

HISTORICAL SCIENCES

ROMANIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS IN THE '80S (I)

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Abstract

The extremely tense Romanian-Soviet relations after April 1964 would deteriorate even more during Mikhail S. Gorbachev's mandate. The leaders of Kremlin criticised Nicolae Ceaușescu and, at the same time, could not forgive him for his ambition and his demonstrative flirting with the West. Speaking about Nicolae Ceaușescu, Mikhail S. Gorbachev stated that after August 21, 1968, he began to distance himself from the Soviet Union and to emphasize his demand for Romania's independence and sovereignty to be respected in every way possible, so that this basic demand in itself, repeated on every occasion and even without reason, turned into a kind of incantation that brought with it doubled dividends. Nicolae Ceaușescu and socialist Romania proved to be the stumbling block in the process of reforming and restructuring the strategic glaxis of the USSR, reforming socialism and trying to bestow a new perspective on an ideology that proved to be failing.

Keywords: *Ceaușescu, Gorbachev, USSR, perestroika, glasnosti*

Introduction

In February 1989, the Foreign Relations Division of the Central Committee of the CPSU submitted Memorandum entitled "On the Strategy of USSR Relations with the European Socialist Countries" with the leadership of the USSR. The Kremlin analysts pointed out in this foreign policy document the fact that there was a dramatic decline in the positions of the communist parties which, in certain cases, even appeared to be going through a "self-confidence crisis" [1, p. 19] and, at the same time, it was obvious that the transition to the principles of equal rights and mutual responsibility, applied after April 1985 by the USSR leadership in the relations between socialist countries, "had changed the image of Soviet conservatism" [2, p. 457].

The Soviet party and state leadership was informed that „ *the society* (in socialist countries – n. n.) *was rejecting the existing political institutions and ideological values*" [2, p. 457], therefore "the ruling parties can no longer lead as they used to do" [2, p. 457] and they would find themselves "in an increasingly difficult permanent state" [2, p. 457]. Soviet analysts revealed the fact that the GDR and Romania represented special cases, because Bucharest "was still facing the suffocating environment created by Ceaușescu 's cult of personality and authoritarian rule" [2, p. 457], with Ceaușescu "seeking to supplant our (Soviet – n.n.) influence" [1, p. 19] and pose as a "champion of socialist purity" [1, p. 19], creating an "an indirect polemics amongst ourselves (the Soviets – n. n.)" [2, p. 457]. Moreover, Kremlin noted the fact that the authoritarian regime in Bucharest, corroborated with the cult of personality in socialist Romania was bound to generate "certain social explosions, but they are currently unlikely to generate a widespread impact" [2, p. 457]. Mikhail S. Gorbachev was informed that things could only take a turn for the better by Nicolae Ceaușescu 's overthrow, "an event which may be accompanied by very painful phenomena" [2, p. 457]. Furthermore, in the same month of February

1989, a team of researchers from the *Institute of Economics of the Socialist World System of the USSR Academy of Sciences* submitted another Memorandum entitled "Analysis of Changes in Eastern Europe and their Influence on the USSR".

Referring to socialist Romania, the researchers wrote: "**Optimistic scenario.** *Changes in the political leadership of the country occur. As a result, N. Ceaușescu is replaced by reasonable politicians, capable of carrying out the radical reforms and the ideas of the renewal of socialism. Romania provides good premises for the use of market relations, for the relatively dynamic restructuring and modernisation of the economy and a real unleashing of the economic initiative and the creation of a competitive economic macro-system.* **Pessimistic Scenario.** *The current leadership of the country remains in office and continues the policy. If the resources that are freed up for foreign debt payments are used to reduce social tension, the general political stability may be maintained for a while, but without solving the political issues, and furthermore, all the while the technical-scientific progress risks lagging behind. However, if the leadership chooses to ignore the objective of improving the population's standard of living and diverts the resources obtained towards the achievement of new ambitious projects, a social explosion cannot be ruled out. At this time, when the processes of renewal in the other socialist countries have not yet proven the feasibility of the reform policy, there is a risk of a decisive return of the country to the West, given that its population has freed itself from socialist values and has traditionally been educated in the spirit of a common destiny with the Latin world (including the exit from the WTO). The material and financial support from the West, most likely in the conditions of a genuine exchange, may prove effective for a country possessing plentiful economic and natural resources"* [1, p. 20]. In conclusion, the text could be read as: "As long as the regime has not exhausted its resources and has recently gained experience by combating repressive measures and social manoeuvres in order to maintain stability, the second scenario may be the

most likely. It is also supported by a low level of national consciousness and the absence of an organised opposition in Romania. At the same time, an obvious irrationality of the leadership represents a constant source of discontent not only at the lower levels, but also for the ruling class. Therefore, the possibility of certain changes occurring «at the top» cannot be excluded” [1, p. 20 -21].

Pessimistic Scenarios Regarding Romania's Political Future

Romanian-Soviet relations were at their lowest point when journalist Nikolai Morozov returned to Bucharest, in the fall of 1989, in an extremely difficult political context for the Ceaușescu regime, both internally and externally. **“The foreign pages of the Soviet press describe Romania as a genuine «Cinderella». This issue caused a lot of bad blood for journalists who wrote frequently about this country”** [3, p. 9], confessed Nikolai Morozov in his memoirs relating to Bucharest at the start of 1989. The *TASS Agency* newsroom featured instructions on the manner of writing about socialist Romania. **“The theme of these articles was also included... friendship, collaboration, solidarity... We were not allowed to mention any kind of difficulties, issues, conflicts. Editors would go over their own thought process and feelings, publishing texts about the “victorious march of socialism on the Romanian land”, and only trimming the “embellishments” that only served to catch the eye”** [3, p. 11] mentioned Nikolai Morozov. In Moscow, Russian journalists found it quite difficult and, at the same time, dishonourable to write about Ceaușescu’s Romania, whose starving and freezing people suffered **“under the rule of a bizarrely anachronical regime”** [3, p. 11].

Nikolai Morozov recalls the way in which socialist Romania was perceived in Moscow, in journalistic and diplomatic circles, where, for example, the newspaper *Izvestia* printed, in April 1989, a magazine of the Romanian press that the **Tass Agency Office** in Bucharest had prepared for an internal news bulletin. **“This publication – stated Nikolai Morozov - drew the general attention and caused quite an amusement”** [3, p. 15], given that the news bulletin fully comprised of eulogies addressed to Ceaușescu by the Bucharest press. However, Nikolai Morozov did manage to publish in the foreign policy magazine *Eho planet* an article where he discretely criticised the systematisation program of Romanian villages. The article did not go unnoticed and was deemed as **“a genuine strike directed at Ceaușescu !”** [3, p. 15]. In the *Oameni* section, he also published a text accompanied by two photos: **“a rendering of a pompous and honest painting by the painter Nițescu, where the secretary general together with his wife were represented as «forever young», and next to it a recent and «genuine» recent photo of Ceaușescu – a wrinkly old man with a blank stare, as he looked in the final year of his life”** [3, p. 15].

Nikolai Morozov reminds us that the atmosphere within the Romanian embassy in Moscow was completely different from the **“cordial climate”** that reigned within the embassies of Poland and Hungary. All under the influence of the transformations generated by *perestroika* and *glasnost* that the Bucharest regime so stubbornly rejected. The former correspondent of the *TASS Agency* recalls poet Mircea Dinescu’s visit in Moscow, in the fall of 1987, at the invitation of the USSR Writers Union. On this occasion, he would give an extensive interview to be later published in *In-ostranaia literatura*. In the interview entitled **“The Rumours about Spring Brought Me to Moscow”**, Mircea Dinescu openly criticised the situation in Romania and praised the Soviet *perestroika*. A few months later, on the airwaves of *Radio Libertatea* would provide journalist Nikolai Morozov the information that Mircea Dinescu had been fired and placed under house arrest following an interview with French newspaper *Libération*, in addition to the one in Moscow. The attempt to publish Mircea Dinescu’s Paris statements in the Soviet media was met with the indifference of the Moscow newsroom directors. Given such context, Nikolai Morozov arrived in Bucharest as a representative of the *TASS Agency* to monitor the dealings of the 14th Congress of the PCR, at a time when Ceaușescu had lost **“his sense of reality, political instinct and basic common sense”** [3, p. 19].

Kremlin Imposes New Rules in Its Relations with the Socialist States

Speaking about the socialist community upon his ascent to power, Mikhail S. Gorbachev stated that: **“The socialist community [...] was already nowhere near as homogeneous as it had been during the first post-war years, having its own «heretics» and «rebels» as the ever-occurring Ceaușescu. However, in terms of strategic matters, party discipline was still observed and the first say always belonged to the established vanguard - the socialist superpower”** [4, p. 105]. At the same time, Mikhail S. Gorbachev would record in his memoirs: “Romania’s “special position” was encouraged by the West through loans, through some investments, the most favoured nation in terms of trade, etc. Secondly, and this was perhaps the main issue, *Ceaușescu* skilfully used it to strengthen his grip, that was already rather tight, over the people’s behaviour and thinking and, essentially, to establish absolute personal power. The population as a whole was separated from both the West and the Soviet Union by an impenetrable curtain” [4, p. 103]. Soviet political scientist Georgy H. Shakhnazarov, advisor to Mikhail S. Gorbachev, wrote that: **“Ceaușescu tried to incorporate in the socialist camp the status that, thanks to de Gaulle, belonged to France within the Atlantic Alliance. His game was faultless, for he knew that however irritated Moscow might be at his demonstrative opposition, he could not be punished for it. Instead, as a show of gratitude for the painful stings administered to Moscow's pride, he could always count on thanks from the Americans, while at the**

same time maintaining the strictest political regime in Central Europe” [4, p. 103].

On the occasion of the meeting of the party and state leaders of socialist countries attending the funeral of Konstantin U. Chernenko, the new *Soviet Secretary General* took the opportunity to state that the CPSU “stands for relations based on equality of rights, respect for the sovereignty and national independence of each country, mutually beneficial collaboration in all fields, full responsibility of each party towards the situation in its own country” [2, p. 450]. Mikhail S. Gorbachev would note in his *Memoirs*: “Essentially, our statement uttered during this meeting meant a turn point aimed at establishing new relations, the abandonment of the so-called «Brezhnev doctrine», which had never been officially proclaimed, but which practically defined the USSR's approach to socialist countries” [2, p. 450].

In May 1986, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPSU would receive a note entitled “Concerning Some Issues in the Collaboration with Socialist Countries” whereby Mikhail S. Gorbachev set out the principles regarding relations with the friendly socialist countries shown during the speech of March 1985. The end of the *Note* stated the necessity of “a genuine turning point within the entire system of collaboration with the allies” [4, p. 105]. Speaking about this document, Valery L. Musatov, former deputy head of the Department of External Relations of the Central Committee of the CPSU, noted that the document revealed the effort of the Soviet leadership “to renew relations, grant them added momentum and ease the burden that the Soviet Union carried on his shoulders” [2, p. 451]. Vadim A. Medvedev, secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU responsible for international and, later, ideological issues, and member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPSU, wrote the following about the direction of the new Soviet Union foreign policy: “The emergence of authoritarian regimes in the Eastern Europe countries occurred subject to its direct, and even decisive involvement [of the Soviet side - n.n.]. And, without meddling in internal affairs, our duty was to provide the peoples of these countries with the opportunity to define themselves, to help them, freeing them from external dictate” [4, p. 105].

At Mikhail S. Gorbachev's initiative, in November 1986, Moscow hosted the working meeting of the leaders of the member countries of the **Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA)** in order to debate the issues of mutual collaboration. The secretary general of the CPSU took the floor on three occasions during this closed-door meeting, insisting that the principle of the autonomy of each party, its right to solve the issues regarding its country's development, would be applied in the relations between the CPSU and the other communist and labour parties, similarly to the responsibility for the policy pursued before one's own people. At the same time, he noted the fact that “socialist countries are facing an unavoidable alternative” [5, p. 37], therefore “either socialism would advance at a rapid pace and reach out to the new scientific, technical and economic boundaries and would convincingly prove

the attractiveness of our way of life and strengthen its position worldwide in the process, and provide new perspectives for the world revolutionary process” [5, p. 37], or it would come to a grinding halt due to its difficulties and issues. “**We are losing our dynamism and then they will start to pressure us, and they will try to push us back with all the consequences arising therefrom on the destiny of socialism and the world**” [5, p. 37], stated Mikhail S. Gorbachev. “**The experienced leaders of the «brotherly parties» immediately picked up on this nuance - that of being responsible for their decisions before their own peoples and not before Moscow and the international communist movement**” [2, p. 451], wrote Valery L. Musatov.

The Soviet leader would go on to inform his counterparts in the CMEA members states that the USSR *perestroika* “**should be seen as more than an internal Soviet necessity, i.e. a contribution to the settlement of world socialism issues**” [5, p. 37], which would lead it to a conflict with certain leaders of countries that were part of the Warsaw Treaty (WTO), some of whom harbouring a personal dislike of the Kremlin leader, implicitly with Nicolae Ceaușescu. Furthermore, the PCUS informed his East-European counterparts that “**we need to consolidate commerce (between socialist countries – n.n.) on a mutually beneficial basis and under the conditions of a genuine market**” [6, p. 189]. On the occasion of this meeting, the USSR informed the OTV members states that “**it will not guarantee, under any circumstances, the loans that the Eastern Europeans had obtained in recent years from the Western banks**” [6, p. 189 - 190]. A Soviet official, present at the talks, went on to state: “**It was the economic equivalent of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe**” [6, p. 190]. Speaking about the future misunderstandings of the Soviet Secretary General with the leaders of the OTV member countries who were *opposed to perestroika* and the latter's desire to replace them from office, in the years 1987-1988, political scientist Valery L. Musatov wrote: “**Within the Central Committee apparatus, this was called the desire to bring in «mini Gorbachevs» to power. (...) Officially, the preparation of all these changes was entrusted to Medvedev (Vadim, member of the Political Bureau, secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU - n.n.) and to Kryuchkov (Vladimir, chairman of the State Security Committee/KGB - n.n.)**” [2, p. 451].

Speaking about the CMEA meeting of November 1986, political scientist Valery L. Musatov wrote: “**More often than not, V. Kryuchkov, former chairman of the KGB, stated that Gorbachev was presented with all the information about the situation in the socialist countries and about the plans of the Western partners. According to the testimony of E. Shevardnadze, Gorbachev was a poor economist, yet he was fully informed about the economic status in the economic field**” [5, p. 41]. Mikhail S. Gorbachev's main collaborators, respectively Anatoly Chernyaev, G. H. Shakhnazarov and Vadim A. Medvedev, revealed in their writings the fact that Mikhail S. Gorbachev “**used to literally calculate the**

duration of his reign in the long term” [5, p. 43] and **“the socialist countries had almost been a burden on his shoulders”** [5, p. 41], therefore, he wanted to avoid getting involved in their problems.

Speaking about President Nicolae Ceaușescu and about his relationship with Kremlin, political scientist Valery L. Musatov wrote: *“As far as Romania is concerned, the attempts to stop Ceaușescu (the exchange of visits, the decoration with a highest order, the oil supplies, the acknowledgments made by the USSR Academy of Sciences towards Elena Ceaușescu and so on) did not generate the desired results. Ceaușescu continued to fiercely oppose perestroika, to criticise Gorbachev’s concessions towards the West in terms of security and disarming. Moscow had obviously formed a clear opinion about N. Ceaușescu’s politics, especially after M. Gorbachev in Bucharest, in 1987. They were well aware of the difficulties Romania was facing. There was also information about attitudes of opposition within the party, within society and especially within the Romanian army. I am unaware of the terms laid out during Romanian opponent S. Brucan’s talks with Gorbachev about the future of Romania. (Specialised literature mentions this meeting taking place in Moscow, at the end of 1988. I cannot say whether this meeting actually took place or not, or if it was conducted through agents). In any case, during the high-level meeting in Bucharest, in July 1989, as well as during the meeting of the leaders of the Warsaw Treaty in Moscow, in the beginning of December 1989, N. Ceaușescu, put up for the debate the situation within the socialist camp and the development of common measures to get out of the impending disaster. To which Gorbachev responded that all changes would occur democratically, without affecting the cause of socialism. He believed there were no reasons to fear the collapse of socialism”* [5, p. 42 - 43].

Ceaușescu's Romania Rejects Kremlin's Rules

The extremely tense Romanian-Soviet relations during the '80s remained unchanged even after the former KGB chairman, Yuri V. Andropov, became secretary general of the PCUS, in November 1982. The new Soviet General Secretary ostentatiously ignored Nicolae Ceaușescu at the funeral of Leonid I. Brezhnev. **„Andropov made it clear at Brezhnev's funeral that, like Khrushchev and Brezhnev before him (and like Chernenko after him), he believed that Romania's independent policy in the Balkans was directly targeting the Soviet strategy in the region (as in fact it was). Therefore, he warned Ceaușescu stay put and «abide by Soviet instructions» in the future”** [7, p. 382], wrote Larry L. Watts. Halfway through Yuri V. Andropov's term, The US intelligence community would note the actions of the new Kremlin leader until then **“suggest his resolve to impose himself in Eastern Europe with a firm hand”** [7, p. 384], which made **“the Soviets insist that the doctrine of «democratic centralism» (i.e. a firmer Soviet control) be applied in the economic field, and they increased pressure on Pact allies for a sustained contribution to the modernisation of the military forces**

and criticised the ideological «deviations» in Eastern Europe” [7, p. 384].

Socialist Romania's political cooperation project in the Balkans, namely a Balkan Pact which would counterbalance the Soviet influence in the region and in which the administration of President Gerald Ford had tried to engage, was a reason for permanent dissent within the Soviet Union. **“Ceaușescu used the discussion regarding the transformation of the Balkans into a nuclear-weapons-free zone to once again reiterate the Romanians' old thesis of the concerning the development of a multisectoral collaboration between the Balkan states. And he insisted that, should a future meeting of the heads of state in the Balkans be organised, the issue of turning the Balkan region into a nuclear-weapons-free zone be subordinated to a multilateral collaboration in the Balkans”** [7, p. 389], stated Todor Zhivkov in a report submitted with the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian PC, on January 22, 1982, after a meeting with Nicolae Ceaușescu. The Kremlin was extremely concerned about Ceaușescu's regional political project in the Balkans, given the risk that the West would support Romania's proposals and thus contribute to a failure of the Soviet policy in the Balkans.

In the '80s, socialist Romania refused to take part in *“Operation Ryan”* initiated by the KGB and GRU against the West and NATO, campaigned in the West to prevent further deployment of nuclear and medium-range tactical missiles in Europe, advocated disarmament as a necessary step for the abolition of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, prevented the strengthening of the military capabilities of the United Armed Forces (UAF), initiated the creation of a *Working Group on the European Disarmament Process* (December 1984), attempted to prevent the renewal of the Warsaw Treaty, etc. thus straining the Romanian-Soviet relations to the verge of unbearableness. Tensions reached a critical point on May 28, 1987, during the Berlin consultation of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. On this occasion, Nicolae Ceaușescu initially opposed the adoption by the Warsaw Treaty member states of the **“sufficiency principle”** proposed by Marshal Viktor G Kulikov, regarding the simultaneous decrease of the armed forces of the two existing military blocs in Europe to a sufficient and rational level. However, alongside the other leaders of the Warsaw Treaty (WTO) Nicolae Ceaușescu would go on to sign the document entitled *“Concerning the Military Doctrine of the Member States of the Warsaw Treaty”*.

Referring to the political-military relations between socialist Romania and the Warsaw Treaty member states, General Anatoly I. Gribkov, former Chief of Staff of the United Armed Forces during the 1976-1989 period, revealed in his memoirs (*Soarta Tratatului de la Varșovia. Amintiri, documente, fapte (The Fate of the Warsaw Treaty. Memories, Documents, Facts)*) published in 1998, an extremely delicate moment where the fate of a secret document was discussed, document proposed by the Commander of the United Armed Forces on March 18, 1980, respectively: *“Concerning the United Armed Forces of the Signatory States of the*

Warsaw Treaty and Their Governing Bodies During the War". Referring to that delicate moment, General Anatoly I. Gribkov stated that: **"At the time, it seemed that accepting Ceaușescu 's proposal of taking a break, and highlighting, rather convincingly, the need for adopting the document as presented, Ceaușescu would have signed the decision, in this case by amending a few points. However, Brezhnev and Husák, who chaired over the meeting, refused take into account the opinion of their (Romanian - n. n.) partner and insisted on furthering their own agenda"** [8]. The fierceness of the Kremlin leaders and that of their other allies from the Warsaw Treaty was exceedingly high, and left little room for reason during the time.

With regards to *perestroika* and *glasnosti*, General Anatoly I. Gribkov recalls the fact that Nicolae Ceaușescu received him in Bucharest, in 1988, and presented his opinions on what was happening in Moscow. *"In the presence his Minister of Defence, General V. V. Milea , Nicolae Ceaușescu listened to our report without paying any particular interest. When the state of affairs in the Soviet Union came about, he smiled mischievously and began to share his thoughts. «I am well informed - said Ceaușescu - about the events in your country, I am closely monitoring the so-called «perestroika». Your mass media has poisonous impact on society, smearing the name of its country, its army and its own people. Is this democracy? Your heroic people won the greatest of victories over fascism. All of mankind respectfully bowed its head before it, and enemies trembled in fear of the power of the Soviet Union. The Red Army avoided starvation for the most part, during four years of war, thanks to the collective farms and state farms. Before war broke out, your country traded in wheat. Now you buy grain from abroad paying with gold. Industry and agriculture are being destroyed. This year, however, the collective households in Romania generated one tonne of grain per capita. It is an excellent indicator».* With this, he concluded his comments on our report, only adding that "it is your own internal affair". In his tone of voice, the word «perestroika» sounded like a formidable irony" [8].

During a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPSU, on November 13, 1986, while presenting the conclusions of the Moscow meeting of the leaders of the CMEA member states (November 11-12, 1986) Mikhail S. Gorbachev , emphasised the fact that Nicolae Ceaușescu was **"even worse than before"** [9, p. 59], that he delved in demagoguery and that socialist Romania fell to **"Ceaușescu 's dictatorship"** [9, p. 59], with Ceaușescu himself being a supporter of **"inherited"** [9, p. 59] socialism, of **"dynastic socialism"** [9, p. 59]. At the same time, the Hungarian diplomats stationed in Bucharest noted the fact that major changes were occurring in the external and internal behaviour of socialist Romania, given the new realities in East-West relations. *"Starting with the second part of the '80s, Hungarian diplomats in Romania believed that Romania's foreign policy began to show signs of a lack of spirit of compromise, that the interest of capitalist countries towards Romania decreased and*

that the number of high-level meetings decreased compared to previous years. However, Romania diplomacy remained very active in the international forums. One noticed a slight closeness to the USSR. In 1986, Pál Szűcs, the Hungarian consul in Bucharest, stated that he believed Romanian diplomacy was becoming increasingly isolated, and, given the existing conditions, was incapable of renewal. This fact would require the replacement of Ceaușescu . Romania's foreign relations (even with the USSR or China) were characterised as stagnating at best" [10, p. 99], wrote historian Csaba Zoltán Novák. In 1988, Hungarian diplomats noted that Ceaușescu 's Romania nu refuses to accept any system reform, refuses collaboration with socialist countries undergoing reforms and *"it seems that we must learn to coexist for a very long time with these distinctive phenomena by the political leadership of the PCR"* [10, p. 101].

During an analysis from February 8, 1983, Anneli Ute Gabanyi, analyst of Romanian issues at *Radio Free Europe* (RFE), wrote the following, referring to the Romanian-Soviet ideological dispute: **"In the last year (1982 – n.n.), both the important speeches of PCR leader Nicolae Ceaușescu , as well as the press releases showed signs that PCR was engaged in an ideological debate with the USSR. More and more articles were published in the Romanian press after the Yuri Andropov 's promotion to the position of Secretary General of the PC of the URSS. The main points of the PCR in the fight against «dogmatism» and the remnants of «Stalinism» are: a rejection of «genuine» or Soviet socialism in favour of «Romanian socialism», based on specific national traits and requirements; replacing the phrase «dictatorship of the proletariat» with that of «state of workers' democracy»; the right of every socialist country to base its foreign policy on national and class interests, an approach based on a new definition of the nation; the call for a new type of internationalism, different from the «socialist» or «proletarian» one; the opposition to the supranational integration within the CMEA and the insistence on certain non-conformist initiatives in the matter of disarmament. Caught between East and West, between his own discontent populace and the partners from the communist bloc, Ceaușescu seemed to be walking a tight rope between two burning buildings"** [11, p. 200].

In an essay published in a series in the *România Liberă* newspaper, on April 18 and 25, 1983, Eugen Florescu, the deputy head of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the PCR, criticised the "pressure of economic integration, applied by the "powers" (a transparent allusion to the Soviet Union) with the aim of limiting the sovereignty of smaller states" [12, p. 124]. The senior party activist stated that he would further conduct a *„regulated process of rapprochement between nations"* [12, p. 125], but that it could only exist subject *"to a voluntary and even cooperation"* [12, p. 125]. Eugen Florescu contested the use of *"spillover methods, through radical, automatic and externally-imposed overthrows"* [12, p. 125].

*Romanian-Soviet Economic Relations Generate
New Power Struggles*

Despite the ideological differences, Nicolae Ceaușescu was forced to take into account the economic realities, therefore, in 1984, he would have to ask for the support of the USSR for the preferential delivery of 1,500,000 tonnes of oil, which were to be paid for through a **“better cooperation in terms of foreign policy”** [11, p. 209]. Based on the information provided by the USSR Embassy in Bucharest, *Radio Budapest* informed that, since the end of 1983 and in addition to the amount stated in the long-term agreement, the Soviet Union supplied Romania with the following: 1,500,000 tonnes of crude oil, 300,000,000 cubic meters of natural gas and 2,000,000 tonnes of coal.

On March 2, 1984, Anneli Ute Gabanyi wrote that the issue of *Revista Economică* from February 1, 1984, published an article by F. Măgoreanu, the Romanian-Soviet trade specialist, whereby references were made to statistical data on Soviet oil deliveries and it was stated that **“there were no Soviet concessions regarding the terms of oil supplies”** [11, p. 209] and that **“these ad hoc deliveries of crude oil were also occasional and experienced fluctuations depending on the world market situation”** [11, p. 209]. Anneli Ute Gabanyi concluded that: **One should note that while it complained about exchanging agricultural products for oil, in the conditions established by the Soviets, Romania indirectly blamed the Russians for the food shortage in its own country. Thus avoiding the more complex explanation that the PCR and Ceaușescu were particularly responsible for creating excessive refining capacities in Romania, and thus making it to become an importer of crude oil and leading to its dependency on USSR deliveries and the conditions imposed by the same** [11, p. 210].

A series of documents newly included the scientific circuit revealed that Nicolae Ceaușescu conditioned the negotiations for a new extension of the Warsaw Treaty, respectively the agreement of socialist Romania, to the meeting of certain economic demands, while the Soviets conditioned the acceptance of such requests on a change in Romania's foreign policy. During the meeting of the Executive Bureau of the Popular Councils of PCR on June 1, 1984, Nicolae Ceaușescu stated the following, in anticipation of the June 4 Moscow meeting with the secretary general of the PCUS, Konstantin U. Chernenko : *“In the discussions to be had, we will emphasise the settlement of mutually beneficial matters, the strengthening of friendship between our peoples, but also the concrete, not only declarative aspect related to raw materials, cooperation in production, specialisation, growth economic exchanges”* [13, p. 135].

During the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPSU on May 23, 1984, Nikolai Tikhonov informed on the fact that Nicolae Ceaușescu addressed **“repeated and insistent pleas”** [13, p. 135] for the delivery of an amount of five to ten million tonnes of oil annually based on a long-term contract within the goods exchange agreement, practically

under the same conditions as for the other CMEA countries. **“That is why we must clearly state to the Romanian side that we will make oil deliveries to Romania at the expense of saving our own resources and that we expect a serious turn point in his foreign policy from Ceaușescu . We must make him understand Romania needs to appreciate this generous gesture”** [13, p. 135], declared Nikolai Tikhonov in anticipation of the high-level meeting between the Soviets and Romanians on June 4, 1984. Despite the consensus made by the members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPSU with regards to President Nicolae Ceaușescu 's requests, the transcript of the meeting of the Executive Bureau of the Popular Councils of PCR, of June 5, 1984, revealed the fact that Nicolae Ceaușescu was still unwilling to give up the position of the PCR and socialist Romania, and on the principles in bilateral relations and in international relations for the sake of an improvement in relations, or for the sake of millions of tonnes of oil. Anatoly Chernyaev, former advisor to Mikhail S. Gorbachev , would note the following in his memoirs, with regards to this “trade”: **“In Hungary, I was blatantly told: you have bought Ceaușescu with a yearly supply of 2 million tonnes of oil, yielding to his blackmail - as he had threatened to otherwise leave the Warsaw Treaty”** [13, p. 137].

The USSR had agreed to supply Romania with an amount of 5,000,000 tonnes of oil on an annual basis, as well as to increase the volume of bilateral trade to 30-35 billion roubles, including the development of cooperation in production and the wider participation of Romania in the exploitation of fuel and raw material deposits from the USSR. At the end of 1986, the trade volume between Romania and the USSR had increased by 47% compared to 1985. **“After almost 20 years, Soviet technicians, specialists and purchasing agents had again made their way into Romania. Romanian specialists collaborated with the Soviet specialists in order to build a gas pipeline on Romanian soil, which would aid in the energy supply of Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, as well as to build an energy plant near Piatra Neamț. Moscow also agreed to help Ceaușescu implement his last five-year plan by supplying him with Soviet machinery for the purpose of modernising the metallurgical, chemical and machine building industries”** [14, p. 526], recorded historians Joseph F. Harrington and Bruce J. Courtney with regards to the Romanian-Soviet economic relations.

The Romanian-Soviet controversies regarding the extension of the Warsaw Treaty, as well as the economic conditions related to this decision, also carried to the mandated of Mikhail S. Gorbachev . At the insistence of Mikhail S. Gorbachev , Nicolae Ceaușescu would however sign the extension of the Treaty for another 20 years and, subsequently, for another 10 years on April 26, 1985, during the high-level meeting of the party and state leaders of the signatory states of the Warsaw Treaty, taking place in Warsaw. **“Of course, as a member of the Warsaw Treaty, Romania could not ignore the common policy. Despite its reserva-**

tions and claims, the Romanian leadership ultimately supported the main stages of the agreed foreign policy applicable to the Warsaw Treaty countries. However, this was constantly accompanied by whims, underlying the desire not so much to make any positive contribution to the common process of developing and implementing the policy, as to overestimate his importance, to once again emphasise the autonomy and independence of his position” [13, p. 141], wrote Vadim A. Medvedev, secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU and member of the Politburo.

After the meeting of the secretaries of the Central Committees from the member countries of the Warsaw Treaty charged with ideology and external relations, organised in Warsaw on January 22-23, 1987, one noted the increasing pressure exerted by the USSR over the “leadership of the PCR, considered in the entire communist bloc as the stronghold of conservative, anti-reformist and anti-integrationist positions” [11, p. 295]. The Romanian version of *Radio Moscow* broadcast almost snippets of Mikhail S. Gorbachev’s criticism of the „outdated economic, ideological and political practices in the USSR, which, they (commentators and analysts - n.n.) seemed to suggest, also applied to Romania” [11, p. 295]. Moreover, Nicolae Ceaușescu held two significant speeches which “not only contradicted Gorbachev’s new policy - as Anneli Ute Gabanyi underlined - but they also serve to defend his own approach against the supporters of the reformist course within the PCR and the state bureaucracy” [11, p. 295]. Assessing the Romanian-Soviet relations from the beginning of 1987, Anneli Ute Gabanyi wrote, on February 6, 1987, in an assessment provided for *RFE*: „Nicolae Ceaușescu launched a campaign to defend his own dogmatic and anti-reformist policy, in contrast, if not in opposition, to the course of reform that the Secretary General of the CPSU, Mikhail Gorbachev, had mapped out not only for the USSR, but also for the entire Eastern bloc.. This situation, along with the aim of consolidating the austerity program, seems to be facing increasing opposition from inside and outside the party” [11, p. 295].

A Long-Awaited Visit

Mikhail S. Gorbachev’s visit in Bucharest, between May 25 and 27, 1987, constituted the peak point of Soviet attempts to impose the *perestroika* and *glasnost* on the work agenda of PCR leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu. On May 15, 1987, the Bucharest media announced the planned visit of the Soviet Secretary General, in the hope that the meeting would cover up the “disagreements between the ruling elites of the two countries” [11, p. 239]. *RFE* mentioned the fact that the postponement of official statements regarding the date and period of the visit was also due to certain protocol aspects “such as the occurrence or not of a «spontaneous» meeting, typical for Gorbachev, with the local populace” [11, p. 240]. Quoting a Soviet diplomat, the *Reuters Agency* stated that the “«key is-

sue» of Gorbachev’s visit to Bucharest was the «urgent need to restructure economic relations» with Romania, as it was affecting all CMEA members” [11, p. 240].

Nicolae Ceaușescu had taken highly restrictive measures to prevent the perpetuation among the Romanian public opinion of the ideas of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, so that the full text of Mikhail S. Gorbachev’s speech during the Plenary of January 1987 of the PCUS was not published in Romania, and the *Selected Works* of Mikhail S. Gorbachev, offered for sale to the Romanian public around the upcoming visit, only included the speeches made by the Soviet Secretary General by November of 1986. Mikhail S. Gorbachev recorded the fact that socialist Romania fully rejected the decisions of the CPSU Plenary. “No information is provided to the public. Ceaușescu openly informs the Soviet ambassador that he cannot agree with what was said during the Plenary session, and that the PCUS was treading a dangerous path” [4, p. 107], wrote Mikhail S. Gorbachev. Speaking about the general perception concerning the *perestroika* and *glasnost* in Bucharest, historian Catherine Durandin wrote: “For Nicolae Ceaușescu and his nearest entourage, the measures introduced by the *perestroika* (“restructuring”) and *glasnost* (“transparency”) are dangerous: they can weaken the Eastern countries in the eyes of the West because, according to the Cold War logic, no compromise can be reached with the West. These measures are perceived as all the more disturbing as they entice the Hungarian Communist Party. However, Ceaușescu deemed Budapest as untrustworthy” [15, p. 18].

The Secretary General of the CPSU landed at the “Henri Coandă” International Airport in Bucharest on May 25, 1987, on a Monday, being received with all the honours required by the protocol of an official visit, although “observers noted an «unusual coldness» in the way the two leaders embraced and kissed (three times)” [11, p. 242]. It should be noted that the invitation to make an official visit to socialist Romania was addressed to the Secretary General of the CPSU by Nicolae Ceaușescu in February 1987. As Vadim A. Medvedev stated, the PCUS leadership decided on accepting the invitation “in spite of all of Ceaușescu’s, exploits, skidding and ambitions” [16, p. 237] and to consolidate the fundamental bases of relations between the two peoples and states, to curb and limit the influence thereof on the negative moments of Ceaușescu’s policy. “We were aware - wrote Mikhail S. Gorbachev – that Ceaușescu sought a meeting with me, understanding both his and Romania’s need (and he, of course, was inclined to identifying himself with Romania) to collaborate with the Soviet Union, as a neighbouring great power, an aspect whose consideration was not only not unwise, but even dangerous. (...) I thought that the showdown nuances should be removed from the Soviet-Romanian relations. Hence my approach to Ceaușescu, with whom I sought to address with respect, to carefully penetrate the essence of his ideas” [4, p. 106]. Speaking about Nicolae Ceaușescu’s personality, the PCUS leader wrote: “I was meant to meet a lot of ambitious

people. It is generally hard to imagine a great politician without a certain amount of arrogance and self-confidence. However, in this regard, Ceaușescu had no semblance of a competition. The arrogant smirk would not leave his lips, which to the interlocutor suggested that he read through him and think nothing of him. His aplomb, and contemptuous attitude towards people, which went to extreme heights following decades of unchecked power, was transferred, perhaps without noticing it, from his servants to his partners that were equal in status” [16, p. 238].

The *România liberă* daily newspaper announced the arrival of the Secretary General of the PCUS on the second column of the first page, stating that the object of this meeting was to **“consolidate the friendship and good relations based on the principles and ideals of socialism”** [16, p. 21]. The *Romanian radio and television* representatives provided a live broadcast of the reception ceremony, while the Soviet press minimised the importance of the visit. While *Agerpres* reported that the Soviet and Romanian comrades were **“warmly received by thousands of people in Bucharest”** [11, p. 242] while passing through Victoria Square, the Soviet TV news bulletin *“Vremia”* recorded a detailed account at 7.00 PM **“of Gorbachev ‘s failed attempt to discuss (actually, to deliver a monologue) with Romanian women scared into silence, and yet incapable of concealing their worries and hardships”** [11, p. 243]. The Romanian version of *Radio Moscow* provided the exact recording **“of the «discussion» between Gorbachev and the «silent women» of Bucharest”** [11, p. 243].

In her assessment of socialist Romania’s press reporting on Mikhail S. Gorbachev ‘s visit to Bucharest, historian Catherine Durandin noted the following: *“Gorbachev ‘s biography is presented on two columns, accompanied by a photograph of front rendering of a petrified face: a massive and closed figure, according to the aesthetics of official portraits, permeated by communist gravity. In retrospect, it is funny to note that Gorbachev poses as an elegant traveller, advertising Vuitton suitcases! In 1985, the year when Gorbachev ascended to power, he was dispatched using three dry lines (...) Nothing was mentioned about Gorbachev ‘s achievements. The biography is completed by a list of Mikhail’s decorations: The «Lenin » Order, the Order of the «Revolution of October», the «Red Banner of Labour» Order, quite a reassuring record!”* [15, p. 21]. Moreover, the weekly foreign policy magazine *Lumea* published in the May 21, 1987 issue a story on the USSR entitled *Soviet Itinerary*. *“The story - concluded Catherine Durandin - is not displayed on the front pages. You have to leaf through the magazine printed on poor-quality paper, take a look at the grey, yellowish photos, to be able to follow the reporter’s phrases, in his conscientious attempt to prove that the perestroika was inspired by Romanian achievements from long ago! In other words, Ceaușescu emerges as a thinker, a sort of mentor to Gorbachev , as if he had set the tone all along”* [15, p. 21 - 22].

Majore General Ștefan Alexie , undersecretary of state and deputy head of the Foreign Intelligence Centre

(CIE/UM 0544) within the Department of State Security (DSS), responsible on behalf of the DSS for conducting the visit, recalls that Mikhail S. Gorbachev incessantly repeated the following to all the people he came across: **“You need to implement the perestroika, perestroika is the most important thing for you now, you have to do it!”** [17, p. 102]. Boris Buzilă, then editor of the *Romania Liberă* daily newspaper, recalls that Mikhail S. Gorbachev outwitted DSS’ people and waded his way into the crowd, asking: **“Why are you silent? Don't tell me that everything in your life, and in the country, is going perfectly because I won't believe it!”** [18, p. 268 - 269]. Vadim A. Medvedev , secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU and head of the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee of the CPSU, member of the Soviet delegation, understood that absolutely nothing could be done in their relationship with Ceaușescu and that all that Romanians had to say to the Soviets were **“Ceaușescu – Gorbachev chants!”**.

A Huge Misunderstanding

During his speech at the dinner held by the Romanian head of state, Mikhail S. Gorbachev alluded to the fact that the **“Romanian model”** had failed and had clearly rejected Ceaușescu ‘s policy of seeking cooperation in the interest of Romania, at the same time ignoring the general USSR program. **“Ceaușescu would always say that as far as he was concerned, everything had been settled a long time ago. I look at it, listen to him and can’t help but feel like a fool. As far as he was concerned, everything had been settled - both in terms of democracy, and in terms of free elections, and in terms of cooperation and the rights of labour collectives[...] Ceaușescu got extremely upset when I gave a public speech, at the great gathering, about glasnost, about perestroika, when I allowed myself to provide concrete arguments about what we were doing in the USSR. It made him lose his temper”** [16, p. 243], confessed Mikhail S. Gorbachev during the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPSU on June 4, 1987. Assessing Mikhail S. Gorbachev ‘s speech from that evening, historian Catherine Durandin note that the Secretary General of the CPSU concluded his speech by congratulating himself for the good Soviet-Romanian understanding in matters foreign policy, which **“was an indirect way of reminding Ceaușescu claiming the right to follow a specific national path was pointless”** [15, p. 27].

Speaking about the relations between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Mikhail S. Gorbachev , former Soviet foreign minister, Eduard A. Shevardnadze , stated that while Gorbachev usually provided his recommendations smoothly and attentively during his discussions with his Eastern-European counterparts, his talks with Ceaușescu sometimes became so *“tense”*, that **“security sometimes ended up breaching the secrecy of the negotiation room: opening the doors to see what was going on”** [11, p. 127]. Thus, the security representatives discovered that **“nothing had happened initially, just an argument between two people who stood for completely opposing views”** [11, p. 127].

Referring to the meetings between the two heads of state, Cheslav Ciobanu, a Soviet citizen born in the Moldavian SSR, the official Romanian interpreter of Mikhail S. Gorbachev, stated the following: “Mrs. Gorbachev was very cheerful, friendly and serene and she would often calm her husband down, so as not to react too strongly to Ceaușescu’s comments. Elena, on the other hand was in the opposite extreme. She did not say much, but Ceaușescu would constantly look to her, seeking her reactions, as if she, and not him, were the secretary general” [15, p. 35]. Mihaela Moraru, Marin Ceaușescu’s daughter, confirmed alongside Cheslav Ciobanu, that Nicolae Ceaușescu did speak Russian, but it was bad Russian. “The Soviet leaders - confessed Cheslav Ciobanu -, as I learned from what my colleagues said, had never borne any love for Ceaușescu and had never trusted his intentions and behaviour. (...) I believe that he did understand Russian, but I also believe that he intentionally never spoke it. Or, at the very least, he preferred to listen first and he did not hint at his understanding during the conversation...that was my impression. (...) Ceaușescu never doubted the «Romanian socialist» was proud to have come up with it. He had even attempted to convince Gorbachev to consider the «achievements» of the Romanian people during the socialist period and, in particular, the way in which Romania had been freed of its debts” [15, p. 34].

Mikhail S. Gorbachev would record in his memoirs the fact that his talks with Nicolae Ceaușescu, on the evening of his first visit, were extremely tense and that “they had raised their voices so much that «one of the advisors ordered for the window to be closed»” [19, p. 476]. Referring to the tone of discussion of the two heads of party and state from May 26, 1987, Vasile Buga stated in his work *On A Knife’s Edge. Romanian - Soviet Relations* (p. 247 – 248), that despite their raised voices, the scene where the advisors closed the window was far from an argument, and it led to fanciful interpretations, denied by former interpreter, Gheorghe Stoica, however, “the good mood showed by Mikhail Gorbachev and Raisa Gorbachev upon their return to the booked villa, after the conclusion of the dinner meeting, confirmed by the author of the current volume (Vasile Buga – n. n.), is further proof of the unfoundedness of the fables surrounding of the atmosphere of the discussion held during the dinner” [16, p. 252].

On the second day of his visit, the Secretary General of the CPSU travelled to the “23 August” Factory, which produced goods to be exported to the USSR. “While Radio București și Agerpres mentioned nothing about the discussions held between Gorbachev and the directors and workers, the Soviet television showed the Soviet leader insisting on the need for Romania and the USSR to produce and trade quality goods and criticising their preferential export to the West in order to obtain hard currency” [11, p. 245], wrote Anneli Ute Gabanyi. The Soviet leader insisted on the fact that the USSR “had a different take than Romania on the relationship between economic and social policy, which prioritised industrial development over consumption” [11, p. 245]. At the end of Mikhail S. Gorbachev in Bucharest, the RFE analysts concluded that “the increased Soviet pressure on Romania to improve its socialist system and

relations with its allies, especially with The USSR was still met with reluctance by the Romanian leadership” [11, p. 237] and, furthermore, “subtly combining pressure with reward, Soviet policy seemed to appeal to the future rather than the current leadership of Romania” [11, p. 237].

Speaking about what was presented to him by the Romanian socialist authorities as the everyday realities, Mikhail S. Gorbachev told Nicolae Ceaușescu, during the official dinner in the evening of May 26, 1987, that this “welfare and humanitarian society has (...) nothing in common with either, not to mention with democracy - you are keeping the whole country in fear, isolating it from the outside world” [4, p. 111]. Moreover, Mikhail S. Gorbachev stated that: “The entire course of the conversations and discussions with Ceaușescu showed that he was concerned, and even oppressed by the restructuring begun in our country. And more than anything – the criticising of Stalinism, of the dictatorial methods, and of the administrative and command system. All these ricocheted into Ceaușescu’s regime. Ceaușescu’s attempt to convince me that the most democratic system of highlighting and fulfilling the interests and will of the working people was working in Romania was rather tragicomical” [4, p. 111].

In a volume published in Moscow in 2010 [20], Russian political scientist Valeri L. Musatov wrote - with reference to the “tormenting departure” of Mikhail S. Gorbachev from Bucharest, on May 27, 1987, after the talks with Nicolae Ceaușescu: “It became clear that Ceaușescu was unable to tread the path of renewal, democratisation and transparency, because he dreaded the failure of his own system and autocratic leadership. Then Gorbachev, as it turned out, prophetically told his close advisors: «this will end badly for Nicolae»” [21, p. 38]. Assessing this high-level Romanian-Soviet meeting, historian Adam Burakowski wrote: “Officially, (as in Hungary, for example, where the head of the KGB, Vladimir Kriuchkov, met with reformed Imre Pozsgay) no discussion was possible with any follower of the perestroika. Even if changes were actually desired in the SRR, the Soviet leadership would have been forced to resort to at least unofficial, if not downright diversionary actions” [22, p. 334].

The transcript of discussions between Erich Honecker and Nicolae Ceaușescu, of November 17, 1988, revealed the resolve of the two leaders to reject Mikhail S. Gorbachev’s *perestroika*: „Honecker: We have always pleaded for a renewal (of socialism - n.n.). During my speech before the Central Committee, I will say: «We are the party of renewers». Ceaușescu: Yes, I will say the same thing. Honecker: The notion was initiated by Lenin. Ceaușescu: A renewal based on socialist principles. Honecker: Correct, a renewal based on socialist principles, which means, at the same time, the application of dialectical and historical materialism. So, we have an agreement, are we to consider this a done deal? Ceaușescu: Yes” [23, p. 129]. In 1988, Nicolae Ceaușescu would be awarded the “Karl Marx” decoration, the highest distinction of the GDR, as a sign of the East German leader’s appreciation for his political ally in his *anti-perestroika* and *anti-Gorbachev*. Despite this mutual “esteem”, the head of the STASI, Ernst Mielke, issued Order no. 13/89 regarding the development, command and management of the liaison

operational groups of the MSS with friendly foreign security bodies, where he excluded Romanians from the list of “friendly socialist services” in mid-July 1989, therefore, one may state that the GDR “clearly maintained its hostile attitude towards Romania and its leadership at institutional level” [7, p. 593].

(To be continued)

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