and a position in the public eye, thereby eliminating any possible opposition.

Disillusion with domestic policies came in July 1971. A short time before, Ceausescu had visited China and North Korea. It is now clear that this visit aroused in him an admiration for the cultural revolution and for the grandiose spectacles dedicated to the personality cult.⁴⁷ The stage-managed adulation of Mao and Kim Il Sung, so meticulously choreographed, fired Ceausescu's imagination and he demanded the same upon his return to Romania. While Ceausescu may have genuinely believed that a drive against inertia was required, his proposals for the 'political-ideological activity, the Marxist-Leninist education of Party members and of all the working people', presented at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the RCP on 6 July 1971 filled most intellectuals with despair. The seventeen proposals, or 'theses' as they were popularly dubbed, were elevated to the status of a 'mini cultural revolution' by most observers. Although couched in the term 'socialist humanism', they in fact constituted a return to the method of socialist realism, and were therefore a reaffirmation of an ideological basis for literature that had, in theory, hardly been abandoned by the Party.

The application of the proposals was to be supervised constantly and exactly by the Party. Fortunately, however, the efficacy of their implementation in literature was woefully wanting in comparison with the achievements of the original brand in the 1950s. The proposals called for 'the continuous growth of the Party's leading role in all domains

⁴⁷ See the Stenogram of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the CC of the RCP of 25 June 1971 in this volume.

of political-educational activity', an emphasis on 'the great achievements recorded by the Romanian people - builder of socialism', the improvement of ... forms of political and ideological training of the Party cadres and members', ' a more rigorous control ... to avoid publication of literary works which do not meet the demands of the political-educational activity of our Party, [of] books which promote ideas and conceptions harmful to the interests of socialist construction'. In the repertoire of 'theatres, operas, ballet and variety theatres', stress was to be laid 'on the promotion of national productions having a militant, revolutionary character'.⁴⁸

President of the Republic

Yet another sign of the degeneration of Ceausescu's rule had been Ion Gheorghe Maurer's decision to retire in 1974. It was Maurer who, above all, gave an element of style and class to the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party. Unlike Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceausescu, his ethnic roots were mixed and he came from a professional background.⁴⁹ Gheorghiu-Dej valued Maurer highly for his wisdom, moderation, objectivity. He had shown great skill in charting Romania's new course in its relations with the Soviet Union at the end of the 1950s and was Gheorghiu-Dej's most trusted colleague. When the latter fell gravely ill in March 1965, he entrusted Maurer with the affairs of party and state. It was with Maurer's backing that Ceausescu had been elected first secretary. But as Ceausescu began to show despotic tendencies, so the position of Maurer and others assumed more of a cosmetic character and, invoking injuries sustained in a car accident, Maurer retired as prime minister in March 1974. His resignation, and Ceausescu's election to the newly-created office of President of the Republic on 28 March 1974, delivered a crushing blow to anyone wishing to reign-in the party leader.

⁴⁸ N. Ceausescu, Romania on the Way of Building Up the Multilaterally Developed Socialist Society. Reports, Speeches, Articles, May 1971-February 1972., vol.6, Bucharest: Meridiane, 1972, p.608.

⁴⁹ Maurer was born in 1902 to a Saxon father and a Romanian mother of French origin. After graduating in law, he acted as a defence lawyer for Communists and joined the party in 1936. During the war, after being interned for a period in 1943, Maurer maintained contact with Gheorghiu-Dej at Târgu-Jiu and acted as a link between the latter and members of the party who had escaped internment. Between 1944 and 1947, Maurer held senior posts in the Ministry of Transport and Ministry of National Economy. He kept a low profile until 1957 when Gheorghiu-Dej appointed him Foreign Minister, and in the following year he became nominal head of state as chairman of the Grand National Assembly. In 1960, he was elevated to the politburo and in 1961 became prime minister.

Economic decline

It was failure in the economic field that was the principal reason behind Romanians' disillusionment with Ceausescu. To a certain extent, he became a victim of the regime's economic achievements of the 1960s. Expectations of an ever-brighter economic future were raised by the increasingly availability of consumer goods in the late 1960s and when cut-backs became the order of the day in the 1970s and 1980s, these hopes were rudely shattered. In the light of Ceausescu's admiration for Stalin, it is not surprising that economic policy should have been characterized by the former's obsession with industrialization and total opposition to any form of private ownership.⁵⁰ He was, therefore, all the more irritated that the champion of economic reforms in the Eastern bloc in 1985 should be the new Soviet leader, Mihail Gorbachev, and his implacable opposition to change was expressed at the November 1985 Central Committee meeting.⁵¹

This ideological fossilization did not mean that Ceausescu left the economy untouched. In fact, quite the reverse was true. He constantly intervened in economic matters, and his attention was typified by his 'working visits' to enterprises in which he would give 'valuable advice' (*indicatii pretioase*). This advice was dutifully recorded by party officials in a ritual of note-taking which characterized such visits and was faithfully implemented, but its application meant that continual adjustments were being made to economic policy and practice which left managers and workers in a daze and merely had the opposite of the desired effect by increasing inefficiency.⁵²

Ceausescu had turned to the West for loans but the country's creditworthiness had been assessed on over-optimistic estimates of its ability to repay through exports since these proved to be of poor quality. Not only did the exports fail to generate the anticipated income, but the energy-intensive heavy industry plants became increasingly voracious

⁵⁰ In an interview with *Newsweek* given four months before his death, Ceausescu displayed his admiration for Stalin: 'In twenty years, Stalin raised Russia from an undeveloped country to the second most powerful country in the world.....He won a war. He built nuclear weapons. He did everything a person should do in his job.' (Quoted from Mark Almond, *The Rise and Fall of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu*, London: Chapmans, 1992, p.67).

⁵¹ *Scânteia*, 21 November 1985.

⁵² Ceausescu's increasing distrust of innovation is reflected in his criticism of the reliance upon electronics in the Romanian defence industry and his claim that old technology was more reliable; see his comments in the Stenogram of the Meeting of the Defence Council of 31 May 1989 (document 31 in this volume).

due to inefficient running. In the mid-1970s Ceausescu expanded Romania's oil-refining capacity in excess of the country's own domestic output, and in 1976 was forced to begin the import of crude oil. When the price of oil soared on the international market in 1978 Romania was caught out and soon faced a major trade deficit. Her problem was exacerbated by the revolution in Iran, a chief supplier to Romania of oil, which put a halt to deliveries.

Nature was also against the régime. A severe earthquake of 1977, followed by floods in 1980 and 1981, disrupted industrial production and reduced the exports of foodstuffs which Ceausescu now looked to in order to pay off the foreign debt incurred through industrialization. In late 1981, the country's foreign debt rose to \$10.2 billion (in 1977 it stood at only \$3.6 billion) and Ceausescu requested its rescheduling. On the recommendation of the IMF imports were reduced and exports, especially of machinery, equipment and petroleum products, increased. The implications of this reduction of imports were not fully appreciated by foreign analysts at the time; since in 1981 Romania had a net importer of food from the West (food imports from the West in that year totalled \$644 millions and exports \$158 millions).⁵³ In the same year, Soviet statistics show that Romania exported 106,000 tons of frozen meat to the Soviet Union. Cutting back on food imports, while at the same time continuing to export meat to the Soviet Union, forced Ceausescu to introduce meat rationing.

More importantly, the very act of having to accept conditions from the Western banks was a great blow to the Romanian leader's inflated pride. On its heels came political isolation which made him less dependent on the support of foreign governments that might have exercised some influence in persuading him to moderate his policies towards his people. He declared defiantly in December 1982 that he would pay off the foreign debt by 1990, and to achieve this introduced a series of austerity measures unparalleled even in the bleak history of East European Communist regimes. Rationing of bread, flour, sugar and milk was introduced in some provincial towns in early 1982, and in 1983 it was extended to most of the country, with the exception of the capital. The monthly personal

⁵³ A.H. Smith, 'The Romanian Enterprise', in Industrial Reform in Socialist Countries, ed. by I. Jeffries, London: Edward Elgar, 1992, p.204.

rations were progressively reduced to the point where, on the eve of the 1989 revolution, they were in some regions of the country one kilo of sugar, one kilo of flour, a 500-gram pack of margarine, and five eggs. At the same time, heavy industry was also called upon to contribute to the export drive, but because its energy needs outstripped the country's generating capacity drastic energy saving measures were introduced in 1981, which included a petrol ration of 30 litres per month for private car owners. Other strictures stipulated a maximum temperature of 14 degrees centigrade in offices and periods of provision of hot water (normally one day a week in flats). In the winter of 1983, these restrictions were extended, causing the interruption of the electricity supply in major cities and reduction of gas pressure during the day so that meals could only be cooked at night. During the severe winter of 1984-85 it was calculated from medical sources in the capital's hospitals that over 30 children had died as a result of unannounced power cuts affecting incubators.

Public Opposition

The miners' strike of 1977 in the Jiu Valley was the most important challenge posed by a group of workers to Communist power in Romania since the spate of protests in Bucharest, Iasi and Cluj triggered by the Hungarian uprising of 1956. The failure of the Romanian media to report the Jiu valley strike characterized its total subservience as a tool to be manipulated by the regime, and illustrated the blackout tactics used by the authorities throughout the postwar era to stifle the passage of potentially 'harmful' information to the populace. Access to information is just as essential for the individual to defend himself against authority as is manipulation of it for the government to protect itself. This control of the media and the 'sanitizing of news' was very effective in containing protest and in inculcating a sense of isolation and frustration amongst protestors, and played a self-fulfilling role: if no opposition to the regime was reported, then most of the public not only assumed that there was none, but, guided by this assumption, questioned the point in displaying any.

Despite this negative attitude, there were courageous yet spasmodic attempts by groups of manual workers to challenge authority. In January 1979, a group of fifteen workers from the naval yards in the Danube port of Turnu Severin approached a Dr Ionel Cana, a

general practitioner who had worked in Olt county amongst workers and had recently moved to Bucharest. Dr Cana had acquired a reputation for helping workers to draw up petitions complaining about labour conditions and he agreed to the men's proposal to set up S.L.O.M.R, the 'Free Trade Union of the Working People of Romania'. The founding declaration was broadcast over Radio Free Europe on 4 March 1979 by Noel Bernard, the head of the Romanian section, and the union attracted more than 2,400 signatures of support from workers in towns such as Ploiesti and Constanta, and Hungarian workers in Târgu Mures and Timisoara. The dissident Orthodox priest Gheorghe Calciu offered to be a spiritual adviser. The group circulated a manifesto calling for the legalization of unofficial trade unions and observance of the right to free association. In April the union, in an open letter to Ceausescu, protested against the arrest of its members, among them Cana and an economist, Gheorghe Brasoveanu, the latter being confined to a psychiatric institution in March. Cana's successor as chairman, Nicolae Dascalu, was sentenced in June to 18 months in prison for allegedly passing state secrets to Amnesty International.

The growing economic hardship imposed on the country by Ceausescu sparked off more strikes in the early 1980s. Miners in seven metal mines in the Maramures region of northern Transylvania went on strike in September 1983 in protest at wage cuts introduced under a new wage law. Security police were sent in to break up the strike. Following a reduction of the daily bread ration to 300 grams per person and pay cuts of up to 40% for failure to fill output targets, Romanian and Hungarian workers went on strike in November 1986 at the Heavy Machine Plant and the Refrigeration Plant in Cluj, and at the glass factory in Turda. Leaflets in both languages demanding 'meat and bread' and 'milk for our children' circulated in Cluj, thus demonstrating inter-ethnic solidarity. Party officials rushed food to the factories and promised to meet the workers' grievances, whereupon the strikers returned to work, but just as in the Jiu valley in 1977 the *securitate* launched an investigation into the organization of the strike and several workers were moved to other areas.

Within three months unrest had spread to the east of the country, encompassing for the first time in decades both workers and students. Once again, wage cuts imposed for failure to meet production targets and food supply problems were the trigger. On 16

February 1987, some 1000 employees at the Nicolina rolling stock works in the Moldavian capital of Iasi marched on the Party headquarters protesting at the pay cuts. Their demands were quickly met. On the following day, in what appears to have been an uncoordinated action, several thousand students from the university and polytechnic marched through the centre of the city in protest at the power and heating cuts imposed in student hostels, chanting 'we want water to have a wash and light to be able to study'. The authorities again gave in and no repressive action was taken against the students. At the Nicolina plant, however, 150 of the most prominent strikers were dismissed after the customary *securitate* directed *post-mortem*.

Behind this string of protests against Ceausescu's economic policies lay the introduction of draconian measures designed to reduce food and energy consumption, and wage reductions. Yet instead of heeding the warning signs of increasing labour unrest, Ceausescu plunged blindly forward with the same measures, seemingly indifferent to their consequences. A sign that the cup of privations had filled to overflowing came on 15 November 1987 in Brasov, the country's second largest industrial center when several thousand workers at the *Steagul Rosu* plant (with a workforce of 22,000) came off the night shift and assembled, ostensibly to vote in the local elections taking place across the country that day. They marched off from the plant at about 9 am in the direction of the Party headquarters in the centre of the city singing the anthem of the revolution of 1848 *Desteapta-te, române* (Awake, Romanian) and chanting 'Down with the dictatorship' and 'We want bread'. They were joined by workers from the Brasov Tractor Plant (workforce 25,000) and by many townspeople as they made their way to the city centre where they forced their way into the county Party headquarters and sacked the building, throwing into the square portraits of Ceausescu and food from the well-stocked canteen. A number of arrests were made after the disturbances. Sixty-two of the protesters were transferred to jobs in other towns, the majority in Moldavia.⁵⁴

Dissent

The fact that this protest took place in a major industrial centre whose production of

⁵⁴ A list of 74 workers who were released after the 1989 revolution appeared in *România libera* on 9 January 1990.

lorries and tractors was largely for export, and whose workers were formerly amongst the best-paid in Romania, showed to what depths discontent with Ceausescu's policies had sunk, especially after 1982, the year in which the austerity programme was launched in order to pay off the foreign debt. This fact was highlighted not only by Doina Cornea, a leading dissident, but also by a former leading member of the Romanian Communist Party. Mihai Botez, a mathematician and erstwhile economic adviser, and a prominent critic of Ceausescu, issued a statement emphasizing that the protests signalled a 'rejection of the leadership's economic and political strategies' and constituted 'a severe warning to the leaders' from the working class. Botez warned that 'repression would be the costliest option, with disastrous implications for the country.'⁵⁵

Even more significant, and unprecedented, was the intervention of Silviu Brucan, deputy editor of the party daily *Scântea* from 1944 to 1956, and Romanian ambassador to the United States (1956-59) and to the United Nations (1959-62). In the evening of 26 November 1987, Brucan invited two Western journalists to his house and handed them a statement to Western correspondents in Bucharest invoking the authority of the Party and alerting Ceausescu to the fact that 'a period of crisis has opened up in relations between the Romanian Communist Party and the working class.' After a rise in the standard of living in the 1960s and 1970s, 'the situation of the workers has deteriorated and the explosion in Brasov is a sign that the cup of anger is now full and the working class is no longer prepared to be treated like an obedient servant.' He warned that 'repression may result in total isolation, this time not only from the West, but also from the East.'⁵⁶ Excerpts from Brucan's declaration were broadcast the following evening on BBC World Service News and the whole text in Romanian was transmitted on the BBC Romanian Service, Radio Free Europe and Voice of America, thus enabling millions of Romanians to hear for the first time a warning to Ceausescu delivered from a senior Party figure.

Signs that Ceausescu was severely shaken by the Brasov disturbances were evident in his decisions to postpone the National Party Conference by a week and not to attend Mikhail

⁵⁵ Vladimir Socor, 'The Workers' Protest in Braşov: Assessment and Aftermath', Romania Background Report /231, Radio Free Europe Research, 4 December 1987, p.3.

⁵⁶ S. Brucan, Generatia Irosita: Bucharest: Editurile Universul & Calistrat Hogas, 1992, pp.168-69.

Gorbachev's briefing for Warsaw Pact leaders in East Berlin but to send his Foreign Minister instead. At the same time, in order to prevent further criticism of the regime at a time of unrest, prominent dissidents were detained or placed under house arrest in early December. They included Doina Cornea, the university lecturer from Cluj who was dismissed from her post in September 1983 for having used Western philosophical texts in her lectures, and her son Leontin Juhas, who together with Cornea distributed a leaflet outside Cluj factories expressing support for the Braşov workers. Others who either confined to their homes or arrested were Mihai Botez's wife Mariana Celac, an urban planner who was a critic of the urban and rural resettlement programme, Ion Puiu, a veteran National Peasant Party politician and critic of the regime, Florian Russu, the leader of the outlawed National Peasant Party youth group, Radu Filipescu, a young electronics engineer who had been sentenced on 12 September 1983 to 10 years imprisonment for printing and distributing anti-Ceausescu leaflets but was released in April 1986, Nicolae Stancescu and Ion Fistioc, both Party members, who had submitted proposals for reform to the Romanian leadership and to the Soviet Embassy in Bucharest with the request that they be forwarded to Gorbachev, Nelu Prodan, a young Baptist, and Gabriel Andreescu, a 36 year old geophysicist, who sent an open letter to a human rights conference sponsored by Solidarity in Cracow at the end of August 1988 calling on Romanian citizens to adopt a policy of non-cooperation with the regime.

The Impending End

Ceausescu's notorious 'systematization' plan, accelerated to reduce the number of the country's villages by half by the year 2000, represented a spectacular own goal by the Romanian leader for it managed to draw international attention to the excesses of the regime and brought Doina Cornea her largest measure of domestic support. Twenty seven teachers, writers and workers from the towns of Cluj, Sibiu, Fagaras, and Zarnesti in Transylvania, including Iulius Filip and Dumitru Alexandru Pop, founder members of the free Trade Union *Libertatea*, put their names to Doina Cornea's third open letter to Ceausescu.⁵⁷ This letter marked an example rare in Romania of collective dissident

⁵⁷ The others were George Vasilescu, a lawyer from Cluj; Haralambie Circa and Samoila Popa, both teachers from Sibiu, Puiu Neamtu an electrician from Fagaras, Teohar Mihadas, a writer from Cluj, Isaia Vatca a painter from Cluj, Dan and Gina Sâmpaleanu, both teachers from Blaj, Crucita Mariana, a

protest from intellectuals and workers. Written in July 1988, but broadcast by RFE only at the beginning of September and published by *The Spectator* and *Le Monde*, it was devoted entirely to the systematization plan and presented a ringing condemnation of it. Cornea's arguments were presented in the language of Romanian traditionalists who placed village life at the core of national identity: 'By striking the peasant's house, you are striking at the nation's soul'.⁵⁸ Following the publication of this letter, Cornea was placed under house arrest, a restriction which was only lifted on 22 December 1989. Her treatment at the hands of the regime remained unique until March 1989, when she shared her predicament with such writers and political figures as Mircea Dinescu and Silviu Brucan, but she had taken her stance long before the changes in the Soviet Union offered a political umbrella, however pervious, to those whose professional or family ties linked them to the home of Communism. Cornea remained for almost seven years a largely isolated figure and yet because her views were formed from her own experience of daily life, one shared by her audience, her message gained in power.

It is no exaggeration to say as regards Doina Cornea, no single case drew more attention to Romania's abuse of human rights and to the country's consequent, but belated, quarantining by the international community. Amidst an avalanche of criticism from both West and East the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva adopted on 9 March 1989, by 21 votes for to 7 against, a resolution calling for an inquiry into alleged human rights abuses in Romania, the first such investigation to be authorized in any country for five years. A mark of the country's growing isolation was the abstention from voting of her

housewife from Turda, Peter Ivan Chelu, a theatre director and Melinda Chelu, an architect from Cluj, Zoltan and Judith Wrabel, Eniko Tabacu, Rachel Szocs, and Viorica Hecia, all teachers from Cluj, Marius Tabacu, a musician from Cluj, Marin Lupeu, Ioan Voicu, Mihai Torja, Marin Brâncoveanu, Bogdan and Monica Serban, all workers from Zarnesti, and Mihai Hurezeanu and Ion Rostas, both workers from Cluj. Iulius Filip, one of the founder members of the independent trade union *Libertatea* had been arrested in 1982 after writing a letter of support to the Polish trade union Solidarity. After five years in prison, during which time he was beaten, he was released but forced to choose from three places of work, none of which was close to his home and family in Cluj. He chose the town of Zlatna, some 150 km from Cluj and commuted to work. He and his wife were placed under constant surveillance and they applied to emigrate. In June 1988 pressure was brought to bear on the couple to withdraw their application but they refused. In July, Filip went to Bârlad in Moldavia to meet fellow workers who were sympathetic to the aims of *Libertatea* but he was arrested upon arrival and accused of a robbery committed in Cluj. He was badly beaten and detained for four days before being freed. On his return to Cluj he was rearrested, this time for a robbery carried in Bârlad, and he was beaten again, by a Major Jurcut of the *securitate* (East European Reporter (Spring-Summer 1989, p.24).

⁵⁸ D. Cornea, Scrisori deschise si alte texte, Bucharest: Humanitas, 1991, pp.84-85.

Eastern bloc allies, the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and East Germany, while Hungary went even further and joined the resolution's sponsors. The resolution highlighted the rural resettlement (systematization) plan and the country's treatment of its ethnic minorities, drawing attention to the many thousands of Hungarian refugees who had fled Transylvania in the preceding months.

These moves taken by the international community coincided with the growing disaffection with Ceaușescu within senior political circles. On 10 March 1989, an open letter to the President was made public by the BBC bearing the signatures of six veteran figures in the Party. Three of them were former members of the Political Executive Committee (Politburo): Gheorghe Apostol, First Secretary of the Party from April 1954 to October 1955; Alexandru B[r]l`deanu, the Party's leading economist who played a key role in charting Romania's autonomy from the Soviet Union; and Constantin Pârvulescu who was a founding member of the RCP in 1921 and one of its secretaries for a brief period from April 1944 until 1945. The other signatories were Silviu Brucan, Corneliu Manescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1961 to 1972 and President of the UN General Assembly from 1967 to 1968., and Grigore Ion Raceanu, a veteran member of the Party.⁵⁹ All were placed under house arrest. The regime's obsession with security was

⁵⁹ For the full text of the letter see Michael Shafir, 'Former Senior RCP Officials Protest Ceaușescu's Policies', Radio Free Europe Research, Romania/3 (29 March 1989), pp. 8-11. A good deal of misinformation and perhaps disinformation has circulated concerning the manner in which the letter reached the West. There seems little doubt that Silviu Brucan sent at least two copies of the letter on 1 March through the open post, one to the offices of Associated Press in Vienna, the second to a friend in London. The friend in London informed the BBC World Service who sent a messenger to collect the letter. It was broadcast by the Romanian service of the BBC on 10 March and on the same evening a despatch from London by Misha Glenny containing details of a telephone conversation with Brucan on the subject of the letter was transmitted in English (I am grateful to the Caris Information Service of the BBC World Service for providing me with a copy of the despatch). That same evening I was interviewed by the BBC English-language service on the significance of the letter and shown a translation of it. In an alleged declaration made by Silviu Brucan to the *securitate* on 23 March 1989 which was published in the Romanian weekly Express Magazin in its edition of 13-19 March 1991 (p.9), Brucan said that he had sent a copy of the letter to me in London. I have no reason to disbelieve this. However, the only text of the letter which I saw was that shown to me in English translation on 10 March at the BBC. The name of the American correspondent William Pfaff has also been invoked in connection with the transmission of the letter to the West. Here is what Pfaff has to say about the matter: 'I have been credited by Radio Free Europe (and elsewhere) with having brought the text of the dissident Communist leaders' letter of March 1989 to the West. This is not true. I seem to have provided a useful diversion in these events, but the text of the letter was simply mailed by Mr Brucan to addresses in Vienna and London, for transmission to The Associated Press and the BBC. When after several days the BBC had broadcast nothing, Mr Brucan concluded that the letter had not got through (actually it had) and made another handwritten copy that he gave to the American Embassy, asking that it be immediately typed on an embassy machine and his version

confirmed by the dismissal on 17 March 1989 of the poet Mircea Dinescu from the Party and from the editorial staff of the literary weekly *România literara* and his placement under house arrest. Neither he nor his wife were allowed to receive visitors. Like Doina Cornea, Dinescu received 'black spot' letters - threatening, unsigned letters with black edges in the form of obituary notices - during this period of house arrest which lasted until 22 December 1989.

Several weeks before the opening of the 14th Party Congress, which took place on 20 November 1989, the protest against Ceausescu had received significant momentum from the clandestine circulation of two letters, one in the form of an appeal to the Congress delegates not to re-elect Ceausescu, the other putting a number of questions to him about his mismanagement of the economy and human rights violations. Both letters were issued in the name of 'The National Salvation Front' (*Frontul Salvării Naționale*) and were sent to the West in the summer of 1989, being broadcast by Radio Free Europe respectively on 27 August and 8 November.⁶⁰ The composition of this 'Front' remained a mystery until a short while after the revolution and naturally invited claims that the National Salvation Front which assumed power after Ceausescu's overthrow was this same clandestine group. However, the two letters sent six months earlier under the name of the NSF were said by Silviu Brucan to have been written by Alexandru Melian, a professor at Bucharest University, who had no connection with any of the leading members of the post-revolutionary NSF.⁶¹ This was contradicted by General Nicolae Militaru who claimed that he and Ion Iliescu were leading members of the clandestine NSF and that 'Iliescu agreed with the name NSF from the very beginning. He was the one who had the idea to write the appeal to the November Congress, which was then written by a professor, Alexandru Melian.'⁶²

The letters had no impact whatsoever on the Congress proceedings, for immediately after

destroyed. His arrest promptly followed. According to him, the embassy had been penetrated by the Romanian security service, the *securitate*, and an American officer had been turned.' Pfaff also revealed that Brucan had shown him a draft proposal for reform of the Romanian Communist Party during a visit to Bucharest 'in the late winter of 1988-89' (International Herald Tribune, 6 June 1991, p.10).

⁶⁰ M. Shafir, 'Ceausescu's Overthrow: Popular Uprising or Moscow-guided Conspiracy?', Radio Free Europe Research, Report on Eastern Europe, vol.1, no.3 (19 January 1990), p.15.

⁶¹ S. Brucan, Generatia Irosita, p.218.

⁶² Author's interview with General Nicolae Militaru, 7 January 1995.

the opening national anthem applause broke out amongst the 3,308 delegates, and to the accompaniment of rhythmic clapping chants of 'Ceausescu re-elected at the 14th congress!', 'Ceausescu, RCP!', 'Ceausescu and the people!', 'Ceausescu, Romania !', and 'Ceausescu, Peace !' went up. The very first resolution put to the congress by Manea Manescu, a member of the Politburo, was to have Ceausescu proclaimed chairman of the congress and it met with universal acclamation. This set the pattern of mechanical voting for proposals from the chair which was repeated throughout the congress proceedings.

It was as though the Party leadership and the delegates had buried their heads in the sand, oblivious to the warnings set out in the letter issued in the name of the National Salvation Front. Yet another Front signalled its existence in the Moldavian capital of Iasi on 10 December when handwritten leaflets issued in the name of the Romanian Popular Front (*Frontul Popular Român*) were displayed in the History Faculty of the university calling on students to join a protest meeting at 2 pm on 14 December in Piata Unirii against 'the policies of the the madman and his madwoman'. To prevent the meeting taking place the militia and fire-tenders were brought in to cordon off the square and even a tram-stop was removed to prevent people from alighting in it. At the same time a party meeting of university teachers was hastily arranged for 2 pm in the university to distract staff from joining the students. As an extra precautionary measure a national judo meeting was arranged in Iasi on the same day and many of the rooms in the Unirea hotel overlooking the square were occupied by members of the *Dinamo* team, the club of the Ministry of the Interior. These measures succeeded, for those who responded to the call were reduced to standing around in groups on the fringes of the cordon. The local *securitate* office managed to identify some of the members of this Front, one of whom was a poet named Cassian Maria Spiridon, and they were arrested but released on 22 December.

Oppression

Whilst not relying on the extremes of terror pursued during the early years of Communist rule in Romania, the Ceausescu regime showed that it was capable of resorting to the practices of the past in order to maintain its dominance of Romanian society. The institutions and legal codification of coercion remained unchanged. Some provisions of the penal code remained dormant until Ceausescu found it convenient to resuscitate them;

such was the case with the decree requiring the registration of typewriters with the police which was revived in a decree which came into force in April 1983, and with a provision of Gheorghiu-Dej, introduced in 1958, which made failing to report a conversation with a foreigner a criminal offence (decree no. 408 of December 1985). Photocopying machines were a rarity, and the few that were available in national libraries were closely supervised and special permission was required for their use. The materials and number of copies made were carefully recorded by a librarian.

The degree of Ceausescu's interference with the lives of individuals was most potently illustrated by measures of family planning. Abortion on demand had been legalized in 1957 and became the principal means of family planning. When the 1966 birth rate dropped to 14 per thousand people (much the same as in Britain), thereby heralding a decline in the workforce and a threat to the pace of the country's industrialization, the law was adjusted to allow abortion only to women over 40, mothers of four or more children, victims of rape and incest, and in cases of possible foetal abnormality. After the 1966 law went into effect, the abortion-related mortality rate among Romanian women increased to a level ten times that of any other European country. Since contraceptives, while not illegal, were virtually unobtainable, many women used abortion as the main method of birth control and were forced to obtain it illegally.

From a peak of 21 per thousand people in 1969 the birth rate showed an annual decline thereafter, due both to the increase in the number of illegal abortions and the fall in living standards in the late 1970s. Figures for 1981 showing the birth rate at 6 per thousand people led Ceausescu to insist that steps be taken to reverse this trend. Prime Minister Constantin Dascalescu took up this theme in a speech in September 1983. In March 1984, Ceausescu issued a summons before a gathering of National Women's Councils in Bucharest to 'breed, comrade women, it is your patriotic duty'.⁶³ At the same time he issued one of his notorious unpublished orders that women of childbearing age were to be subjected to compulsory gynaecological examination to check that they were not breaking the law by using contraceptive devices. Women doctors were required to

⁶³ D. Aspinall [D. Deletant], 'Romania: Queues and Personality Cults', *Soviet Analyst*, 16 May 1984, p.4.

conduct monthly examinations of factory women in Bucharest and to ask each one of them if she was pregnant, and if not, why not. In fact they consistently falsified records in the patients' favour and sold contraceptive pills to them which they had obtained from other East European countries.

To bolster the drive to increase the birth-rate Ceausescu introduced punitive tax measures, introducing additional taxation for all childless couples over 25. In 1986, he raised the minimum age for women to be allowed an abortion from 40 to 45, and lowered the age at which women could marry from 16 to 15. Although the birth rate did rise between 1986 and 1988, it fell again in 1989 to 16 per thousand. But the measures led to tragedy. There was a dramatic increase in back-street and self-induced abortions, especially among young working women, despite the harsh penalties given to those involved in them. Doctors risked fines and imprisonment if they gave medical help without legal authorization when self-induced abortions went wrong, and the delays in securing this often led to fatalities. *Securitate* officers were assigned to every maternity hospital to ensure that the provisions of the abortion law were strictly observed although in some cases they turned a blind eye.

The figures for deaths among Romanian women resulting from the anti-abortion law are the single most powerful indictment of the inhumanity of Ceausescu's regime. In the 23 years of its enforcement, the law caused the death of over 10,000 women from unsafe abortion. The majority died from post-abortion hemorrhage and blood poisoning.⁶⁴ The black irony of this tragedy is that it took place in a country whose 'First Lady', Elena Ceausescu, was lauded in its media as the 'Woman-Mother'.⁶⁵

International isolation

In the face of the severe austerity measures which Ceausescu had introduced in order to pay off the country's foreign debt, most Romanians began to ask whether autonomy was

⁶⁴ P. Stephenson, M. Wagner, M. Badea, F. Serbanescu, 'The Public Health Consequences of Restricted Induced Abortion - Lessons from Romania', American Journal of Public Health, October 1992, pp.1328-1331).

⁶⁵ Orizont, 6 January 1984. Elena's callousness is evident from her comments on the Poles in the Stenogram of the Meeting of the Consultative Political Committee of the CC of the RCP of 17 December 1981 (see this volume).

worth the price. The question was put even more frequently after Mikhail Gorbachev became Soviet party leader in March 1985. By the time Gorbachev visited Romania in May 1987, a remarkable one hundred and eighty degree turn had occurred in Romanians' perception of the Soviet Union and its relationship to Romania. This change in attitude hinged on the evolution of Ceausescu himself: if in 1965 Ceausescu presented a young, dynamic face of Communism compared with the ageing, reactionary Brezhnev, now, thirty years later, it was Gorbachev who had assumed Ceausescu's mantle and the latter that of Brezhnev. In a speech broadcast live during his visit to Bucharest on 26 May 1987, Gorbachev presented to the Romanian public his concepts of *glasnost* and *perestroika* and in doing so offered an implicit criticism of Ceausescu's resistance to reform. The enthusiasm for reform could be seen in the queues that formed in July 1988 in front of the *Aeroflot* offices in Bucharest as Romanians were admitted five at a time not to purchase airline tickets, but to pick up free copies in Romanian of the Soviet leader's report to the nineteenth conference of the Soviet Communist Party, coverage of which had been restricted in the Romanian media to those measures which had already been taken in Romania. Here was yet another irony of Ceausescu's continued rule: the arch-nationalist had succeeded in making Romanians look to Soviet Union for hope !

Ceausescu had reiterated his commitment to rigid central economic planning and insisted that market forces were incompatible with Communist society in his address to the Romanian Party Conference on 14 December 1987. In dealing with the reforms advocated by Gorbachev, Ceausescu argued that he had already applied similar measures in Romania. Thus *Scânteia*, in its report of the 19th Soviet Party Conference in 1988, restricted coverage of Gorbachev's speech to those measures which had already been taken in Romania, thereby suggesting that the Soviet leader was following Ceausescu's example. Furthermore, Gorbachev's admission that the Soviet Union had taken important decisions without 'proper consultation with friends' gave Ceausescu a justification for not applying *perestroika* and *glasnost*.⁶⁶

Ceausescu's 'neo-stalinism' also caused severe friction with the other superpower, the

⁶⁶ M. Shafir, 'From Sofia to Beijing: Reactions to the 19th Soviet Party Conference', Radio Free Europe Research, Background Report/133 (13 July 1988), p.5. Ceausescu's barely-concealed irritation with Gorbachev's policies is evident in his speech at the Meeting of Warsaw Pact leaders of 29 May 1987 (see this volume).

United States. Since the granting of Most-Favoured-Nation tariff treatment in 1975, the US Congress had been able to hold Ceausescu's feet to the fire over human rights issues in Romania, most notably the right or opportunity to emigrate. It was in recognition of Ceausescu's success in 'tweaking the nose of the Russians'⁶⁷ that in early 1975, Congress, in passing the Trade Act of 1974, permitted the president to extend MFN to Communist countries. Section 402 of this act, known as the Jackson-Vanik amendment, prohibited the extension of MFN to any country that denied its citizens the right to emigrate, but also allowed the president to waive this provision if he found that such a waiver would 'substantially promote the objectives of freedom of emigration'. The initial 18-month waiver could be renewed for 12-month periods by the president, but either house of Congress could reverse such a decision. This annual review of Romania's performance on emigration was to prove a key factor in Romania's relations with the United States in the 1980s. President Ford took the decision to grant Romania MFN status in 1975 after receiving an oral 'assurance' from Ceausescu that he would 'contribute to the solution of humanitarian problems on the basis of mutual confidence and goodwill.'⁶⁸ Quite apart from its considerable trade benefits to Romania - Romanian exports to the US almost doubled from \$133 to \$233 million between 1975 and 1977 - which the award of MFN brought, of even greater value to Ceausescu was the certificate of respectability that it implied not only for his emigration policies, but also for his treatment of wider human rights issues in Romania.

It was the deteriorating human rights situation in Romania that threatened US-Romanian relations in the early 1980s. The resulting US alienation from Romania in 1987 and Ceausescu's growing irritation with American expressions of concern about Ceausescu's treatment of his opponents, as exemplified by the Brucan case, led Ceausescu in February 1988 to renounce MFN status before suffering the indignity of having it withdrawn by Congress or by President Reagan. Ceausescu's action showed that he would not submit to pressure from any direction, West or East. He appears, however, to have cherished hopes

⁶⁷ The phrase was used by Corneliu Bogdan, one-time Romanian ambassador to Washington, in describing one of the reasons for President Nixon's visit to Bucharest in August 1969, and borrowed by J.F. Harrington and B.J. Courtney for the title of their book Tweaking the Nose of the Russians: Fifty Years of American-Romanian Relations, 1940-1990, Boulder: East European Monographs, 1991.

⁶⁸ R. Kirk, M. Raceanu, Romania versus the United States. Diplomacy of the Absurd, 1985-1989, New York: St Martin's Press, 1994, p.5.

that Reagan would grant MFN treatment without the Jackson-Vanik but in doing so completely failed to appreciate how negative his image had become in Congress as well the constitutional impediments facing the US president.⁶⁹

Systematization

Of the thousands of exhortations made by Ceausescu to the Romanian people none was seized upon with more alacrity by the international media than his call, made in the name of 'systematization', that 'we must radically reduce the number of villages from about 13,000 at present to 5,000 to 6,000 at most', made in an address to the National Conference of the Presidents of People's Councils on 3 March 1988.⁷⁰ His intention was understood by the Western media as a plan to physically demolish seven to eight thousand villages. Coming at a time when conservation and concern for the environment had been promoted to the top of Western political agenda, Ceausescu's plan sent shock waves around the capitals of Europe and North America. Public awareness in the West of Ceausescu's disregard for Romania's architectural heritage had been aroused by reports which trickled out in the early 1980s of his razing of the centre of Bucharest to make way for a new administrative complex of gargantuan proportions. The centre-piece of this project was a presidential palace, whose original name 'The House of the People' assumed Orwellian overtones since some 40,000 hapless citizens were forcibly evicted from their homes to make way for its construction. As the project proceeded, the palace was rechristened 'The House of the Republic' since around it were to be concentrated new ministry and other public buildings.

The spotlight of media attention was redirected on Romania at the time of the workers' demonstrations in Brasov in November 1987 and it was in this ambience of heightened interest in the internal situation in the country that Ceausescu announced in March 1988 his renewal of the drive for systematization. Coupled with revelations about the demolition in Bucharest of churches engulfed by an ever-expanding drive to extend the area of the presidential complex, the systematization plan led environmental groups in the West to coordinate both national and international actions of protests. The most effective

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.184-85.

⁷⁰ Scânteia, 4 March 1988.

in terms of attracting media attention, and in providing moral support to the Romanian people, was *Opération Villages Roumains*.

This movement recommended that European villages 'adopt' Romanian ones. Tens of thousands of letters addressed to the mayors of Romanian villages proposing 'adoption' were sent from European communities to Romania as the numbers of adoptive villages grew: by the beginning of May 1989, 231 communes in Belgium, 95 in France, and 42 in Switzerland had adopted Romanian villages. The British campaign, mounted in June with the backing of HRH The Prince of Wales, who in an unprecedented political intervention by a member of the Royal Family had condemned the systematization programme in a speech delivered on 27 April 1989, had secured 52 adoptions by September. As soon as a village in the West adopted a Romanian one the news was broadcast by the Romanian services of the BBC and Radio Free Europe and visitors returning from Romania reported the gratitude expressed to them by Romanians for the outside support. In the autumn of 1989, children throughout Belgium built 250,000 small paper houses as a symbolical present to the children of Romania and exhibited them in the village of Floreffe. One year later the exhibition occupied the vast floor of the 'House of the Republic', Ceausescu's former 'House of the People'.

Through his plans for systematization Ceausescu succeeded in imprinting Romania upon the consciousness of Europe for only the second time in his career. The first occasion had been his denunciation on 21 August 1968 of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. But whereas then he won the admiration of Europe and the rest of the world for his courageous defiance of the Soviet Union, his claim in 1989 was one to notoriety. Ceausescu became the ogre of Europe. The international media probed deeper into the character of his repressive regime and the Romanian Foreign Ministry was instructed in May 1989 to counter the *Opération Villages Roumains* campaign with the claim that the policy of systematization was to be applied more slowly. In fact Ceausescu's plans continued to be carried out to the letter. On 24 May, a large number of private houses were demolished in the villages of Otopeni, Dimieni and Odaile to the north of Bucharest and their rubble taken in 200 dump trucks and deposited in two large pits. The dislodged population of the three villages were rehoused in four-storey

apartment blocs in Otopeni. In the case of Buda and Odoreanu, in the county of Giurgiu, these were evacuated to make way for a large reservoir being constructed as part of the Bucharest-Danube canal.

Whether the international campaign eventually led Ceausescu to temper his policy of bulldozing homes in the summer and autumn of 1989, as some foreign diplomats alleged, is an open question, but at least we have no evidence that it was accelerated, as was the case with the works to complete the presidential complex in the centre of Bucharest. What the campaign did achieve was to let the Romanian people know that their villages would not, as one campaigner has written, borrowing a line from the poet Dylan Thomas, 'go silent into that dark night', forgotten by the rest of Europe.⁷¹ What no one associated with the campaign could have foreseen was that the links established between communities throughout Europe and the villages in Romania provided the perfect springboard for humanitarian aid to be channelled to an identifiable destination after Ceausescu's overthrow. The full enormity of the dictator's rule and the suffering it caused prompted adoptive communities in Europe to target their own Romanian villages as recipients of food, clothing, medicines, and practical aid. Hospitals and children's homes in the area became the special focus of attention. Thousands of ordinary European citizens travelled overland in convoys to their own adopted village with aid supplies and having assessed the needs of the Romanian community, made return visits.

Systematization under Ceausescu was not just a planning process; it was an attempt at social engineering. It threatened to destroy traditional skills, a way of life linked with the land, and the individuality of the village and its inhabitants. Ceausescu's obstinacy procured a success, in his terms, for his plan but its execution trampled on the moral being of his citizens. The plan, like so many of his other infamous edicts, such as the abortion decree, eventually provoked a reaction in that moral being which led to the dictator's downfall. Few localities in Romania do not show the mark of systematization; the suffering that the plan caused is less easy to identify.

⁷¹ J. Loraine, 'Operation Ursoaia': Porlock's Village in Romania, privately printed in 1990.

A protest which sparked off a revolt

Among the persistent critics of the Communist Party's interference in the affairs of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Transylvania were Istvan Tokes, a former deputy bishop, and his son Laszlo, a pastor, who had initially been appointed to a parish in the Transylvanian town of Dej. Laszlo was a contributor to *Ellenpontok*, a clandestine Hungarian-language journal produced in Oradea in 1981 and 1982, and amongst his articles was one on abuses of human rights in Romania, which led to his harassment by the *securitate*. He and his friends were followed and eventually Tokes was dismissed from his parish in Dej by order of bishop Nagy and assigned to the village of Sânpietru de Câmpie some forty kilometres from Cluj. Tokes refused to go and instead went to his parents' house in Cluj where he spent two years unemployed. He used part of this time to launch a letter-writing campaign in 1985 amongst the Hungarians of Transylvania to gather statistics about facilities for education in Hungarian.⁷² His plight was brought to the attention of the Foreign Relations Committee of the US Senate and as a result bishop Papp was instructed by the authorities in 1986 to appoint Tokes assistant pastor in the city of Timisoara, one of mixed Romanian, Hungarian, and German population.⁷³

As the village-systematization programme gathered momentum, so Tokes used his sermons to encourage resistance to it. He called for solidarity between Hungarians and Romanians who were both suffering at the hands of the regime and made no special pleading for Hungarian villages. In the summer of 1988, he talked with representatives in all thirteen deaneries of the Reformed Church to organize resistance to proposals to destroy villages, and at his own deanery meeting in Arad in September he and three other Hungarian pastors spoke in favour of a statement denouncing the programme.

The statement was sent to bishop Papp and within twenty-four hours every signatory had been visited by *securitate* officers and cross-examined about the meeting. Tokes's own file was handled by the head of the Timisoara *securitate*, Colonel Traian Sima, who

⁷² L. Tokes, With God, For the People, as told to David Porter, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990, pp.65, 79.

⁷³ M. Rady, Romania in Turmoil, London: I.B. Tauris, 1992, p.86.

authorized visits to Tokes's church flat by anonymous visitors who would hurl insults and threats. A cultural festival organized with the Catholic Church in Timisoara on 31 October 1988 led to threats of expulsion being made against those students who had participated. Bishop Papp sent a letter to Tokes banning all youth activities in the Oradea diocese, which included Timisoara, but undeterred, Tokes decided to hold another festival in the spring of 1989 with the Orthodox Church whose metropolitan agreed. On 31 March, at the instigation of the department of Cults and the *securitate*, Bishop Papp ordered Tokes to stop preaching in Timisoara and ordered him to move to Mineu, an isolated parish in northern Transylvania. Tokes refused to comply with the order and his congregation expressed its support for him. The bishop then began civil proceedings to evict him from his church flat. Since he was no longer deemed by the Timisoara authorities to be a resident of the city, his ration book was withdrawn and power supplies to his flat were cut off. Tokes's parishioners rallied round, bringing him and his wife and young child food and fuel. Their action contrasted with that of his fellow pastors. Fear of incurring bishop Papp's displeasure - 70 per cent of the two hundred pastors in the diocese had never been promoted from probationary status and were still directly answerable to Papp - , coupled with a feeling that Tokes's defiance was pointless, meant that the authors of an open letter appealing to the bishop to put an end to the harassment of Tokes could not find one pastor who was prepared to add his signature.⁷⁴

In the meantime, members of Tokes's congregation were arrested and beaten. One parishioner, Erno Ujvarossy, who in May had petitioned Bishop Papp in support of Tokes, was found murdered in woods outside Timisoara on 14 September. Istvan Tokes was arrested briefly in October when he arrived in Timisoara to visit his son. A court order was made for Tokes's eviction on 20 October. Tokes lodged an appeal. Tudor Postelnicu, the Minister of the Interior, ordered Sima to enforce the order. On 2 November, four attackers armed with knives broke into the flat while *securitate* agents looked on but fled after Tokes and friends managed to fight them off. After this incident, in which Tokes was cut on the forehead, the Romanian ambassador was summoned to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry and told of the Hungarian government's concern for the

⁷⁴ M. Rady, op. cit., p.88.

pastor's safety.

Parishioners continued to smuggle in food and firewood for Tokes to the sacristy of the church, despite the attention of *securitate* agents. On 28 November, Tokes was informed that his appeal had been turned down and that his eviction would be enforced on 15 December. As Christmas approached parishioners brought gifts of food to the sacristy in groups and afterwards gathered outside Tokes's flat next to the church to show their support. The two guards were unable to move them along and this gave hope to his supporters. On the day fixed for the eviction a human chain was formed around the block in which he lived and the militia were unable to gain access. Tokes leaned out of his window and thanked the crowd but advised them to leave. His advice was met with cries of 'we won't leave' and several hundred stayed in groups close to the flat.

The victimization of Tokes and his family took its toll of his pregnant wife Edit who, depressed and exhausted with the strain of harassment and a sleepless night awaiting eviction, fell ill. Tokes asked his neighbour to get word to the family doctor on the morning of 16 December and she duly appeared. Within half an hour, the mayor of Timisoara himself appeared with three doctors. Desperate to defuse the situation, the mayor tried to persuade Mrs Tokes to go into hospital, but the family doctor encouraged her to resist. The mayor relented. Shortly afterwards workmen arrived and began to repair the windows to the flat, shattered a month earlier as an act of intimidation. The door broken down by the four attackers was also restored, to the amazement of his supporters who maintained their vigil outside. Throughout the morning their numbers grew, swelled by young Romanians who were attracted by the sight of such a large crowd and the rumour that the *securitate* were unable to disperse it.⁷⁵

Tokes acknowledged to the mayor that the situation was improving and the latter seized upon this to ask him to tell the crowd to disperse. Tokes agreed and went to the window. Thanking them for their support, he advised them to leave, saying that their gathering was illegal. The crowd roared its disapproval, chanting in chorus 'Don't believe him !'.

⁷⁵ L. Tokes, op. cit., pp.147-48.

Furiously the mayor stormed out of the flat, to the jeers of the crowd. At noon he returned, complaining angrily to Tokes that the protesters had not left. Tokes took the mayor to the window and invited him to address the people. The mayor gave an assurance that Tokes would not be evicted but to no avail. Some in the crowd accused the pastor of collaborating with the authorities. 'We want it in writing', they cried, and added to their demand a retraction of the decision to transfer Tokes to Mineu, and confirmation of his appointment as pastor in Timisoara.

Rashly, the mayor promised to produce such a document in one hour, but being a Saturday this was unrealistic. The ministries closed at lunchtime on that day and after an hour the excuses were trotted out; no one was available in the legal department. At 2 pm the deputy mayor arrived. He warned that unless the demonstrators went away, Tokes would be held responsible for the consequences. Tokes suggested that the leaders of the different churches in the city be brought to the flat to witness the mayor's promise, and the deputy mayor telephoned the mayor with the idea. It was rejected. The pastor then proposed that a delegation from the street be brought in. The deputy mayor agreed. Six Romanians and four Hungarians sat down in the church office and discussed the situation with him. Progress was reported to the mayor who, strangely, now promised that a document would be sent from Bucharest in an hour. Representatives of the congregation would be able to collect it from the town hall. The representatives duly went to the town hall after an hour but there was no document. Instead, the mayor sent back an ultimatum with them that if the crowd had not dispersed by 5 pm. the fire-brigade would be sent in to scatter them with water cannon.

The demonstrators' defiance had been fuelled by the conviction that members of the *securitate* were in Tokes's flat and were either holding him against his will, or preparing to evict him. This fear was incited by provocateurs in the crowd, who could be clearly seen shouting. While the core of the crowd was made up of people who had joined the vigil against eviction, most of the newcomers had been drawn by the sight of the original protest, or by news of it. After the mayor's warning Tokes pleaded with the crowd to go home, but they were convinced that he was acting under threats from the *securitate* and refused. Some called upon him to come down into the street and lead them but Tokes

realized that this might play into the hands of the regime who could put the blame for the protests on the Hungarian minority.

By 7 pm the crowds now filled several streets extending from the church. It contained many students from the local polytechnic and university. Around the church Romanians linked hands with Hungarians in a human chain and hymns were sung. About thirty minutes later the first bars of *Desteapta-te Române* ('Romanians awake !'), a Romanian national song which had been sung for the first time in a public place during the Ceausescu era in the Brasov protests of November 1987, were falteringly taken up. Unknown in the Hungarian community, the song was an anthem of resistance to oppression and a sign that a Hungarian protest had now become a Romanian revolt.

Downfall

After the anthem came the first, bold cries of 'Down with Ceausescu !', 'Down with the regime !', and 'Down with Communism !'. The crowd then began to move off from the church and cross the bridge towards the city centre and the Party headquarters. They stoned its windows before militia reinforcements, brought up just before 10 pm, managed to drive the demonstrators back to Tokes's church where they turned water cannons on them. The crowd seized the cannons, broke them up, and threw the parts into the river Bega. They then marched on shops, smashing the windows, and broke into a book store where they burned copies of books on Ceausescu in ceremonial piles. By midnight the street outside Tokes's flat and the church was relatively quiet as the violence continued elsewhere in the city.

The vigil held in support of Tokes on 15 December turned into major demonstrations on the following day and on the 17th which were brought to a halt by the intervention of the army which opened fire on the crowd. The number of casualties was initially estimated at several thousand, but subsequent investigations put the figure at 122.⁷⁶ On Elena Ceausescu's orders, 40 of the dead were transported by lorry to Bucharest and cremated to make identification impossible. Here was a clear sign of her cruelty and ruthlessness

⁷⁶ Adevarul, 21 December 1991, pp.2-3.

On 18 December, industrial workers in Timisoara staged peaceful protests in their tens of thousands within the factory gates but on 20 December these overflowed into the streets and effectively brought an end to Communist rule in the city. The crowds proclaimed Timisoara a free city and this two days before Ceausescu fled from Bucharest. On the streets of Timisoara there were chants of 'Today in Timisoara, tomorrow throughout the whole land', and the fervour there was gradually transmitted to all those who had been waiting for years for the end of the dictatorship. Romanians learned from Western radio stations details of the number of dead in Timisoara. The figures given were exaggerated but nevertheless it was clear to the audience that grave events were taking place in the city.

Despite the gravity of the situation, Ceausescu made a brief visit to Iran, leaving his wife and Manea Manescu in charge at home. On his return on 20 December, he made a series of tactical errors, which led to his lightning downfall. In a televised address to the nation that evening, he completely misjudged the mood of the people by displaying no hint of compassion for the victims of Timisoara - rumoured by this time to number tens of thousands -, and by dismissing the demonstrations as the work of 'fascists' and hooligan elements', inspired by Hungarian irredentism.

His second mistake was to convene a public meeting of support on the next morning in Bucharest. To his bewilderment, his speech was interrupted by cries of 'We are not hooligans' by a protester whose proximity to the microphones caused them to be heard by sections of the crowd. Those around him panicked for fear of being identified by the *securitate* as accomplices in the cries and dropped their banners of support for Ceausescu which were trampled under foot. The sound of cracking produced by the breaking of the wooden poles carrying the banners resembled gunshots and led the crowd to flee. The sound of the commotion was heard in the background of the live television and radio coverage of Ceausescu's speech and the broadcast was cut for several minutes. When he resumed his speech, Ceausescu attempted to placate the crowd by announcing salary and pension increases, but this stratagem only angered them further. At the end of his speech, large groups of young people remained in the city centre and, encouraged by the mild, unseasonal weather, lingered into the evening, and formed a barricade in University

Square. During the night they were fired upon by units of the army and of the *securitate* troops, and many were shot dead.

On the following morning of 22 December, a communiqué was broadcast on television in which the demonstrators were dismissed as 'hooligans', 'Fascists' and 'foreign agents' ; at the same time, it was announced that Defence Minister Vasile Milea was a traitor and had committed suicide. Senior army commanders, on learning of Milea's death, ordered the units in front of the Central Committee to withdraw. At the same time, waves of protesters were coming in the other direction from all parts of the city. They assembled in front of the central Committee building and began to chant: 'Ceausescu should be judged for the bloodshed', and 'Yesterday in Timisoara, tomorrow throughout the whole land'. When Ceausescu appeared briefly at the window of the balcony of the Central Committee, stones were thrown and he was hustled inside.

The withdrawal of the troops was a signal to the crowd to storm the building. Ceausescu and his wife fled from the rooftop in a helicopter accompanied by his wife and two of his closest allies, Manea Manescu and Emil Bobu, and two bodyguards. Ceausescu ordered the pilot to land at Snagov, some 30 kilometres to the north of Bucharest, where he had a villa, and it was here that he and his wife collected a suitcase of clothing. Manea and Bobu remained behind as the helicopter took off again with the Ceausescus and their bodyguards in the direction of Pitesti, but shortage of fuel prompted the pilot to put down on the main road south of Târgoviste. Here they highjacked a car driven by a doctor who took them to the outskirts of the town. They then commandeered a second car and tried to reach the local party headquarters, but were recognized. The driver took them to an agricultural research station, where they were locked in a room until the local police arrived. The couple were eventually taken to the Târgoviste military garrison. They were tried before an improvised tribunal there and executed there on Christmas Day 1989.

Fate has its own way of rewarding the courageous and of punishing tyrants. Despite the divisiveness of Ceausescu's policies towards the peoples of Romania, their shared experience of suffering under his rule brought them together. It was the defiance of Tokes which provided the catalyst for the display of ethnic solidarity which sparked off the

popular uprising against Ceausescu. This convergence of circumstance started the series of events which led to the overthrow of the dictator. One may argue that it was only a matter of time before Ceausescu fell, given his isolation in the international arena and the growing dissent at home. But it was the merit of Tokes and of his parishioners that they pressed on with their protest against a bishop's abuse of power which was characteristic of a denial of human rights typical of the Ceausescu regime.

The events of late December 1989 showed that the forces of the *Securitate* were only as efficient as their weaknesses allowed them to be. They were not trained in dealing with crowd control, still less was the army, and the heavy-handed actions of forces from both bodies resulted in the deaths of many of the 1,033 official victims of the revolution. 270 of the dead were soldiers as were 673 of the 2383 wounded.⁷⁷ Most of the soldiers were killed in exchanges with snipers, the so-called 'terrorists'. About 800 suspected 'terrorists' were arrested by the army but were later freed in the course of 1990. Major General Mugurel Florescu, the deputy prosecutor general, said that many had been released through lack of witnesses since the people who had brought them in left and did not return.⁷⁸ A partial list of those detained as 'terrorists' was published in the weekly *Tinerama* in September 1993, but we cannot be sure that all those named actually fired on soldiers and civilians. Still less do we know under whose authority, if any, they might have been acting. As the account of some of the events in Bucharest on 21 December shows, the forces deployed against the demonstrators were drawn from the army, the Ministry of Interior troops, the troops of the militia, the Patriotic Guards, and USLA. It is quite likely that the 'terrorists' were an assortment of renegade elements from all these forces, and the use of the term 'terrorist' by the populace and the media was an attempt to rationalize opposition to the fledging authority of the revolutionary government. This same assortment made it difficult for the authorities to clearly implicate, in the case of the *Securitate*, and disculpate, in the case of the army, particular forces in their resistance to the new order and therefore to avoid the embarrassment of admitting that soldiers, militia, and *Securitate* officers were equally involved in shedding innocent blood after Ceausescu's execution, the military procurator was given the order to release all 'terrorist'

⁷⁷ Adevarul, 21 February 1990, p.1.

⁷⁸ The Times, 22 December 1990.

suspects. By whom is not yet clear.

We should bear in mind that mass demonstrations against Ceausescu occurred only in a small number of Romania's cities and that in the majority there was a relative calm. The greatest anti-Ceausescu demonstrations before 22 December were in Timisoara, Bucharest, Cluj, Arad, and Sibiu, but in the majority of towns in Moldavia and Wallachia there was an uneasy calm. The violent manner of Ceausescu's demise set Romania's experience of political change apart from that of the other Central European states and was itself an indication that in Romania the peaceful overthrow of dictatorship was impossible. Whereas Ceausescu succeeded in uniting Romanians in opposition to him, his fall threw them into confusion. The legacy of totalitarian rule in Romania was therefore markedly different from that elsewhere.

INTRODUCTION

MIHAIL E. IONESCU, Ph. D.

**Director of the Institute for Political Studies of Defense
and Military History**

Romania's evolution within the Warsaw Pact and its position during the Cold War could be understood more easily—and would be more realistically explained—by analyzing its behavior during the crucial moments of the alliance's history. Romania had a specific evolution within Warsaw Pact. Bucharest's distinctiveness was made evident by its general policy within the Soviet bloc. Moscow's reactions to the Romania's dissident policy reinforced Bucharest's desires for increased maneuverability.

At the end of the 1950s and at the beginning of the next decade "Romania frequently followed an independent course and seldom got in line with other Warsaw Pact states."⁷⁹ While the assertion in itself is important, questions remain on the sources and effects of Romania's role in the Treaty. When was this new course adopted and how was it implemented by the leadership in Bucharest? Did this new course aim at removing Romania from the Soviet sphere of influence or did it seek only to offer Bucharest greater maneuverability at international level? Were some political limits and constraints admitted by Bucharest? Finally, was it only a simple attempt of the Romanian political communist elite to overcome Moscow's "moods"—which oscillated between reform and stagnation—or was this orientation aimed at defending the national interest?

We seek to provide our interpretation of the answers to the above questions, seeking to offer some explanations as to the causes and consequences of the events, in this one of the most fascinating episodes of Romania's contemporary history. They seek to decipher Romania's relations with the Soviet Union within the hegemonic power's backyard, and uncover the short and long term options available to the Communist leadership in Bucharest during the Cold War.

The first significant event regarding Romania's attitude within the Warsaw Pact took place soon after the Organization was established in 1955. During the autumn of

79 Anna Locher, *Shaping the Policies of the Alliance- The Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Warsaw Pact, 1976- 1980*, p.14. The author underlines that the denunciations by Romania "of Soviet policies and alignment with the West were endured by the Soviet Union because Romania was strategically the least important member of the Alliance, surrounded by communist countries" (See <http://www.isn.cthz.ch/php/documents/collection>).

1956, under the impact of the destalinization, calls for reforming Communism developed in Poland and Hungary. In Poland, at the end of September, people took to the streets in Poznan; the demonstrations quickly spread to other regions, especially Warsaw. The initiators, many of whom were “Communist reformers”, asked for more economic freedom, the withdrawal of Soviet forces, and the diminishing of the United Polish Workers’ Party (UPWP) control over Polish society.

Confronted with this crisis, the Soviet leadership, headed by N.S. Khrushchev, acted rapidly and resolutely. On 19 October 1956, the Soviet leader flew to Warsaw and succeeded in stabilizing the situation at the cost of accepting Wladislaw Gomulka as the new leader of the UPWP.

The Hungarian crisis was much more serious. The crisis erupted on 23 October 1956 and quickly turned much more radical than the Polish crisis that preceded it. The situation became explosive as Hungarian Prime Minister, Imre Nagy, under increased pressure from the population, announced Hungary’s withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and its immediate neutrality. Taking advantage of a tense situation in the Suez region—on 29 October the second Israeli-Arab conflict began and on 31 October the Anglo-British forces bombarded objectives in Egypt—Moscow decided to use Soviet troops on 4 November to crush the Hungarian Revolution.

The leaders of the Hungarian revolution took refuge at the Yugoslav embassy in Budapest, where they were finally apprehended by Soviet special-forces on 22 November 1956 and transferred to Romania. Imre Nagy and his compatriots remained in prison at Snagov, near Bucharest, until 1958 when they were repatriated to Hungary to be tried, sentenced to death and executed.

The Romanian political leadership supported unconditionally the Soviet intervention in Hungary.⁸⁰ At the beginning of November, in Bucharest, the Romanian, Bulgarian and Czech leaders communicated their unwavering support to the N.S. Khrushchev and the G.F. Malenkov. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Todor Zhivkov went a step further and offered to send troops to the neighbor country in support of the Soviet army. N. S. Khrushchev recalled in his memoirs the eagerness showed of the Romanian

80 See, among others, 1956. *Explozia. Perceptii românești, iugoslave și sovietice asupra evenimentelor din Polonia și Ungaria*, Edited by Corneliu Mihai Lungu and Mihai Retegan. Afterword by Florin Constantiniu, Bucharest, 1996.

leadership to participate in the repression of the Hungarian revolution.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the Soviet leaders did not consider ally participation in invasion necessary.

Pushing for rapid intervention, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was acting at the time as an “Orthodox communist.” In a meeting of the Romanian Workers’ Party Central Committee (CC RWP) Politburo, December 1st, 1956, he told the other members of the Romanian leadership that he considered Romanian participation “a necessary international duty.”⁸² His position can be primarily understood as influenced by the fear that the events in Hungary could spill over into neighboring Romania. The Bucharest authorities watched very closely the population’s mood, dealing harshly with any manifestations considered “counter-revolutionary.”

The evolution of events in 1956 had placed Dej in a very complex situation. On one hand he felt threatened by the destalinization process promoted by Khrushchev’s Secret Speech at the 20th CPSU Congress which partly revealed Stalin’s crimes and abuses. The rapidity and radicalism of the Hungarian uprising hinted at the fragility of the East European communist regimes. As a consequence, the political survival of the Bucharest regime and its leaders was dependent upon Moscow’s support.⁸³ An important consequence of this insecurity was Romania’s attitude within the Warsaw Pact during the early years. Primarily, it prompted Bucharest to offer its unconditional fidelity to Soviet political directives aimed at repressing any attempt by Hungary and Poland to take advantage of the destalinization process for their own ends.

The decision to withdraw the Soviet troops from Romania in May 1958 represents a strong argument supporting this interpretation. Their legal status had been radically changed after the conclusion of the State Treaty with Austria (May 1955). The legitimacy of the Soviet military presence in Romania has been based on the Peace Treaty signed in Paris in February 1947. The treaty sanctioned Soviet military presence in order to ensure lines of communication with the contingents of the Red Army in Austria. After the

⁸¹ Khronchtchev, *Souvenirs*. Afterword by Edward Crankshaw, Paris, 1971, p.400.

⁸² *Stenogram of the meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party (CC RWP) regarding the Romania’s stand towards the events taking place in Hungary*, 1 December 1956, Central Historical National Archives (C.H.N.A.), Fund CC of the RCP, Chancellery Section, File no. 174/1956 in *1956. Explozia...*, pp. 328-329.

⁸³ Florin Constantiniu, *O istorie sincera a poporului roman*, Third Edition, Bucharest, 2002, p. 458-463.

signing of the treaty, Bucharest's acquiescence to the presence of Romanian territory was decisive for Moscow's ability to continue the occupation.

The interpretations of historiography related to the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Romania vary. Many Romanian historians emphasized, before and after 1989, the role played by the Romanian communist leadership, in allegedly persuading Khrushchev to order the withdrawal. There is little doubt that the initiative belonged to the Romanian leadership, especially to Defense Minister and Politburo Member Emil Bodnarus. It was Bodnarus who asked Khrushchev in 1955 for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Bodnarus request was firmly rejected by the Soviet leadership.⁸⁵ In the end, however, Khrushchev finally agreed to withdraw the Soviet troops from Romania, in part for reasons independent of Bucharest's desires. The historiographical cliché of Romanian national-communist, suggesting that Bucharest had succeeded in "forcing" the Soviets to withdraw their troops from Romania still lacks documentary support.

Other interpretations of the Soviet Army's withdrawal from Romania underlined the firm interest Moscow had in carrying out this unprecedented step.⁸⁶ At the time, the Soviet leadership sought to reduce military expenses in order to redirect the freed resources toward the civilian field. It was in the late 1950's that the Kremlin had begun a process of redistributing Soviet capital toward the production of consumer goods. The power struggle between Khrushchev and the Molotov group had begun, among other causes, due to divergent concerns on prioritizing the investments. Still other historians argued that the idea that the withdrawal was one proof of the emergence in the Kremlin's leadership of the idea of establishing a policy of peaceful coexistence.⁸⁷ Still others argue that the "relative strategic insignificance" of Romania influenced Moscow's decision to withdraw.⁸⁸

Romania's unconditional political support for Moscow's policy, support Bucharest had demonstrated on numerous previous occasions, played an important role in

⁸⁴ see, among others, Paul Niculescu Mizil, *O istorie traita. Memorii*, vol. I, Bucharest, 2002, pp. 102-103, 111; Lavinia Betea, *Maurer si lumea de ieri. Marturii despre stalinizarea Romaniei* (Interview with Gheorghe Apostol), Arad, 1995, pp. 263-264; Ioan Scurtu, *Romania si retragerea trupelor sovietice. 1958*, Bucharest, 1996, pp. 41-44; Khrushchev, *op. cit.*, 481-482

⁸⁵ Khrushchev, *op. cit.*, p. 482

⁸⁶ Florin Constantiniu, *op.cit.*, pp. 491-492

⁸⁷ Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, pp. 47, 49-50

⁸⁸ Ana Locher, *op.cit.*, p.14.

the Kremlin's final decision. That aspect of Romania's foreign policy was well understood outside the Socialist camp. An intelligence report dated October 1958 of the United States Army Headquarters, Europe, (G2) underlined that, even as the Warsaw Pact had announced the reduction of 55,000 men in the Romanian armed forces at the same time as the withdrawal of the Soviet military forces from Romania, there was little evidence of a possible change in the nature of the Soviet system.⁸⁹ While the report suggested that "in view of the Soviet troops withdrawal, we anticipate continued but unsuccessful efforts to align the Romanian military forces with the Warsaw Pact concept" it added that "Romanian regime [had] instituted a new series of repressive measures."⁹⁰

Romania's opposition toward Soviet hegemony, arguably begun sometime between 1962 and 1964, included an event which remains unclear. The Cuban Missile Crisis brought into question Bucharest's attitude regarding the fulfillment of its obligations as a member of the Warsaw Pact in case of a war with NATO. The Crisis centered on Khrushchev's decision to install Intermediate Nuclear Missiles in Cuba, one of the most controversial decisions of the Soviet leadership. The escalating tension in the region brought mankind to the edge of a nuclear war.

Historians have outlined two hypotheses to explain the decision taken by Kremlin. The first suggested that the Soviet move was defensive, seeking to establish nuclear parity with the United States of America, since Washington possessed nuclear weapons and their vectors of transport in Turkey. Khrushchev, they argue, wanted to make a similar move, installing missiles in Cuba, in the close proximity of the United States.⁹¹ Other historians have argued that Khrushchev's move was driven by his desire to pressure Washington in making concessions over Berlin.⁹²

Regardless of which explanation is correct one thing remains certain: Moscow had acted unilaterally, without consulting its Warsaw Pact allies. Especially critical was the fact Moscow, acting in the name of the alliance, took measures such as increasing combative capacity of Joint Warsaw Pact Armed Forces (JWPAF) without informing their respective national governments. Romanian President of the Council of Ministers,

⁸⁹ *Periodic Intelligence Report 3- 5823*, 1 October 1958. Headquarters US Army Europe, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Excerpts, National Archives, Record Group 319, Records of the Army Staff, boxes 115-1156, file 9, on the website <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php>

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

⁹¹ Peter Calvocoressi, *Politica mondiala dupa 1945*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 30

⁹² Henry Kissinger, *Diplomatia*, Second Edition, Bucharest, 2002, p. 515

Ion Gheorghe Maurer later complained that the smaller allies would have found out “from newspapers” that they were suddenly at war and nobody asked for their opinion or informed them in this regard.⁹³

The Cuban Crisis in October 1962 the ease with which the Soviet Union could launch a war against the United States or other NATO member that would inevitably involve Romania. Eager to prevent such a possibility, Bucharest secretly made it known to Washington that Romania would not consider itself as being automatically involved in such decisions taken by Moscow.⁹⁴ It was Raymond L. Garthoff’s publication in 1995 of a short note on the meeting between Romanian Foreign Minister Corneliu Manescu and US Secretary of State Dean Rusk on 4 October 1963 that brought this Romanian position light. Garthoff, a former ambassador and diplomatic historian, went ahead to conclude that “Romania essentially repudiated its allegiance obligations in a secret approach to the United States Government in October 1963, promising neutrality in case of the outbreak of war. This was a stunning, unilateral breach of the central obligation of Warsaw Pact alliance membership, which Romania nominally maintained until the very end, when the Pact dissolved in 1991.”⁹⁵

According to Raymond L. Garthoff’s testimony, Corneliu Manescu told Dean Rusk during their meeting that “Romania had not been consulted over the Soviet decision to place nuclear missiles in Cuba, and was not therefore a party to the dispute. The Romanian government wanted the United States to understand that Romania would remain neutral in any conflict generated by such actions as the Soviet deployment of nuclear missiles in Cuba, and sought assurances that in the event of the hostilities arising from such a situation, the United States would not strike Romania on the mistaken assumption that it would be allied with the Soviet Union in such a war.”⁹⁶ In fact, R. L. Garthoff himself recognized that “I do not know of there is today any written account in either American or Romanian archives.”⁹⁷

⁹³ Ion Gheorghe Maurer made this statement during the enlarged plenary session of the CC RWP held between 15 and 22 April, 1964, see Alexandru Osca, Vasile Popa, *Romania. O fereastra deschisa in Cortina de Fier*, Focsani, 1997, p. 167-168

⁹⁴ R. J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century - and After*, London and New York, 1993, p.311, and Raymond L. Garthoff, *When and why Romania Distanced Itself from the Warsaw Pact*, in ‘Cold War International History Project’, Spring 1995, p. 11.

⁹⁵ Raymond L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*

Indeed, Corneliu Manescu's report given to the leadership on his return to Bucharest remains silent in this regard.⁹⁸ He underlined that he had met Dean Rusk at the latter's request – this fact is consistently emphasized, as if someone had to be convinced that he, Manescu personally, could not have had something to communicate to his interlocutor—and that his purpose had been obvious. Namely, “that we can't allow, by our behavior, any speculations regarding our country's stand, we have to use the opportunity in order to explain our party, and government's point of view in the foreign policy field.”⁹⁹ Thus, there is absolute silence on this matter in Romanian archival sources.

The suggestion that Manescu's secret communication with Dean Rusk was a preliminary step towards denouncing its Warsaw Pact obligations is still insufficiently confirmed by contemporaneous documents. While some circumstantial evidence could be used in support of this assertion, there is still no smoking gun document. Romania's political course between 1961-1964, its opposition to Soviet integration efforts undertaken within the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), could be regarded as steps to distance itself from Soviet hegemony and, ultimately from the Soviet alliance. Khrushchev's plans for economic integration, based on the principle of the Socialist division of labor, were viewed in Bucharest as Soviet attempts at preventing Romania's industrialization. It was at the same time that Romania also revived old traditions and national symbols, abolished the compulsory study of Russian in Romanian schools, and began to release of some political prisoners.

Yet “the new course” adopted by Romania in its relations with the Soviet Union attracted the attention of the United States. Romanian Deputy Foreign Minister Mircea Malita reported to the Romanian leadership on 18 August 1963 that William Crawford, the diplomatic representative of the United States in Bucharest, had told him that the US legation emphasized to Washington that the recent events in Romania led it to conclude that “[the communist leadership] have a mind of their own and that following their own

⁹⁸ *Protocol no. 19 of the meeting of the Politburo of the CC RWP* of 11 November 1963, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, Chancellery Section, File 53/ 1963, f. 4-13 in Petre Otu, “Bucuresti- Washington. Sfarsitul tatonarilor”, in *Document*, no. 2 (18)/ 2002, pp. 29-31

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 30

interests represents a firm position, not a circumstantial one.”¹⁰⁰ Dej, referring to the difference with the Soviet Union, pointed out that it was clear that Romania’s attitude gave Western countries the impression that “there are some people who oppose Moscow” in the Bucharest. “Objectively,” Dej continued, “this is the case. And we do not have to be shy about recognizing that there are divergences.”¹⁰¹

Further documentary evidence for these divergences could be presented but they do not go so far as to prove that Romania adopted the position of neutrality indicated by Romania’s foreign minister in October 1963 mentioned above in front of his American counterpart.

Nevertheless, the subsequent attitude of Bucharest confirms, indirectly, Raymond Garthoff’s statement on Romania’s early disassociation with the Warsaw Pact. The 19 February 1969 discussions between Nicolae Ceausescu and Marshal I. I. Yakubovski, Commander-in-Chief of the JWPAF and V. Kuznetsov, First Deputy of the USSR’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, provides us with some valuable documentary evidences. The Romanian side asked for the insertion of the word “all” in article 12 of the Warsaw Pact Statute which referred to the rights of the Commander-in-Chief of the JWPAF and evaluation of the degree of danger of war by the allies of the Warsaw Pact. The Soviet part supported the exclusion of this word from the content of the article.¹⁰²

The Romanian side emphasized that the word “all” must be included in order to express the will of all Warsaw Pact’s members. As Ion Gheorghe Maurer stated:

The situation is clear: in such a problem, which could unleash the military mechanism of the Warsaw Treaty, not all of us might be of the same opinion. But you are right that such a word could mean a veto and some countries, for instance six of the seven member states could ask themselves: why can’t we, six countries, act in accordance with our common opinion just because the seventh country doesn’t agree with us?

¹⁰⁰ *Stenogram of the meeting between Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej and Mircea Malita, deputy Foreign Minister, on 18 august 1963, about the visit of the Romanian delegation in USA* (Chivu Stoica was also present), C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, Chancellery Section, File 42/1963, f. 2-26 in Petre Otu, *op. cit.*, p. 20

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 24

¹⁰² *Minute of the meeting on 19 February 1969 between Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of the CC of the RCP and Soviet Marshal I.I. Yakubovski, Supreme Commander of the Unified Armed Forces (UAF) of the Warsaw Pact member states, and V. Kuznetov, prime-deputy of the USSR’s Minister of Foreign Affairs*, Romanian Military Archives (R.M.A.), Fund D, File V2, vol. 3C, f. 2-26 in Alesandru Dutu, “Tratatul de la Varsovia. Divergente romano-sovietice in adoptarea statutelor” in “Document”, no. 1 (17) / 2002, p. 11-17

This doesn't mean that this seventh country must accept the decision taken by the other six countries.¹⁰³

What the Romanian side was asking for was that, in the event of conflict, a possible position of dissidence would be recorded in the status of the working mechanism of the Warsaw Pact and thus, such dissidence would become legal. What is especially surprising is Soviet opposition toward Bucharest's request, despite a lack of arguments in order to support this opposition.

It is clear that part of the reasoning for such a request from Bucharest developed after the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Nicolae Ceausescu alluded to this event: "I'd like to tell you sincerely, openly and not diplomatically; there were meetings to which Romania has been neither invited nor consulted."¹⁰⁴ The decision to invade came as a surprise to the Romanian leadership. Shortly thereafter, Bucharest sought to deny Moscow any pretext of legality for the military intervention, and acted to prevent Warsaw Pact authorities from contacting subordinate structures in Romania, i.e. the Ministry of National Defense.

Yet, Bucharest's insistence on the inclusion of unanimous appreciation of the danger of war and, implicitly, the decision to launch it, could also be viewed in a different light. More precisely, the Romanian position could be seen as an attempt to gain legal support for avoiding engagement in a war against NATO. In such a case, Bucharest was seeking legitimacy in the event of assuming a position of neutrality. Nicolae Ceausescu noticed at the end of the discussion that "it is difficult to suppose that a member country of the [Warsaw Pact] Treaty would not be in danger if another [member] country is in danger. This fact underlines even more the necessity of the member countries' obligation to act only if previously they took counsel with each other and agreed on the existence of the state of war."¹⁰⁵ This was exactly what did not happen during the missiles crisis when the USSR did not confide its plans to its allies and decided to unilaterally in their name.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, p. 13

¹⁰⁴ see *Record of the negotiations between the delegations of the Romanian Communist Party and Czechoslovakian Communist Party on 15 August 1968* in Mihail Retegan, 1968. *Din primavara pana in toamna. Schita de politica externa*, Bucharest, 1998, p. 245

¹⁰⁵ *Minute of the meeting on 19 February 1969 between Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of the CC of RCP and Soviet Marshall I.I. Iakubovski, Supreme Commander of the UAF...*, in *op. cit.*, p. 16

For the Bucharest leadership, this position was not conflicting with its proposals for concomitantly dissolving the Warsaw Pact and NATO. “For the Soviets”, Bodnaras added, “NATO serves as the sole remaining justification for maintaining the Red's Army's occupation troops in Eastern Europe.”¹⁰⁶ The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the Romanians seem to argue, would have led to the disappearance of the Soviet “hegemony” in Eastern Europe and would have invalidated the decisions made at the 1945 Yalta Conference of the Allied Powers, highlighting “that Eastern Europe was not the exclusive province of one great power.”¹⁰⁷ It was US president Richard M. Nixon's visit to Romania in 2-3 August 1969 through which the Romanians, Bodnaras asserted, had hoped to show just that.

There is other circumstantial evidence that could be cited in support of Garthoff's thesis, i.e. the legal challenge of the Warsaw Pact opened by Romania in 1963. Although fleshing out Romania's stand regarding Soviet domination and its effort to increase its own freedom of action in the international arena, this evidence should not lead to the conclusion that in October 1963 Corneliu Manescu had effectively suggested to Rusk that Romania was adopting a status of neutrality vis-à-vis the United States. Questioned on this issue in 1997, Manescu declared that he was trying

to make Dean Rusk understand that Romania is not a country of war, that Romania is not an enthusiastic partner of the Warsaw Treaty, that we do not support the war between the two opposite military pacts, that we could adopt a reasonable stand, regardless of the problem in discussion.¹⁰⁸

Is it possible that Bucharest did not realize the fact that the USA would consider Manescu's communication as a “declaration of neutrality” in the case of a war between USSR and USA, and consequently between NATO and the Warsaw Pact? The evidence suggests that the answer to this question is affirmative.

In the history of Communist Romania, “The April 1964 Declaration,” known then as the “Declaration on the position of the Romanian Workers Party regarding the

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 166

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 169

¹⁰⁸ Mircea Suci, *Criza rachetelor din Cuba si apropierea romano-americana*, in “Dosarele Istoriei”, nr. 6/1997, p. 30

problems of the international communist and workers' movement adopted by the enlarged plenary session of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party of April 1964," and referred sometime as the "1964 Declaration of Independence," represents another turning point.¹⁰⁹ Many Romanian historians consider it as being the most important public act of autonomous provenience for laying the foundation of the future anti-hegemonic, and implicitly anti-Soviet, orientation of Romania foreign policy.

It was the April 1964 Declaration that marked the beginning of the public process of steadily increasing the distance between Moscow and Bucharest, of Romania's adoption of an autonomous position in the international arena--especially as it related to the International Communist Movement—and the beginning of a new course in the foreign policy that later brought to Romania a nickname of "rebel ally" or "maverick ally" inside the Warsaw Pact. It would be difficult to minimize the importance of the "Declaration of April 1964" when analyzing the attitude adopted by Romania within the Warsaw Pact. The declaration accelerated the process of claiming equal rights for all member states of the Warsaw Pact, a policy practically equivalent to challenging the Soviet hegemonic rights in the region. Since the beginning of 1964 Bucharest had been taking concrete steps for a kind of "nationalization" of defense, an action that distanced the country from the military proceedings inside the Warsaw Pact. The April 1964 Declaration came on the heels of Romania's opposition to the inclusion of the Mongolian People's Republic as a full member of the alliance.¹¹⁰ When the Declaration was debated in the RWP's internal structures, its anti-Soviet orientation quickly became well-known.

This interpretation is substantially enhanced when taking into account a series of official actions of the communist regime in Bucharest, abstracting and reaching the highest point of the public position expressed in the Declaration's position. The position of the Romanian leadership concerning the Sino-Soviet dispute is just one such

¹⁰⁹ *Declaration on the position of the Romanian Workers' Party regarding the problems of the international communist and workers' movement adopted by the enlarged plenary session of the CC RWP* (April 15-22, 1964), C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RWP, Chancellery Section, File 23/ 1964; also, see the full text in Alexandru Osca, Vasile Popa, *op.cit.*, anexa 13, pp. 279-308

¹¹⁰ *Stenogram of the Meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party of April 3, 1963*, Bucharest, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of RCP, Chancellery Section, File 39/ 1963, p. 123-126. See also Petre Otu, Gheorghe Vartic, *Rom=nia [i extinderea asiatic\ a Pactului de la Var[ovia. Cazul Mongoliei*, in *Case Studies of the Cold War, Proceedings of the international seminar 17-22.04.2001*, Bucharest, pp.110-117.

example.¹¹¹ Bucharest's refusal to Romania's economic accept subordination to Moscow's whims, especially with regard to economic matters, is another.¹¹² Other measures included the closing of the Soviet bookshop Cartea Rusa [Russian Book], the Romanian-Russian Museum, the "Maxim Gorki" Russian Language Institute, the Romanian-Soviet Institute, ceasing the publication of the Timpuri Noi [New Times] Review, as well as changing the former Russian names of streets, institutions and towns, etc., all actions aimed at reducing the visibility of Soviet opinion in Romania.¹¹³

Recently declassified documents from the Romanian archives allow us to propose a new vision of the "April 1964 Declaration." On 18 March 1964, the CC of the RWP Politburo met to discuss the results of the Romanian delegation to China and North Korea. That same delegation had stopped in the Soviet Union on its way back to Bucharest and had met Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership. The delegation, led by Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Emil Bodnaras, Chivu Stoica and Nicolae Ceausescu visited China between 2 and 11 March, and North Korea between 12 and 13 March, meet the Soviets at Pitzunda Gagra on 15 March 1964. The minutes of the Politburo meeting came after an initial report forwarded by Maurer to Dej after the delegation returned home.¹¹⁴ During the meeting, Maurer suggested that

During the talks we had, Khrushchev expressed his opinion and told us that maybe it would be an appropriate thing that Romania, as a country having the initiative related with ceasing the polemic [with the Chinese Communist Party], should propose the signing of an appeal by both countries in dispute, respectively the Soviet Union and China; this appeal should encourage the ending of the dispute.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ See, among other works, Alexandru Osea, Vasile Popa, *op.cit.*, Mihail E. Ionescu, *Romania in Tratatul de la Varșovia*, in "Magazin istoric", nr. 11/2001, pp.33-38; Alexandru Osea, *Divergente romano-sovietice privind statutul Tratatului de la Varșovia*, in "Magazin istoric", nr.2/2001, pp.18-20; Petre Otu, *O aniversare discreta la Bucuresti. 10 ani de la infiintarea Pactului de la Varșovia*, in "Revista de Istorie Militara", nr. 1/2001, pp.42-44; Mihai Retegan, *Din primavara pana in toamna. Schiță de politica externa romaneasca*, Bucharest, 1998, pp.42-53.

¹¹² Mihai Retegan, *Razboi politic în blocul comunist. Relatii romano-sovietice in anii '60. Documente*, Bucharest, 2002, passim. Other works contributing to a better understanding of this moment are: Lavinia Betea, *Maurer si lumea de ieri. Marturia despre stalinism*, Cluj-Napoca, 2001, pp.175-203; Idem, *Alexandru Barladeanu despre Dej, Ceausescu si Iliescu*, Bucharest, 1997, pp.152-158;; Corneliu Manescu în dialog cu Lavinia Betea. *Convorbiri neterminate*, Iassy, 2001, pp.82-96, Paul Niculescu Mizil, *op.cit.*, pp.309-359

¹¹³ Cf. Vlad Georgescu, *Istoria românilor. De la origini pâna în zilele noastre*, Bucharest, 1992, p.270.

¹¹⁴ *Stenogram of the meeting of the Politburo of the CC RWP, on 18 March 1964*, C.N.H.A., fund CC of the RCP, Chancellery Section, file no. 10/1964, f. 9-23. Ion Gheorghe Maurer says, at a certain moment : « The second issue I want to raise here is the one I reported when we came home » (f. 16)

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 16-17

Moreover, Khrushchev and the members of the Romanian delegation discussed even the text of the envisaged appeal. “We reached the conclusion” Maurer continued, “that launching such an appeal would not be a bad thing, of course, provided its form be appropriate, according to the text we drafted during our talks. [Khrushchev] said he would be agreeable to this appeal.”¹¹⁶

A long discussion ensued in the CC RWP Politburo following Maurer’s report, where the Prime Minister pleaded in favor of Khrushchev’s proposal. “This would give us the opportunity to mark once again our own line,” Maurer stated.¹¹⁷ Dej too suggested that he had “reached the conclusion that it would be better to adopt a path going toward a favorable reaction concerning the desire expressed by comrade Khrushchev.”¹¹⁸ Analyzing the Soviet behavior at Pitzunda, Dej gives some details about the way Khrushchev forwarded his proposal:

The fact is that during the talks Khrushchev excused himself for interrupting you, tried to defend himself by saying that it was not his fault, the fault was with the Chinese party, although you did nothing else but report your discussions with the Chinese during our bilateral meetings. This shows us the confusion of the Soviets, actually they seem to be in a situation without escape, so I believe therefore they favorably met [our initiative], they hoped, in spite of the fact they were in doubt about it/...../ [Khrushchev] came and proposed. It looks like he had discussed previously with Mikoyan, he also had consulted his comrades, and so he came up with this formula ? what if you continued this action? /.../ He proposed: come on, make a proposition, so that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Chinese Communist Party and the Romanian Workers Party would address an appeal to all communist and workers parties. This is the variant they proposed /.../ So, comrades, let us meet this proposal, let us support it.¹¹⁹

In order to draft the declaration requested by Khrushchev, a commission was proposed in Bucharest. Emil Bodnaras suggested that Khrushchev be informed about the RWP’s intention of launching the action, a suggestion approved by the Politburo. Simultaneously, the Chinese were to be informed that the leadership of Bucharest is still thinking of ways to continuing the mediation. However, the Chinese leadership would

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 16-17

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, f.17

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 18

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 20-21

find out about the declaration only after it was issued, exactly what Khrushchev had asked the Romanians to do. The declaration was intended to force a Chinese refusal of the dialogue while showing the openness of the Soviet side for negotiation and mutual understanding. In acquiescing to Khrushchev's request, Bucharest played Moscow's card.

Khrushchev also made an additional suggestion of indisputable importance in the genesis of the declaration: to award the Dej the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. The nature of this proposal by Khrushchev is significant: "if we agree with, we should tell [Khrushchev] so that he could make this news public, and if we do not, to tell him also, whispering in his ear, so that he does not follow it through."¹²⁰ On Dej's insistence, CC RWP Politburo decided that Khrushchev should award Dej the Soviet Union's highest prize, the Lenin Order and prize, which in their opinion would seem more appropriate than the title of hero of the Soviet Union, usually given to Soviet citizens.

Why is the "April 1964 Declaration" and its genesis so important when analyzing the issue of Romania's relation with the Warsaw Pact? As mentioned before, the declaration was the turning point of Romania's *public deviation* in its foreign policy. From then on, relations with the West were to be developed in the perspective of a kind of balance with the unilateralism and hegemony of the Soviet Union. At the same time, the trend of the internal evolutions aimed at renouncing the hard Stalinism of the previous period. However, these changes did not bring about an authentic liberalization of Romanian society.

Furthermore, the declaration's importance emerges from the ample debate within Romanian public opinion. The debate created within popular circles the perception that the regime was reorienting Romanian foreign policy. Whether this was intended or not by the Bucharest leadership is something to be discussed elsewhere. Nevertheless, following directives from the Romanian Workers' Party leadership, the text of the document was discussed by party members in "ad-hoc" meetings within factories, schools, and cooperatives. As newly released contemporaneous records show, party members viciously criticized Soviet control over the Romanian economy, stating their support for a "new course" and resistance to Soviet hegemony. It is possible, however,

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 9-10

that the criticism directed at the Soviet leadership was intended by the RWP leadership in order to acquire legitimacy based on a public support.

An important document both on internal and international levels, the April 1964 Declaration was issued following Khrushchev's suggestion. Only subsequently was the Declaration "exploited" to serve important but hidden objectives benefiting the Bucharest regime. One of Bucharest's primary objectives was to distance itself from Moscow's hegemony—while coercing Moscow into publicly supporting the action by stating its agreement with the issuing of such a document and its willingness in editorially contribute to the declaration's final version.¹²¹

If the "Declaration" induced among the general public a particular state of mind, no longer justifying the presence of the country inside the Warsaw Pact, did the communist regime react accordingly? The simple answer is that they did not. Romania was not interested in leaving the Warsaw Pact—that is to take full advantage of its supposed independence from Moscow, an issue that came up during the public debates following the publication of the document.¹²²

Foreign policy, however, was not the only field in which the Romanian leadership sought to challenge Soviet dominance. The RWP challenge was also extended to Communist intra-bloc policy. In this case, the directions had been already established through Romanian opposition of economic integration within Comecon¹²³ and politico-military integration within the Warsaw Pact in order to increase her autonomy at the international level. Romania's attitude toward the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and toward the Soviet led attempt to include the Mongolian People's Republic in the Warsaw Pact in 1963 are just two examples of Bucharest's reticence to follow the Soviet line. Ion

¹²¹ The document underlined that the communist countries "established as a base for the (international – *our note*) relations among them the principles of national sovereignty and independence, equal rights, reciprocal advantage, comrade-like mutual help, non-interference in the internal affairs, respect of territorial integrity, principles of socialist internationalism". Such principles had been already written down in many documents issued by the international communist authorities, but the "Declaration" underlined that they represented "an objective necessity" and "any wrong action related with them cannot but bring sources of misunderstandings and dissent", by affecting "the cohesion of a community of independent states".

¹²² The author of these lines remembers himself how the text of the "April 1964 Declaration" was explained to the pupils from a college in Ploiesti (a town near Bucharest). From each class of the town's high schools a number of pupils were selected to take part to the meeting with a representative of the Romanian Workers Party, sent from the "Center". Of course, the inevitable question about "when will Romania leave the Warsaw Pact?" came from audience. The representative of the party sent from Bucharest tried to utter several phrases as an answer, and then the meeting was unexpectedly closed.

¹²³ Mihai Retegan, *Razboi politic in blocul comunist....*, passim. See also Paul Niculescu Mizil, *op. cit.*, passim

Gheorghe Maurer's statements in 1964 concerning the Cuban Missile Crisis reveal the tense situation inside the Warsaw Pact.

Missiles were sent to Cuba. We did not know about that. For the moment, we do not bring any charges upon this case and we pose no problem to anyone. The existence of these missiles in Cuba brought some tension in the international relations /.../. Within this tension, at a certain moment, a certain policy occurred. The unique or supreme Command and Control of the armed forces of the Warsaw Treaty issued an order for all the armies taking part in this group of military forces to be placed in a state of alert. There is an article 3 in the text of the Warsaw Treaty binding all the signing countries to consult among themselves in regard with the most important political international issues. I am asking: wouldn't these problems require such a consultation? Or at least the order to place in a state of alert the armies of the member states, wouldn't it require a previous consultation? Here are the problems?...? These orders are issued, these actions are put in practice, and no one is consulted. At least, we were not.¹²⁴

Practically, after 1964 the Bucharest leadership opened a large front for acquiring its liberty of action at international level and for limiting interference from the Soviet Union. Its actions aimed both at defying the Soviet monopoly concerning the issues of the international communist and workers movement, and at avoiding the economic integration promoted by Moscow, as a means of consolidating autonomy on the international stage.

In January 1965 the Political Consultative Committee (PCC) of the Warsaw Pact was held in Warsaw. At this meeting Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej qualified Moscow's demand for the exclusion of Albania from the Pact as being "illegal," arguing that the exclusion should be repealed.¹²⁵ The Romanian leader further rejected the suggestion that the PCC make a connection between condemning the proposal for the creation of NATO's Multinational Nuclear Forces (MNF) by NATO and the Warsaw Pact proposal of a draft of a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Archival documents are still missing, preventing a clear picture of why the Romanians adopted that position. A

¹²⁴ *Stenogram of the meeting with workers having responsible duties from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Trade on May, 1964*, f. 45-46 in Alexandru Osca, Vasile Popa, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-168

¹²⁵ *Memorandum of discussions which took place on 18 January 1965 at the residence of the Romanian delegation in Warsaw between the leaders of the Romanian Communist Party and the Polish delegation led by Wladislaw Gomulka, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party*, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RWP, Foreign Relations Section, File 15/1965, f. 5-6

reasonable explanation might be that Bucharest was attempting to resist Soviet control in all foreign policy domains. Through its refusal to support the signing of the NPT, Romania understood that nuclear non-proliferation was part of a more complex process of general nuclear disarmament. Bucharest's position was avoiding the establishment of any nuclear monopoly.¹²⁶

Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej died on March 1965 and Nicolae Ceausescu replaced him soon after. The new leader has continued the new lines in the foreign policy's realm. As part of this course in foreign policy, the Romanian side concentrated its actions on the reform of the Warsaw Pact. Launched by Moscow in January 1966, the reform of the communist Alliance intended to make the Eastern alliance a "genuine rather than merely formal counterpart of NATO."¹²⁷ Bucharest believed that since the process had been started by Moscow, all it had to do was to practice its own foreign policy line—as it had been publicly expressed in 1964—within the framework of the process itself. Bucharest's first opportunity for action came during a meeting of the Chiefs of the General Staffs of the Armies of the Warsaw Pact member states held in Moscow in February 1966.

During the meeting of Chiefs of the General Staff of the Warsaw Pact member states, held in Moscow in February 1966, the Romanian delegation presented its position regarding the process of "bettering the activity of the military organs of the Warsaw Treaty Organization."¹²⁸ The Romanian representatives emphasized the necessity of improving the Statute (Regulations) of the JWPAF Command in order to make it conform to the spirit of the 1955 Warsaw Treaty. The Romanians argued that the proposed Statute of the Commander-in-Chief, placed the position "above the national governments and the [national] defense ministers," and that the General Staff of the JWPAF would in turn be "placed above the national general staffs."¹²⁹ This, the

¹²⁶ *Stenogram of the meeting of the first secretaries of the Central Committees of the communist parties and the Presidents of the Ministers Councils of the Warsaw Treaty member states, held at the residence of the CC of the PCWP, 20 January 1965, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RWP, Foreign Relations Section, File 15/1965, f. 121-122. See also Douglas Selvage, *The Warsaw Pact and nuclear nonproliferation 1963-1964* in "Cold War International History Project", Working Paper no. 32, April 2001.*

¹²⁷ Vojtech Mastny, "We Are in a Bind": *Polish and Czechoslovak Attempts at Reforming the Warsaw Pact, 1956-1969*, in *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 11, Winter 1998, p.232.

¹²⁸ *The position of the delegation of the Romania's Ministry of the Armed Forces during the Meeting of the Chiefs of Staff of the Warsaw Treaty member states, February 1966, Moscow, R.M.A., Fund V2, File 4/34, f. 4-10*

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 4-5

Romanians argued, was what happened during the 1961 Berlin Crisis and the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, forcing the national armed forces to conform to JWPAF orders without the ability of the national governments and national commands to discuss the situation.

Raising the specter of the Berlin crisis, the Romanian delegation suggested that "the Commander-in-Chief, without consulting [the Romanians], asked for a mobilization of several battalions and divisions (*unitati si mari unitati*), temporary raising the number of Romanians under arms by about 12,000 men. He also asked for military exercises with or without combat troops to be performed and suggested the deployment of some battalions and divisions outside their permanent garrisons, etc, etc."¹³⁰ During the Cuban Missile Crisis, the same procedure was employed, the delegation stated. Once again, without having consulted the national defense ministers and without having secured the approval of member-states' governments, the Commander-in-Chief "gave orders for the enhancement of the combat capability of all troops composing the Joint Armed Forces."¹³¹ In such a way, the delegation charged, "[Warsaw] Pact member-states were faced with the possibility that they would be entering a war without the expressed decision of the party [leadership] and government--the supreme organs of state power."¹³²

The Romanian delegation submitted a series of proposals aimed at preventing the transformation of Warsaw Pact military structures of the Warsaw Pact into "supra-state" organizations, capable of defying the independence and sovereignty of member states removing the need for any "consultation" with their political leadership. These proposals initially suggested that "the Statute and all the other documents, which provide regulations for the work of this Command, should be based on the idea that only the party and the government of each state are responsible for the leadership, the structure, the procurement activities and the training of all their armed forces, whether in time of peace or war."¹³³ The Romanian side also requested that the establishment of a Military Council of the Command, as a deliberative organ, to take decisions on the basis of unanimity. The

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 5-6

¹³¹ *Ibidem*, f. 6. See also *Memoranda of Army General Leontin Salajan, Minister of the Armed Forces, forwarded to Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of the CC of the RCP, regarding the discussions of 3 May 1966 with Army General, M.I. Kazakov, Chief of Staff of the UAF of the Warsaw Pact, 9 May 1966, R.M.A., Fund V2, vol. 3, File no. 8/61, f. 8-9*

¹³² *The position of the delegation of the Romania's Ministry of the Armed Forces during the Meeting of the Chiefs of Staff of the Warsaw Treaty member states, February 1966, Moscow, R.M.A., Fund V2, File 4/34, f. 6*

¹³³ *Ibidem*, p. 7

Military Council should examine all the matters within its attributes. It will consist of the Commander-in-Chief, as president, his deputies and the chief of the General Staff, as members. The proposals and the recommendations of the Military Council will be submitted for the approval to all governments of the states taking part in the Treaty. The Military Council will perform its activity on the basis of a regulations document, this being also approved by all governments of the states taking part in the Treaty.¹³⁴

Bucharest's third request was that troops committed by each state for a common action would be engaged in a war only following a decision of that state, and that "their national command will be the only one in charge of coordinate them. [...] It would be rational to put at the basis of rules of engagement for these troops the idea that they will act in case of war in accordance with their operational plans, made through an agreement between all interested parties"¹³⁵ Finally, the members of the Military Council—i.e. the Commander-in-Chief, Chief of the General Staff and the deputies of Commander-in-Chief—should not concurrently hold positions within their respective national governments. The delegation also asked that both the Commander-in-Chief and the Chief of the General Staff "be appointed on the basis of a general agreement of all the governments of the states taking part to the Treaty, for a 4-5 years term. It would be desirable to have a Commander-in-Chief and a Chief of the General Staff from different countries, during each period." The deputies to the Commander-in-Chief were to be appointed by their national governments. Their attributes, as outlined in the Romanian proposal, would have made unnecessary any continued presence of JWPAF representatives in the member armies. The Unified General Staff should contain officers from all the signatory armies.¹³⁶

Initially, the position of Romania resulted in an unexpected victory. At the meeting of the defense ministers from the Warsaw Pact (27-28 May 1966), the greatest part of the Romanian proposals was accepted, even if, in the protocol of the meeting, divergent points of view were mentioned.¹³⁷ The draft Statute included the Romanian

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*, f.7

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*, f.8

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 8-9

¹³⁷ *Report of Army General Leontin Salajan, Minister of the Armed Forces, forwarded to Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of the CC of the RCP, regarding the meeting of the ministers of defense of the Warsaw Treaty member states held in Moscow, on 27-28 May, 1966, R.M.A., Fund V2, vol. 3, File 9/62, f.4*

proposals on the coordination—not commanding - role of the JWPAF Command, the subordination of troops committed to JWPAF to their national military command, the proportional representation of the officers of member states within the JWPAF General Staff, and the appointment of the Commander-in-Chief from the marshalls and generals of every member state. The Romanian delegation also won the removal of a number of provision from the draft statute, including the right of the Commander-in-Chief to control the JWPAF, that nuclear forces would not be considered part of JWPAF, and the establishment of the Military Council alongside the Consultative Political Committee.

The Romanian side formulated its reserve toward the role and the functions of the PCC, and the presence of JWPAF Command representatives in the armies of all member states.

At the July meeting PCC, the Romanian delegation submitted a new draft Statute of the JWPAF. The document, however, was not discussed as the Romanian position went against Moscow's intentions. Soviet reaction to the Romanian initiative followed quickly. (see below) Moscow decided to adopt a new tactic in their dealings with the Romanians. Accepting Romanians proposals at first, Moscow rejected them slowly by ignoring them later.

The next meeting of the deputy ministers of defense started 29 February 1968 in Prague, quite a long time since the May 1966 meeting. Moscow had used the time to snub Romania's opposition to Soviet proposals. Not wanting to finalize the text of the Statute, Moscow implemented its own proposals by small, controlled actions, with the support of its other allies. By the time of the meeting in Prague, when the Romanian delegation asked that the 1966 draft be discussed, "all the members of other delegations, and more insistenty Army General Sokolov and Marshal Y. I. Yakubovski declared that they have no instructions on this issue, that they are unprepared, and that the present conditions are unfitted to replay the problems raised by the Romanian side."¹³⁸

The Soviet side imposed at the Prague 1968 meeting a debate over the issue of establishing the Military Council and the General Staff of the JWPAF. On his return from Prague, Romanian Chief of Staff, General-Colonel Ioan Gheorghe concluded that from

¹³⁸ *Report of General -Colonel Ion Gheorghe, prime-deputy of the minister of Armed Forces and Chief of Staff, forwarded to Nicolae Ceausescu, relating to the meeting of the deputy ministers of defense held between 29 February and 1 March 1968 in Prague, R.M.A., Fund V2, vol. 3, File 11/27, f. 3*

the way the proceedings of the meeting went on and looking upon the debates it is obvious that the representatives of all other armies of the states members of the Warsaw Pact want to solve in a different manner, step by step, the issues related with the Joint Command, respectively the ones concerning the Military Council, the Technical Committee, and they all affirmed they agree with all these matters[...]. So, we should conclude that for the first time, officially, an attempt is being made to solve the problem of establishing different organs of the United Command without discussing previously the essential matter, which is the elaboration of the Statute of the United Command.¹³⁹

This protractory tactics adopted by the Soviets reached the highest point in 1968, when Marshall I.I Iakubovski forwarded, on 24 May, to the Romanian Ministry of Defense the drafts of the Statutes of JWPAF, the Military Council, and the Joint Air Defense System.¹⁴⁰

The invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 by the Warsaw Pact troops caught the Romanian leadership by surprise. Bucharest remained unaware that the decision to invade had been taken.¹⁴¹ Romanian documents show Bucharest's gradual movement outside the circles of decision-making in the Warsaw Pact.

At the PCC meeting in Sofia in 6 March 1968, the decision was taken to finalize the work on the JWPAF Statute in the hope of reforming the alliance. The process had been initiated during the Bucharest PCC meeting in July 1966. When the proposals finally arrived in Bucharest in May 1968, the experts at the Romanian Ministry of Defense concluded that only a fraction of Bucharest's suggestions had been included in the updated text.¹⁴² While Romanian provisions "regarding the foundation of a Military

¹³⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 4

¹⁴⁰ *Report of General -Colonel Ion Ionita, minister of Armed Forces forwarded to Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of the CC of the RCP and president of the State Council, on the content of the draft statutes elaborated by the Unified Command of the UAF of the Warsaw Treaty member states, 3 iunie 1968, R.M.A., Fund V2, vol. 3, File 12/35, f. 53-63*

¹⁴¹ *Stenogram of the common meeting of CC of the RCP, State Council and Government of the Socialist Republic of Romania on 21 august 1968, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, Chancellery Section, File 249/1968, f. 13-30*

¹⁴² *Report of General-Colonel Ion Ionita, minister of Armed Forces forwarded to Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of the CC of the RCP and president of the State Council, on the content of the draft statutes elaborated by the Unified Command of the UAF of the Warsaw Treaty member states, 3 iunie 1968, R.M.A., Fund V2, vol. 3, File 12/35, f. 1-12.*

Council, the method of appointing the Chief of the JWPAF General Staff and the deputies of Commander-in-Chief for anti-aircraft defense and procurement, the subordination of the troops taking part in the JWPAF to their national command and the proportional representation in the JWPAF command structure of the participating troops were implemented, other concerns voiced by Bucharest had been rejected outright.¹⁴³ Of particular concern to Bucharest was the right attributed to the JWPAF Commander-in-Chief to command all troops, irrespective of their nationality, once the JWPAF had been committed to a joint action. The ministry of defense concluded that:

a) the wide prerogatives attributed to the PCC by the proposal were contradicting the role of a consultative structure established by the Warsaw Treaty;

b) the draft of Joint Command Statute had stipulations “contradicting the principles of mutual cooperation and assistance on the basis of observance of national sovereignty, independence, and non-interference in the internal affairs, provided by the [Warsaw] Treaty.” These stipulations, the analysis concluded, “affect the essential attributes of the participant states.”

c) the Statute of the Military Council of the JWPAF provided that half plus one of the members’ votes would be necessary to adopt recommendations or proposals. The Romanian experts considered that such a principle “cannot be applied in the relations among states and parties. Enforcing such a practice in the international relations is unacceptable.”

d) adopting the Statute of the Unified Air Defense System “would practically lead to the subordination of all [national anti-aircraft systems] to the Warsaw Pact’s Unified Air Defense System Commander.”¹⁴⁴

In conclusion, the Romanian experts suggested, “a change in position of the Soviet part, regarding the provisions introduced within the documents, giving to the Commander-in-Chief, the General Staff, and the Warsaw Pact Unified Air Defense Commander the right to command and to exert their control over all the troops committed for joint action by the signatory states of the Warsaw Treaty” was apparent.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ *Ibidem*, f. 3-4

¹⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 4-9

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 9

The Romanian Armed Forces Ministry asked the leadership to extend its negotiating mandate to a) to uphold its own point of view, previously approved by the party leadership in 1966; b) to agree with the draft of the Statute of the Military Council, with the provisional condition that the recommendations and the proposals of the Military Council be adopted unanimously; and c) to maintain that the draft Statute of the integrated anti-aircraft system be adopted in accordance with the same principles, previously supported by the Romanian side.

Understanding consequences of their proposal, Defense Minister Ion Ionita wrote in his report that „it would be very possible that the point of view of the delegation of the Ministry of Romanian Armed Forces be rejected.”¹⁴⁶ If the proposal was rejected, General Ionita continued, the different position adopted by the Romanian delegation be included in a protocol, “stating that [Romania] will not work in accordance with the provisions” of the documents, because it believes “[the documents] contradict the principles of the equality between all the states of the alliance, of national independence and sovereignty, and of non-interference in the internal affairs, thus transforming the Political Consultative Committee and the JWPAF Command into supra-state organs.”¹⁴⁷ In the end, the report by General Ionita reached a amazingly candid political conclusion; “On the basis of such a position, the Socialist Republic of Romanian *is de facto positioning itself outside the joint military structures of the Warsaw Treaty*, without declaring it is leaving the [Warsaw] Treaty.”¹⁴⁸ (emphasis added) The report, dated June 1968, was the result of analysis carried out by the Romanian Armed forces command, and mirrored the obstinate and uncompromising road taken for reaching the objectives established by the April 1964 declaration. Less than three months later Warsaw Pact forces invaded Czechoslovakia. The Communist leadership in Bucharest, having excluded itself from the decision process in the alliance found out about the military action from a TASS communiqué.

Ceausescu and his immediate entourage were very surprised by the action and about not being informed in advance about its imminence.¹⁴⁹ It is possible that, as he was

¹⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 10

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 11

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 11

informed by the invasion, Ceausescu understood he was teetering on the brink. On 21 August 1968 he had practically reached a crossroad: continued on the previous road of obstinate guarding of Romanian sovereignty in accordance with the political line assumed in 1964, or cave in to the pressure exerted by Soviet actions and begin compromising. The events imply that Ceausescu postponed a decision in adopting a clear choice. Instead, the Romanian leader chose a middle path between the two, continuing the “April 1964 orientation,” while making it more flexible through ad-hoc compromises.¹⁵⁰

At first, a hardening of the Romanian position was more visible. The public condemnation of the invasion and the public statements of Romania’s determination to resist militarily against any similar action against Romania fell were part of Bucharest’s gamble.¹⁵¹

Arguably, the USSR and the other Warsaw Pact countries could not have easily been capable of addressing the costly and uncertain risk resulting from two concomitant military operations. International public opinion would have had an explosive reaction to any additional action similar in nature. Even more so, the Warsaw Pact, having involved itself in Czechoslovakia, had limited military capabilities at disposal in order to carry out similar action. The pretext used in Czechoslovakia, that of a military exercise could not be applied in the case of Romania, and it’s the country’s communist leadership was monolithically opposed to the Soviets.¹⁵² Under such circumstances, an intervention similar with the one made in Czechoslovakia would have been the equivalent of a nude aggression, and would have immediately been brought before the United Nations.

One of the reasons Ceausescu and the RCP leadership reacted in such vitriolic manner to the Warsaw Pact invasion was in order to capitalize on international support

¹⁴⁹ *Stenogram of the common meeting of the CC of the RCP, State Council and Government of the RSR on 21 August 1968 regarding the military intervention of some socialist countries’ armed forces in Czechoslovakia*, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of RCP, Chancellery Section, File 249/1968, f. 14-15. See also Alexandru Osea, Vasile Popa, *Inghet in plina vara. Praga, August 1968*, Bucharest, 1998, pp. 23-25

¹⁵⁰ Corneliu Manescu, *Romania nu a fost niciodata un partener entuziast al Pactului de la Varsovia* in “Dosarele Istoriei”, nr. 11/1997, pp. 25-31 (Interviewed by Mircea Suci)

¹⁵¹ Mihai Retegan, *1968, din primavara pâna-n toamna. Schita de politica externa româneasca...*, pp.69-72. See also *Stenogram of the common meeting of CC of the RCP, State Council and Government of the RSR on 21 August 1968*, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, Chancellery Section, File 249/1968, f. 13-30

¹⁵² *Stenogram of the meeting between Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of the CC of the RCP and Iosip Broz Tito, Secretary General of the Union of the Yugoslavian Communists held in Varset on 24 August 1968* in Ioan Scurtu, *Unanimitate deplina pentru condamnarea interventiei*, in “Dosarele Istoriei”, no. 8 (24)/ 1998, Bucharest, pp. 50-58

and to prepare a strong shield for the future reactions of the Soviets. At the same time however, Bucharest made compromises in order to avoid a final divorce with the Warsaw Pact. Emil Bodnaras, vice-president of the State Council, in the discussion with US Ambassador Harry G. Barnes, 17 May 1974 in Bucharest, reinforced that point. Bodnaras stated that:

“Romania gave some thought to withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact as the Albanians had done in 1968 but had concluded that it was better to stay inside the Pact’s councils where, although without any influence in running the Pact’s military affairs, Romania could at least ask questions and try to keep informed.”¹⁵³

The compromises from Bucharest, were short to follow. By the end of September in the same year Bucharest was visited by the Commander-in-Chief of the JWPAF, Marshal Y. Y. Yakubovski, and the chief of General Staff of JWPAF, Army General S. M. Shtemenko.¹⁵⁴ On this occasion, the Romanian leader declared that he agreed on the reform of the Pact according to the proposals made in May 1968, but he raised two very important objections. The first one referred at the necessity of a unanimous agreement of *all* members of the Warsaw Treaty for moving the troops of the Pact on the territory of one member state, making the invasion of Czechoslovakia illegal. The second Romanian suggestion required the *unanimous* agreement of all member states needed for passing decisions and recommendations within the Military Council.

It is clear that the Romanian side was strongly influenced by the recent events in Czechoslovakia. The Romanians leadership insisted on the principle of unanimity in the hope of insulating itself from the possibility of similar actions directed against it. At the same time, Bucharest experienced an “exclusion” syndrome which affected the leadership’s willingness to compromise. Considering this to be the minimum acceptable position, Bucharest strongly pushed for its acceptance by the Soviets. At the meeting of

¹⁵³ *Memorandum of Conversation between Emil Bodnaras and ambassador Harry G. Brnes Jr., (A), Bucharest A 101, published in Romania and the Warsaw Pact, Document Reader, vol. II, Mircea Munteanu, ed., Bucharest, Romania, October 2002, , p. 168.*

¹⁵⁴ *Minute of discussions between Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of the CC of the RCP and I. I. Iakubovski, Supreme Commander of UAF of the Warsaw Treaty member states on 28 September 1968, R.M.A.,Fund V2, vol. 3, File 13/37, f. 64-70.*

the defense ministers held in Moscow in October 1968, the Romanian representative acted accordingly.¹⁵⁵

The 19 February 1969 meeting between Marshal Yakubovski with Ceausescu and Premier Maurer, constituted a new opportunity for Bucharest to emphasize its position on the necessity of adopting the unanimity principle in decision-making for military matters at all levels inside the Pact.¹⁵⁶

A good part of the discussion concentrated on the Romanian proposal of including “all” in Article 12 of the JWPAF Statute; Article 12 concerned the assessment of a situation of danger of war facing the Warsaw Pact. When Marshal Yakubovski replied that accepting the Romanian suggestion would mean the introduction the right of veto for any one member country over the action of the Pact, Maurer replied that:

The issue is very clear. So, what we must do is to find out a formula giving the right to declare [a state of danger] to those who consider that a state of danger exists, while the Commander-in-Chief would have the right to take an action in those countries. Had a country opposed such a view, or had it not made such a statement, it should not be considered under the obligation to follow the orders given by the Commander-in-Chief.¹⁵⁷

Ceausescu response was even more direct:

I'd like to tell you sincerely, openly and not diplomatically; there were meetings in which Romania neither has been invited nor consulted. We do not want to come up to the point where we should take part to some actions without being consulted previously. Through such a word—all—we underline that provisions from the Treaty referring the necessity for a common agreement of all [member] states when a joint action is decided.¹⁵⁸

The Romanian position elicited a lively debate until Ceausescu clearly stated Bucharest's resolution to stand by its proposal:

¹⁵⁵ *Report of Army General Leontin Salajan, Minister of Armed Forces forwarded to Ion Gheorghe Maurer, president of the Ministers Council regarding the meeting of defense ministers of the Warsaw Treaty member states held in Moscow, on 29-30 October 1968, 30 October 1968, R.M.A., Fund V2, vol. 3, File 15/29, f. 71-75*

¹⁵⁶ *Minute of conversation between Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of the CC of the RCP, I G. Maurer, president of State Council and I. I. Iakubovski, Supreme Commander of the UAF of the Warsaw Treaty, R.M.A., Fund D, File V2, vol 3C, f. 2-26 in Alesandru Dutu, op.cit., p. 11-17*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p.13

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 12-17

I want to make this clear to you! We want to be an active part of the Treaty, for better or for worse. If the case would be to commit our military forces, we want to know why; we want to know why we should send our people to die. We put our signature on the paper of the Treaty. We will sign these documents too, but only if our proposal is accepted... We do want to sign a document, which stipulates binding provisions for all. This document must have clear stipulations. We do not insist upon our formula, we insist upon the essence of the issue.¹⁵⁹

Bucharest's position was substantiated during the same year by postponing a joint military exercise with troops and by replacing it in the next year with another training exercise made by small groups of staff officers from Romania, Bulgaria and USSR using maps, without the participation of combat troops deployed on the field. When hearing about this decision of the Romanians the chief of JWPAF General Staff was surprised and said that such a change would elicit "comments and speculations about serious breaks inside the Warsaw Pact."¹⁶⁰ Bucharest, however, remained unmoved. The Romanian leadership told the Soviets that the training exercise could only take place if "a convention is concluded" among all the participant states; in Romania's case, such a convention was to be approved by the supreme legislative body, namely the Grand National Assembly.¹⁶¹

A Romanian military delegation, led by Chief of the General Staff, went to Moscow between 3 and 4 March 1970 to discuss the necessity of concluding a bilateral convention between the Romanian and the Soviet governments as a condition of having the exercise take place. Now it was the moment for the Soviets to speak frankly. Army General Shtemenko said that "during the last months" the Romanians had adopted "a negative stance." The Romanian absence from the military exercise to be carried out on Hungarian territory of Hungary in July 1970, the lack of an agreement for drafting a joint document concerning necessary measures for maintaining classified information secret, and the delay in sending the data related to the protocol for the future development of the

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 17

¹⁶⁰ *Report of General Colonel Ion Gheorghe, prime-deputy of the minister of Armed Forces and Chief of Staff of the Romanian Armed Forces forwarded to Ion Gheorghe Maurer, president of the Ministers Council regarding the discussions with General M. S. Shtemenko, Chief of Staff of the Unified Command of the UFA held in Moscow on 9 September 1969, R.M.A., 10 September 1969, Fund V2, vol. 3, File 14/3, f. 77*

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem*, f. 78

armed forces during the interval 1971-1975 were indicative examples of Bucharest's attitude.¹⁶²

Despite Soviet pressures, the training exercise did not take place. The episode follows the line chosen by Bucharest post-August 1968: a continuous balance between the continuation of the "April 1964 orientation," and the line of compromise. An objective of this policy was the desire to show that, as Bondaras told Barnes, "Eastern Europe was not the exclusive province of one great power" and that the "Yalta agreement was dead."¹⁶³ This was the general explanation given by E. Bodnaras when he commented on the agreement given for the official visit in Romania of US President Richard M. Nixon.¹⁶⁴ Hence, generally speaking, there was a daring policy taken by the leadership of Bucharest at that time, and especially after the invasion in Czechoslovakia.

Nixon's visit to Bucharest, caused much annoyance in Moscow and, followed by other similar episodes—such as the one related in the lines above—was meant as a signal to the Soviets that Romania was determined to maintain its desire to be considered a state equal in rights with all the other international actors.

Newly declassified evidence from the Romanian archives shed new light on the factors influencing the decision making process in Bucharest. On 15 January 1969, the Romanian military attaché in Athens sent a report to Bucharest regarding a discussion with his West German counterpart. The report was immediately forwarded to Ceausescu.¹⁶⁵ The Romanian officer reported that during the discussion, he was told that western sources suggest that "joint military exercise with Warsaw Pact troops [are] planned to take place in March-April." In case of such an event, the West German officer said that "if such exercises with troops belonging to countries of the Warsaw Pact will take place on Romanian soil, the Soviet leadership will target, as it did in Czechoslovakia, the maintaining of Soviet troops in place, and also [attempt] replace

¹⁶² *Report of General Ion Ionita, Minister of Armed Forces forwarded to Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of CC of the RCP regarding the discussions between General- Colonel Ion Gheorghe, prime-deputy of the minister of Armed Forces and Chief of Staff and Marshall Y. Y. Yakubovski, Supreme Commander of UAF, held in Moscow, between 3 and 4 March 1970, R.M.A., 7 March 1970, Fund V2, vol. 3, File 15/f.n., f. 80-85*

¹⁶³ *Memorandum of Conversation between Emil Bodnaras and Ambassador Harry G. Barnes Jr, in op. cit., f. 169*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibidem*

¹⁶⁵ *Report of General -Colonel Ion Gheorghe, prime-deputy of the minister of Armed Forces and Chief of Staff, forwarded to Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of the CC of the RCP, regarding the information received from the Romanian military attaché in Athens, R.M.A., Fund 467, File 38/1969, f. 4-6*

several high officials of the party and state, who oppose in one way or another the Soviet line.”¹⁶⁶ In case the first plan failed, the report continued, “the Soviet leadership would have a contingency plan providing for the implementation of diversions among [Romania’s] population and the establishment of pro-Soviet groups to oppose the measures taken by the Romanian governments, both at internal or external levels.”¹⁶⁷ Eventually, the Soviets goal was to replace the Romanian leadership—the RCP CC Secretary General Nicolae Ceausescu, the President of the State Council Ion Gheorghe Maurer, and the minister of Defense Ion Ionita.¹⁶⁸

At the same time, Warsaw Pact military leaders openly threatened Romanian officers. On 11 February 1970 Major General Florian Truta, the Romanian deputy of the chief of JWPAF General Staff in Moscow reported home that during his talks with Soviet Army General M. S. Shtemenko on 9 February, Gen. Shtemenko made certain remarks deserving closer attention. When Truta spoke about the Romanian demand regarding the conclusion of a convention on the issue of deploying the military troops of the Pact, during the military exercises on Romanian soil, his Soviet counterpart replied:

We know that you have passed a law on 21 August 1968, in connection with the events from Czechoslovakia. In the Statute signed in March 1968 there are no provisions about concluding conventions as a basis for performing military exercises. *Laws, laws, laws! But if troops would be on the field, would they ask about laws? Dubcek had his laws also, and who asked him about that?*¹⁶⁹

In such a climate, when Bucharest received a constant flux of information suggesting that Moscow intended to change the Romanian communist leadership, including through military means, the decision of taking a harsh course in the bilateral relations between the two countries becomes understandable. Framed in the general continuous balance between firmness and compromise, Nicolae Ceausescu thought that in this period a more inflexible attitude would be more profitable both for the political survival of the Romanian communist leadership, and for preserving the liberty of action already gained at international level. This is the period when Nicolae Ceausescu played

¹⁶⁶ *Ibidem*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibidem*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibidem*

¹⁶⁹ *Report of Major General Florian Truta, Romanian deputy of the Chief of the UAF General Staff, in Moscow regarding the discussions with the Soviet Army General, M.S. Shtemenko on 9 February 1970, 11 February 1970, R.M.A., Fund 467, File 11/ 1970, f. 85-86; emphasis added.*

the role of mediation between China and USA, and meanwhile tried to be accepted as a mediator in the Vietnam War.¹⁷⁰

As détente continued and the CSCE negotiations started of the CSCE in 1969, Bucharest slowly softened its position toward the Soviets. Several reproaches made by Leonid Brezhnev to Nicolae Ceausescu in May 1970 at Moscow, during an official meeting, might have played an incentive role, too.¹⁷¹ It was during that meeting that Brezhnev accused Ceausescu of having the intention to leave the Warsaw Pact, and connecting itself with the West.¹⁷²

Bucharest officials were aware of the fact that the negotiations in the framework of CSCE limited their liberty of action. According to the analysis made by the Romanian communist leadership, détente meant the genesis of a new danger, respectively a new Yalta-like agreement, with the establishment of new spheres of influence in Europe, and in the world, among the USSR and the West. The documents issued by the Romanian communist leadership repeatedly mentioned the opposition toward “the trend to divide the world into spheres of influence,” and the doctrine of “limited sovereignty.”¹⁷³

In order to give more substance to its autonomous position inside the Warsaw Pact, Romania also began “the nationalization” of defense. Between 1969 and 1970, Bucharest conducted an extended study on a national military doctrine, following the Yugoslav pattern of the “generalized defense.”¹⁷⁴ Subsequently, Law No. 14 of 1972 was adopted, and the national defense became a problem of internal competence of the Romanian State, regulated only by internal national legislation and by the constitutional

¹⁷⁰ Joseph F. Harrington, Bruce J. Courtney, *Tweaking the Nose of the Russians. Fifty Years of American-Romanian Relations, 1940-1990*, Boulder-Colorado, 1991, pp.292-293.

¹⁷¹ *Stenogram of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the CC of the RCP regarding the content of discussions held in Moscow between Romanian delegation led by Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of the RCP, and Soviet delegation led by Leonid Brezhnev, Secretary General of the CPUS, 20 May 1970*, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, Chancellery Section, File 59/1970, f. 5-27. See also Paul Niculescu Mizil, *De la comintern la comunism national*, Bucharest, 2002, p. 523

¹⁷² *Stenogram of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the CC of the RCP regarding the content of discussions held in Moscow between Romanian delegation led by Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of the RCP, and Soviet delegation led by Leonid Brezhnev, Secretary General of the CPUS, 20 May 1970*, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, Chancellery Section, File 59/1970, f. 8-9

¹⁷³ see among others *Stenogram of the Plenum meeting of the CC of the RCP regarding the activity of Romanian delegation at the Meeting of Consultative Political Committee (PCC) of the Warsaw Treaty member states, Moscow, 22-23 November 1978*, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, Chancellery Section, File 90/1978, f. 64-72

¹⁷⁴ Petre Otu, *The Military Policy of Romania. From “Defrost” to “Explosion”*, in *On Both Sides of the Iron Curtain*, Bucharest, 2001, pp. 31-41

organs of the country. In accordance with this important law, the national defense field was separated from the Warsaw Pact, while indirectly Romania showed that it was determined not to send any troops outside the national borders.¹⁷⁵

Meanwhile the Romanian communist high-authorities, step by step, gave up their previously shown intransigent face and adopted the line of compromises. When he returned home from a traditional meeting in Crimea with Brezhnev, in August 1971, the Bulgarian communist leader, Todor Zhivkov informed the Bulgarian Politburo “of Moscow’s apprehension that China, Yugoslavia, Romania and Albania would eventually form a special group in the Balkans that might weaken the Warsaw Pact’s Southern tier and would openly or under cover result into a regional Balkan bloc based on an anti-Soviet orientation.”¹⁷⁶ According to what Zhivkov declared, Brezhnev considered that “Ceausescu has gone too far”¹⁷⁷ and he was anxious for discussing with the latter, in order to make him aware of the “gravity” of the consequences of his actions.

As negotiations leading to the Helsinki Final Act progressed, the Romanian leadership became ever more careful in managing its relation with Moscow. Nevertheless, Ceausescu’s options remained unchanged. The fact that the change in Bucharest’s attitude was only skin deep was duly noted in the Kremlin. Thus, in August 1978, Brezhnev told Zhivkov that:

I know, Todor, that you had many times the opportunity to speak frankly with Ceausescu. It is obvious that the necessity of such an influence is now becoming extremely important, especially having in mind that with their policy regarding the Balkan cooperation the Romanians create diplomatic complication for Bulgaria. When they make a fuss over the question of the establishment of a Balkan cooperation, they not do this merely as a whim. The issue of the regional cooperation development in the Balkans is seen by the Romanians as well as the Yugoslavs and the Greeks as a way to decrease the influence of the Warsaw Pact states in the region. This is the essence of their approach... We should decisively counteract all the projects for creation of an autonomous Balkan group with its own particular interest.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ *Low no. 14/1972 regarding the organisation of the national defense of Socialist Republic of Romania*, State Council, Official Bulletin, Bucharest, 1973.

¹⁷⁶ Jordan Baev, *The Crimean meeting of the Warsaw Pact countries’ leaders*, on the website www.isn.ethz.php/collections/coll/overview, p. 2

¹⁷⁷ *Ibidem* p. 4

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem*

After Romania had excluded herself from the invasion in Czechoslovakia, Bucharest became a prisoner of its own April 1964 political orientation. This became most obvious in the military field. As the August 1968 events, and the subsequent thinly veiled Soviet warnings, reinforced Bucharest's temptation to continued on its own, independent, path. The military field represented the domain where Romanian intransigency towards Soviet hegemonic designs was most visible. Step by step, the military link between Romania and the Warsaw Pact weakened. By the late 1970s, Moscow believed that Ceausescu, who at first might have just desired to get out of the alliance, was now attempting to usurp Soviet influence in the Balkans. Documents to further illuminate this issue are not yet declassified, what such action would have meant remains debatable. One thing remains clear; Bucharest's desire to maintain a double approach to policy towards the Soviet Union (and implicitly the Warsaw Pact) did not deceive the Soviets. Moscow's careful watch aimed to prevent a Romanian defection from the alliance, especially after the events in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. The anti-hegemonic orientation and the contention of any political action, that might be compared to a Yalta agreement, were the two main directions of Romania's general policy. This orientation is exemplified through the subtle nuances of the attitude taken within the Warsaw Pact, during the whole decade that followed the "brotherly" invasion of Czechoslovakia.

By the end of 1978, the relationship between Romania and the Warsaw Pact faced another crisis. At the Moscow meeting of the Political Consultative Committee (22-23 November) the Romanian delegation, led by Nicolae Ceausescu, once again took a position opposed to other members of the Pact (see below)

Only few days before the Moscow meeting, Soviet Marshall Kulikov, the Commander-in-Chief of the JWPAF, came to Bucharest carrying the drafts of the documents to be discussed and passed during the PCC meeting. Included in the documents were a resolution on approving the report of the Commander-in-Chief and a memorandum of principles to be inserted in the JWPAF War Statute. According to the draft of resolution on the report of the Commander-in-Chief brought to Bucharest, it was stated that the preparations for defending the Western Europe taken by NATO at that time "are amplifying the risks for the peace, and security of all countries within the

socialist community.”¹⁷⁹ As a result, the resolution called for accelerating the military preparation of the armed forces of the member state, to reach readiness by 1985. These preparations required increasing procurement, reaching interoperability of the main categories of weaponry for all the allied armies up to 70-100 percent, creating new division, etc. As related with the Statute of JWPAF in wartime, the main proposals in the memorandum of principles referred the unique command of the Commander-in-Chief during war, and called for the creation of “regional commands” for each theater of action, overseeing the allied military forces within the area.¹⁸⁰

The communist leadership of Romania appreciated that the analysis of the international situation at that time did not justify the thesis stating that “the evolution of the events goes towards an inevitable military confrontation, towards a new world war.”¹⁸¹ Accordingly, Bucharest argued, there was no need to spend more money for military expenditures. On the contrary, the Romanians thought that it was necessary to reduce the costs in the military field. In this respect, the Romanian government proposed a minimum 5 percent reduction of troops and military expenditures, and the withdrawal of “some military units deployed on the territories of other states.”¹⁸² Quoting Lenin, Ceausescu rejected the thesis concerning the risks of “an imminent war,” and the need to increase military spending because of inflation. Bilateral accords or agreements among the interested parties should be concluded concerning the question of the presence of foreign troops on the territory of a state, Ceausescu told his counterparts. As far as the need to conclude the JWPAF War Statute, Ceausescu agreed but stated that “the principles governing this document must be negotiated, and not established beforehand.”¹⁸³

Facing the “common front” of all other allies which had embraced the position of the Soviets, Nicolae Ceausescu invoked again the procedure of unanimity and stated that

¹⁷⁹ *Draft of Resolution of the PCC of the Warsaw Treaty member states concerning the Report of the Supreme Commander of UAF*, 23 November 1978, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, File 90/ 1978, p. 147

¹⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 147-149

¹⁸¹ *Stenogram of the meeting of the Executive Political Committee regarding the Romanian delegation's stand during the Meeting of PCC of the Warsaw Treaty*, 20 November 1978, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, Chancellery Section, File 87/ 1978, f. 24

¹⁸² *Ibidem*, f. 24

¹⁸³ *Stenogram of the discussions of the Warsaw Treaty member states on the Report of the Supreme Commander of UAF*, 29 November 1970, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, File 90/1978, p. 140

“we are against the decision, so our vote will be against”.¹⁸⁴ Having contested the legitimacy of the resolution, he nevertheless assured his counterparts that the discussions at the PCC meeting respectively, Romania’s opposition, would be kept secret from public ears.¹⁸⁵

Upon the delegation’s return to Bucharest on 24 November, a Politburo session was held in order to inform the party leadership of the delegation’s stance and the conclusions of the meeting. The speakers talked there about “the Soviet militarist circles”, the right of “the Romanian people for independence and liberty,” about “the stimulation of armament race,” “the serious infringement towards norms and procedures,” “the degree of domination and integration that contravene the principles of 1955,” and some “military-like,” if not “Stalinist or dictatorial” practices. Things went even to the contestation of the “viability” of the Warsaw Pact, as long as the principles established since its foundation were not respected.¹⁸⁶ The Politburo decided to inform all the members of the communist party and to control the press releases in order to emphasize the issues concerning the disarmament and détente.

What is surprising was that, in order to justify their position, the Romanian communist leaders invoked primarily the old principles agreed upon when the Warsaw Pact was founded, the same principles they themselves subsequently contested. Bucharest appealed less or not at all the principles affirmed by the main documents issued by the Romanian Communist Party (e.g. “April 1964 Declaration” or the “Resolution of the IXth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party. Despite of the promise made in Moscow, the Romanian position at the PCC was made public and referendum was organized to decide on a cut of 5 percent in the military budget. The referendum passed with almost 100% votes in favor.

In 1980, the JWPAF War Statute was agreed by all the other members of the Pact, except Romania. During the subsequent negotiations the Romanian representatives defended Bucharest’s point of view concerning the principle of allowing deployment of foreign troops on the territory of an allied state only based on a previous bilateral

¹⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 145

¹⁸⁵ *Stenogram of the meeting of the Executive Political Committee of the CC of the RCP regarding the Meeting of PCC of the Warsaw Treaty held in Moscow on 22-23 November 1978*, 24 November 1978, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, Chancellery Section, File 89/1978., f. 69-70

¹⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 14-25

agreement, and the request made by the constitutional organisms of that state. Regarding the Commander of the Regional War Theater, he should be named from among the generals or marshalls of the allied army having most forces deployed in the area.¹⁸⁷

The Romanians had not forgotten the “lesson” learned back in August 1968. Not only did they insist on establishing several basic principles, which made an allied invasion of Romania—Ceausescu’s main fear after 1968—illegal, but also they cautiously took measures to make the internal public opinion sensitive toward the situation inside the Warsaw Pact. Appealing to the traditional anti-Russian feeling from Romania, Ceausescu hoped to create enough public sympathy to his cause as to discourage any Soviet attempts to invade. Yet, to a greater extent, the presumed threat of a Soviet invasion was used by the communist leadership in order to divert the public’s attention from the worsening situation at home and prop up the regime with false external threats.

The Polish crisis of the ‘80s was a test of the solidity of the Soviet communist bloc. Facing the high wave of protests accusing the communist regime in Poland, the leaders of the member states of the Warsaw Pact agreed that there was a need for “recovering the capacity for battle” of the Polish communist party, by using as a main support “the healthy forces of the people, the armed forces, the police and the secret police, and that part of trade unions which remained loyal to the [communist] party.”¹⁸⁸ During the meeting of the PCC held in Moscow on 5 December 1980, the Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev spoke about the reunion as being a proof for “the resolute decision of all socialist states to help Poland,” thus emphasizing the increasing role of the Warsaw Pact as an institution for managing the crises inside the Soviet “outer empire.”¹⁸⁹

Having led the Romanian delegation at the meeting, Ceausescu delivered a long speech, expressing the opinion that the delicate problems facing the Polish Government,

¹⁸⁷ *Stenogram of the plenum meeting of the CC of the RCP concerning the Romanian delegation’s activity during the PCC of the Warsaw Treaty member states (Moscow, 22-23 November), 29 November 1978, Fund CC of the RCP, File 90/1978, f. 69-70; see also Stenogram of the meeting of the Executive Political Committee of the CC of the RCP concerning the meeting of states members of the Warsaw Treaty held on 21-22 November 1978, 15 November 1978, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, File 86/1978, f. 6-7.*

¹⁸⁸ *Speech by Leonid I. Brezhnev at the meeting of party and state leaders of the Warsaw Pact member states held in Moscow on 5 December 1980, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, Chancellery Section, File 74/1980, f. 61*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 65-66

should be addressed “by the Poles themselves.”¹⁹⁰ However, in parallel with this position, the analysis of his speech easily unveils his Stalinist reflex, abruptly reborn once a contestation of communism had arose. Ceausescu’s speech at the Moscow’s meeting represents an example of rigid and dogmatic view of the events occurring by that time in Poland. Such events, Ceausescu suggested, had been generated by the lack of close links between the Communist party and the working class, and also by the unhealthy character of some “elements,” which either remained undefined, or were called as being “anti-socialist” and “counter-revolutionary.” Ceausescu expressed his surprised at “the genesis of so-called independent trade unions”, and he put stress on the imperative for a resurrection of the “workers revolutionary spirit.” He called “all the members of the party, all its forces” to be united and considered that the main risk for the Poles was the birth of fractions inside the communist party. Once Party unity was insured, the Polish communists should take the offensive, firstly at political level, but also it should take all the “necessary measures against the anti-socialist and counter-revolutionary elements.”¹⁹¹

The same Stalinist reflexes were to be noticed, one year later, during the meeting of the Executive Political Committee of the CC of the RCP discussing the situation of Poland, when the martial law was enforced. Under such circumstances, the main cause of the crisis was viewed by the Romanian leaders as consisting in the “alterations of socialist principles” provoked by deficiencies in the activity of the Polish Workers United Party. Such alterations would have brought about separation between the working class and the party, because the latter had given birth to “intellectual elements having a petty-bourgeois mentality, in fact strangers within the working class.”¹⁹²

They also raved against the “reactionary” role played by the Catholic church in Poland, a role that should not have been “tolerated” by the Polish communist leadership. At the same time, it has not been forgotten to mention, among the causes, the fact that Polish national traditions had been neglected, although they have been “exploited” by the Catholic Church. By asking that his opinion be kept secret, it was affirmed that “given

¹⁹⁰ *Speech by Nicolae Ceausescu at the meeting of party and state leaders of the Warsaw Pact member states held in Moscow on 5 December 1980*, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, Chancellery Section, File 74/1980, f. 41 passim

¹⁹¹ *Ibidem*, f. 39-47

¹⁹² *Stenogram of the meeting of the Executive Political Committee of the CC of the RCP regarding the situation of Poland, 13 December 1981*, C.H.N.A., Fund CC of the RCP, Chancellery Section, File 101/1981, f. 5-6

the present circumstances, the leadership of the Polish communist party must be overtaken by a man belonging to the working class.”¹⁹³ Yet the mending relations with the working class did not include, in Romanian leaders’ opinion, a dialogue with “Solidarity.” Rather, they proposed a close union between the communist party and “peasants and workers.”¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, it was openly stated that “Socialism cannot be built with the help of the Holy Cross!” Following these words, it was assessed that the intervention of the party in Poland was belated, and “this thing, which is occurring right now [martial law] must have been occurred last summer.” Ceausescu even went as far as to suggest that there might be need for “foreign help” though he suggested that appealing for foreign help would run the risk of “estrangement from the popular masses.”¹⁹⁵ Symptomatic of Ceausescu’s thinking, the Romanian leader continued:

The Hungarians do not want to go [to Poland]. For instance, during the recent ordinary meeting of the Military Council of the defense ministers from Warsaw Treaty member states, the Hungarians refused to sign an Appeal... We have already discussed it in the meeting of Permanent Bureau of the Politburo; some comrades here do not know the details. The Soviets wanted to introduce some words about Poland in the general, by telling us this was necessary because the security of all socialist country is endangered, and they must intervene to guarantee the security. In fact, they wanted the intervention to be approved. Of course, all the other delegates agreed upon. We voted ‘no’ and the Hungarians told us they will ask home about this. Certainly, we told them we will not accept such thing in the communiqué and it was not accepted. So, they wanted to forward a separate communiqué. The Hungarians said that if the Romanian comrades do not sign, then they would not sign, too... It is true that the Soviet [representative] declared something about what had happened [in Hungary in 1956], then the Hungarian asked “what should be the meaning of such words to me?” – he also knocked the table with his fist – and said “you are bringing offense to the Hungarian people” and so on... By all means, a foreign intervention is not agreed [in Poland]. Of course, the Bulgarians can send there a company or a battalion, the Czechoslovaks will not send any forces, so practically only the Soviets remained in the picture. The Germans don’t want to send [troops].¹⁹⁶

The passage suggests not only a pragmatic calculation made by Nicolae Ceausescu in respect of the possibility of foreign intervention, but also that—in his

¹⁹³ *Ibidem*, f. 6

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 7

¹⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 13

¹⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 13-15

opinion—intervention was the solution. Just prior, the Romanian leader had stated that the Poles could have solved alone, by force, their problems in the summer of 1980.

of course, it's a positive thing that [the Poles] want to solve by themselves this problem. It is bad that it happens now, this should have been done in the summer of 1980; that was the time when they had had to do it. Appealing to foreign help would estrange the popular masses /.../ However, the only ones remaining are the Soviets, and this will raise new problems.¹⁹⁷

At the respective moment, in December 1981, the situation had become worse, and a foreign intervention would give birth to new difficulties as the Soviets alone were capable of sending troops in Poland. Yet the Poles would find such invasion unacceptable. The “new problems” Ceausescu referred to, in fact referred to the possibility of armed resistance by the Poles. In 1981, Nicolae Ceausescu was, at the very least, a passive supporter of a military intervention against the Polish “Solidarity.” In order to save communism, the Romanian leader began to agree on the core rationale at the foundation of the Warsaw Pact: to establish a guardian of communism and Soviet domination within all satellites states.

Such an understanding will find its natural culmination in agreeing with the military intervention of the Warsaw Pact forces in the internal affairs of a “brotherly” country. This meant agreeing with the doctrine of “limited sovereignty”, a doctrine against which the communist leadership from Bucharest fought in the previous years.

This change in Ceausescu’s position became more evident in 1989, when representatives of “Solidarity” entered the government in Poland. On 9 August 1989, the Romanian ambassadors in the allied states from the Warsaw Treaty Organization were instructed to inform the local leaderships “the considerations of the state and party leadership of the Socialist Republic of Romania, and the personal views of Nicolae Ceausescu” referring the situation in Poland. From the answers received from Warsaw and Budapest, it is obvious that Nicolae Ceausescu had proposed a common action “by

¹⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 13

using all means to prevent the end of communism in Poland,” including, if not openly stated, military action.¹⁹⁸

The officials in Budapest learned “in consternation and with disagreement” about such a proposal, while from Warsaw the message came that “we cannot either accept or recognize the motivation of the considerations and conclusions which had been made.” In both capitals the officials were surprised when seeing the new position taken by the Bucharest communist leadership, a position that totally contradicted the traditional one, known since 1968. For instance, from Warsaw a message was sent to Bucharest stating that the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states had been always strongly defended by Romania and “a non-equivocal case was represented in this respect by Romania’s absence in the 1968 intervention in Czechoslovakia.” In Budapest’s message the whole linear evolution of the policy promoted by Romania until that moment was underlined, by stating that the “Romanian point of view cannot be understood when taking into account especially the systematic public support given by Romania to the principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, of sovereignty and independence in the relationship between the communist countries. The present stance goes against the angle of view expressed by the above principles, which represented the basis for establishing Romania’s policy in 1968 related with the events occurring in Czechoslovakia.”¹⁹⁹

Ceausescu and the communist leadership in Bucharest were thus closing in August 1989, only few months before its final extinction, a full circle of their relationship with the Warsaw Pact. This cycle had begun through a public contestation of the super-state character of the political-military alliance, by unveiling the fact that it was actually a tool for preserving the Soviet hegemony. It ended in 1989, after almost three decades, with the acceptance of this feature of the alliance.

Being to a greater extent something more than a simple expression of turnings into policy, the contradictions give testimony to the fact that Romania’s policy of defying Yalta and the Soviet hegemony, promoted by the communist leadership from Bucharest

¹⁹⁸ Dumitru Preda, Mihai Retegan, 1989. *Principiul dominoului*, Bucharest, 2000, pp. 164-167, 170-171, passim

¹⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, passim

represented only a façade concealing the supreme interest of a communist group to maintain itself in power in an illegitimate manner.

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The archival documents show the attitude manifested by the Romanian communist leadership with regard to the Warsaw Pact. In our opinion, since 1962-1963 Romanian attitudes were affected by what one could call the “Yalta syndrome.” Bucharest was outright obsessed, especially after Ceausescu took control of the party leadership, with the possibility of Europe’s ultimate division into spheres of influence between the superpowers and the inevitability of Romania’s inclusion in the Soviet Union’s sphere. The central objective for the Romanian political leadership was to overcome Yalta, hence to avoid the definite positioning of Romania within the exclusive sphere of domination by USSR. Such a course pushed initially the Romanian leadership towards bold taking actions. Bucharest’s attitude in the Sino-Soviet split or its peculiar positions in the Warsaw Pact until the end of ‘70 are examples of such actions. Within the Warsaw Pact, the communist Romania initially took a startling position when it took a position against the Nuclear Proliferation Ban Treaty. Bucharest did so because the leadership of the party considered that such an international agreement would “freeze” the Soviet sphere of influence through an atomic monopoly. The opposition to the world division into spheres of influence constituted a propaganda leitmotiv in the documents issued by the Romanian communist political leadership until its demise in 1989.

The Warsaw Pact was perceived by Bucharest political circles as the main instrument of the “ world of Yalta” as it had been established at the end of the Second World War and therefore the concomitant dismantling of the Pact, together with NATO, become a political aim of the Romanian communist leadership, especially during the period of détente. This way of viewing the Warsaw Treaty pushed Bucharest into a policy of staying “neither inside, nor outside,” of the alliance, after the military intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Undoubtedly, the stance taken by Romania had its heights and lows, but nobody can deny the obstinacy which characterized the policy of following the same objective during many years. While perceiving such an essential motif of anxiety for the communist leadership from Bucharest, in Washington, Averell Harriman, during a personal meeting with the Romanian diplomat Mircea Malita on 8 August 1963, occasioned by the signing of the First Nuclear Proliferation Ban Treaty, told him:

Please forward to Mr. Gheorghiu Dej these words from my part, that the Americans never consented to what some people call ‘the division at Yalta.’ I was there myself. For us, the percentages of Churchill were not valid. According to our interpretation the accord should have been fifty-fifty! We never changed our opinion. Others separated did not respect the agreement, as we saw it.²⁰⁰

In the context of the “Yalta syndrome,” one should bear in mind that a true paranoia was manifested in Bucharest, concerning a possible Soviet invasion. Such a fear was motivated initially by the desire to keep the status acquired in 1958, when the Soviet troops were withdrawn from Romania. After the invasion in Czechoslovakia from 1968, this fear began to increase. Bucharest tried to build a shield against a potential invasion by assuming a national military doctrine. Bucharest also paid increased attention to the idea of taking the Balkans away from the Warsaw Pact mechanism—at least, this is the way Leonid Brezhnev perceived Bucharest’s position in 1978—and the issue of concluding special bilateral conventions for any military maneuvering or military exercises occurring on Romanian soil.

Gradually, as detente took hold, the Warsaw Pact became a “mirror” of NATO, increasingly assuming the role of managing the intra-block relations and establishing a common position in the international arena. Thus is explained, at least partially, the common “management” of the “counter-revolutionary situation” in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Thus are also motivated Moscow’s insistences of getting periodic meetings of the ministers of external affairs, beside the summits of the Pact (the reunions of the Consultative Political Committee) or the traditional multi- or bilateral reunions taking place during each summer in Crimea.

²⁰⁰ Mircea Malita, *Un parteneriat româno-americană scut în Razboiul Rece*, in ‘Cadran Politic’, no. 8, October 2003, p.31.

Bucharest understood Moscow's tendency of changing the role of the Warsaw Pact and took steps to oppose it. Whether regarding the statutes of the different components of the Pact proposed by Moscow ever since 1966, whether regarding the establishment of new structures for standardizing the allies' positions, Romania constantly placed itself in a unique position. It's inability to compromise at the right time resulted in its auto-isolation within the communist bloc.

Gradually, after the Pact's invasion of Czechoslovakia, the communist leadership in Bucharest became bolder, yet more nuanced in its opposition. After Ion Gheorghe Maurer retired in 1974, Ceausescu implemented several reversions to the previous position of the Romanian leadership. Thus, on the occasion of the initiation of martial law in Poland in December 1981, Ceausescu was thinking of the utility of using the Pact in maintaining the unity of the "communist camp," while in 1989 he became the very champion of an intervention of its troops as an instrument of intra-block management. It was in this context that Ceausescu opposed Soviet Leader Mikhael Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* after March 1985. Facing major changes, Ceausescu was concerned with the possibility of losing power, and thought that an alliance with the conservative members of the Pact against Gorbachev's "new way" was solution to maintaining his political survival.

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1. 3 April 1963

Note regarding the discussions which took place at the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party with I.A. Andropov, secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

2. 4 July 1963

Stenogram of the meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party concerning the declaration made by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party about future talks between fraternal parties.

3. 18 January 1965

Memorandum of discussions which took place on 18 January 1965 at the residence of the Romanian delegation in Warsaw between the leaders of the Romanian Communist Party and the Polish delegation, led by Wladislaw Gomulka, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party.

4. 26 July 1965

Stenogram of discussions with the delegation of the Chinese Communist Party which attended the proceedings of the ninth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party.

5. 4-9 February 1966

Report on the meeting of the Chiefs of the General Staff of the Armies of the Warsaw Pact, held in Moscow between February 4-9, 1966.

6. 3 June 1968

Report from General Ion Ionita, Minister of the Armed Forces of the Socialist Republic of Romania, to Nicolae Ceausescu, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, on the meeting of the Consultative Political Committee of the Warsaw Pact held in Sofia, 3 June 1968.

7. 17 August 1968

Stenogram of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party with regard to Ceausescu's meeting with Dubcek.

8. 25 August 1968

Stenogram of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party with regard to Ceausescu's meeting with Tito designed to draw up a reply to the letter of the Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party addressed to the Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party in connection with the events in Czechoslovakia.

9. 1 October 1968

Note dated 1 October 1968 of discussions of 28 September 1968 between Nicolae Ceausescu, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, member of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party and President of the Council of Ministers of the Socialist Republic of Romania, and Marshal I.I. Jakubovsky, Supreme Commander of the Unified Armed Forces of the states participating in the Warsaw Treaty Organization, and Army General S.M. Stemenko, Chief of General Staff of the Unified Armed Forces.

10. 11 March 1969

Memorandum dated 11 March 1969 of discussions at a dinner hosted by Corneliu Manescu, the Foreign Minister of the Socialist Republic Romania (SRR), on 20 February 1969 in honour of Marshal of the Soviet Union I.I. Jakubovsky, supreme commander of the United Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty.

11. 18 March 1969

Stenogram of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, 18 March 1969.

12. *Undated report drawn up by the Romanian Foreign Ministry for the period 1 January 1968-15 March 1969 on the main features of Romania's bilateral relations with the USSR, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the German Democratic Republic.*

13. 10 September 1969.

Letter of General Ion Ionita, Minister of Romanian Armed Forces, to Nicolae Ceausescu, on discussions held in Moscow on 9 September 1969 with General S.M. Stemenko, Chief of General Staff of the Unified Command, on Warsaw Pact exercises scheduled to take place in Romania in October 1969.

14. 7 March 1970

Letter dated 7 March 1970 of General Ion Ionita, Minister of the Armed Forces, to Nicolae Ceausescu about planned Warsaw Pact manoeuvres in April 1970.

15. 8 December 1970

Letter dated 8 December 1970 of George Macovescu, Romanian Deputy Foreign Minister, to chiefs of mission informing them of proceedings of the Warsaw Pact Consultative Political Committee meeting held in Berlin on 2 December 1970.

16. 25 June 1971

Stenogram of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party with regard to the visit of a Romanian delegation led by Ceausescu to China, North Korea, Vietnam and Mongolia.

17. 10 January 1972

Telegram dated 10 January 1972 of George Macovescu, Romanian Deputy Foreign Minister, to the Romanian Ambassador in Moscow, 10 January 1972.

18. 11 January 1972

Reply of Romanian Ambassador to Moscow to George Macovescu, 11 January 1972.

19. 15 January 1972

Note on Soviet proposals for European Security for the Prague Conference of the Consultative Political Committee of the Warsaw Pact, 15 January 1972.

20. 1 June 1972

Letter from General Marin Nicolescu, Deputy Minister of the Armed Forces, to Deputy Foreign Minister Vasile Gliga, 1 June 1972.

21. 24 May 1974

US State Department Memorandum of Conversation between Emil Bodnaras, Vice President, Romanian Council of State, and Harry G. Barnes, American Ambassador to Romania, US Embassy, Bucharest.

22. 20 November 1978

Stenogram of the meeting of the Consultative Political Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, 20 November 1970.

23. 24 November 1978

Stenogram of the meeting of the Consultative Political Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, 24 November 1978.

24. 5 December 1980

Speeches of Stanislaw Kania, Leonid Brezhnev, Erich Honeker, and Nicolae Ceausescu at the meeting of party leaders of Warsaw Pact states in Moscow, 5 December 1980.

25. 13 December 1981

Stenogram of the meeting of the Consultative Political Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, 13 December 1981.

26. 17 December 1981

Stenogram of the meeting of the Consultative Political Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, 17 December 1981.

27. 29 May 1987

Speech of Nicolae Ceausescu at the meeting of Warsaw Pact leaders on 29 May 1987.

28. 29 May 1987

Report of Marshal V.G. Kulikov, Commander of the Warsaw Pact forces, at the meeting of Warsaw Pact leaders on 29 May 1987.

29. 17 June 1988

Stenogram of the Politburo meeting of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, 17 June 1988.

30. 23 July 1988

Stenogram of the meeting of the Executive Political Committee of the Central Committee of the RCP.

31. 31 May 1989

Stenogram of the meeting of the Defence Council of the Socialist Republic of Romania.