

HISTORICAL SCIENCES

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

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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

The Differences Grow

The Romanian-Soviet differences would continue throughout the 1988-1989 period, touching on the issue of delimiting the state border between the USSR and socialist Romania. During the May 10 – 14, 1988 period, Andrey A. Gromyko, the president of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, went on an official visit to Bucharest, together with his wife. The head of the Soviet state insisted on the *perestroika* as a model to be accepted and followed by Nicolae Ceaușescu, but his references to *glasnost* are censored by the Romanian press. Nicolae Ceaușescu refuses to consider the Soviet experience, and the comments from *Radio Free Europe* reveal the rift between the PCR and the CPSU. Lydia Gromyko visits Bucharest without being accompanied by Elena Ceaușescu. The period between October 4 and 6, 1988 marked the visit of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu to Moscow, where Mikhail S. Gorbachev would no longer provide lectures and give speeches about *perestroika* and *glasnost*. The delegations of the two socialist states went on to negotiate the signing of a package of 30 joint economic projects, most of which were established for a period of five years, including some short-term ones, such as the one that included the delivery of 100,000 tonnes of coke needed by the Galați Steel Works by December 1988.

The eighteenth session of the Romanian-Soviet Joint Commission was held in March 1989 to verify the route of the border line between the two states. On April 19, 1989, the MAPN and the MEA informed the Romanian head of state about the differences occurring between the Romanian and Soviet expert reports regarding the establishment of the common border in the area of Maican Island - in the Danube Delta. President Nicolae Ceaușescu was informed and his agreement was requested for **"the following sessions of the Mixed Commission, where the Romanian delegation is to continue to act and avoid the ceding of any territory, according to the Treaty** (border agreement, signed by the Romanian and Soviet representatives in 1961 - n.

n.), **which stipulates that in the water sector, the border passes through the middle of the main fairway"** [1]

On January 25, 1988, Nicolae Ceaușescu declared before the press that **"no agreement signed with Hitlerite Germany served the cause of peace and independence, on the contrary, it provided Germany with strong support for its war path, which exacted a heavy toll on humanity, and especially on the Soviet Union"** [2, p. 597]

At the time, Mikhail S. Gorbachev tried **"to contradict the Western historiographers who claimed that the agreement had led to the outbreak of the Second World War"** [2, p. 598], while Nicolae Ceaușescu publicly adhered to the **"opinion that prevailed in the West"** [2, p. 598] and which rejected the **"Soviet theory (reconfirmed Gorbachev whereby the Ribbentrop – Molotov had had no involvement in the breaking out of the Second World War"** [2, p. 598]. In July 1989, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, the president of socialist Romania was intent on expressly stating that **"the policy of concessions and capitulation to Nazi Germany, the Munich agreement and, among others, the treaty between Molotov and Ribbentrop did not prevent aggression, but rather facilitated it"** [2, p. 599].

Throughout the course of the 14th Congress of the PCR (November 20 – 24, 1989), Nicolae Ceaușescu launched scathing attacks against the USSR, referring to the Molotov Ribbentrop Pact and its consequences, and stating that **"methods for settling unresolved issues"** [2, p. 599] needed to be sought, alongside **"practical decisions to eliminate the results of all those agreements and dictates"** [2, p. 599]. The TASS Agency replied: **"No serious or responsible politician can raise the issue of post-war borders, including the Soviet-Romanian border"** [2, p. 599].

The meeting in Bucharest of the Consultative Political Committee of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation (July 7-8, 1989) once again highlighted the fact that Ni-

colae Ceaușescu refused to accept the principle of single military command within the Warsaw Treaty. The leader of socialist Romania reiterated his proposals from 1988 regarding the reforming of the Warsaw Treaty, respectively: 1) *The Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty should only handle the political aspects of the alliance*; 2) *military issues should be discussed within a Military Defence Committee*; 3) *certain military bodies from the United Armed Forces Command should be subject to reorganisation*. The objective of the president of socialist Romania was to keep the Romanian Army under his direct command, relying on the provisions of Law no. 14/1972 *on the organization of the national defence of the Socialist Republic of Romania*. The Kremlin understood that Nicolae Ceaușescu's objective was the Romanian leader's attempt to rid himself of the commitments that Romania had made as a member of the WTO.

Nicolae Ceaușescu Retaliates

Mikhail S. Gorbachev informed the leaders of the Warsaw Treaty signatory countries of the changes he envisioned, with the stake being the maintenance of these countries in the Kremlin's sphere of influence. During the 14th Congress of the PCR (November 20 - 24, 1989), Mikhail S. Gorbachev sent a letter to Nicolae Ceaușescu, on November 23 1989, through the USSR ambassador in Bucharest, Evgeny M. Tiajelnikov. In anticipation of the Malta Summit (December 2 - 3, 1989), the general secretary of the CPSU wrote to Nicolae Ceaușescu about the fact that there was no pre-agreed agenda so that, on the occasion of the Malta Summit, Soviets intended to observe the principled positions examined in the framework of the Bucharest Meeting on the Consultative Political Committee of the states participating in the Warsaw Treaty, as well as the recent meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Warsaw Treaty member states. „*The well-known steps taken by the German Democratic Republic in recent times have given rise to many rumours regarding the «German issue»», the prospects of German unification. Our intent is not to enter a detailed debate of this issue, but we firmly believe that the existence and development of the GDR throughout all these years has been and continues to represent the most important guarantee for European balance, as well as for international peace and stability. The GDR, a sovereign state, a member of the Warsaw Treaty, has been and remains our strategic ally in Europe. From what we gather, responsible politicians in the West are well aware of this reality. However, the dangers caused by the ever-reviving revanchist passions and moods, cannot be underestimated. The amplification thereof is able to undermine the trust that is being formed and even undo all the historically-relevant achievements throughout the course of relations between East and West*” [3, p. 437], stated the secretary general of the Central Committee of the CPSU in a letter to Romanian leader Nicolae Ceaușescu.

However, the president of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR stated that the changes occurring on the European continent “**must not affect the settled territorial political realities, reignite old territorial claims,**

or give rise to new ones, and must not affect the existing borders of the European states” [3, p. 437]. Mikhail S. Gorbachev warned: “**In this regard, the attempts to portray the restructuring in the Soviet Union, the reforms in several socialist countries, as a testimony, the faces of the «failure of socialism» are inconsistent and short-sighted. In reality, it is a process of renewal for the socialist society. It is necessary to renounce the «Cold War» stereotypes, the calculations that rely on the use of the temporary shortcomings of the other party for the purpose of achieving one's own goals**” [3, p. 437]. The Soviet leader informed the secretary general of the PCR that the Soviets intended to transform NATO and the Warsaw Treaty into political-defensive organisations in the future, “**in order to establish permanent mutually useful relations, not relying on purely occasional contacts, for the purpose of institutionalising an inter-bloc collaboration**” [3, p. 437]. On December 4, 1989, at 3.30 PM, Nicolae Ceaușescu was invited to a meeting in Moscow with the leaders of the allied states within the Warsaw Pact for the provision of a report on the Soviet-American discussions in Malta.

During the day of November 27, 1989, Nicolae Ceaușescu convened a meeting of the Executive Political Committee (CPEX) of the Central Committee of the PCR which approved the message to be sent by Nicolae Ceaușescu to Mikhail S. Gorbachev, in response to the one received by the president of socialist Romania from the Secretary General of the Central Committee of the CPSU on November 23, 1989, regarding at the Malta Summit. “**I believe that it is time for our press to comment these days on the decisions of the 14th Congress, to broach the issues of international relations, of the principles of relations between states, of equality, including the issues in Europe, to state that the affairs of other countries should be renounced here as well, we should take a firm position, to ensure a united Europe, because the current issues cannot be settled only by the two great powers and by a handful of other states, but by all states. (...) We should bring to a stop all forms of interference, the so-called ideological interference, which is more dangerous and must be dealt with in all firmness. (...) Especially now, since it became clear that what occurred in the DR of Germany is being organised by the Soviets and by the FR of Germany as well. The same applies to Bulgaria. The Bulgarians are now looking to clarify why they did it. (...) In fact, what they managed to achieve was organised coups. This is the truth, making use of all kinds of decomposed elements, as has happened with Adameč, who is a traitor, who saw that he could not impose his will in the Politburo, so now he turns to the street**” [3, p. 439], declared Nicolae Ceaușescu in the CPEX plenum of the Executive Bureau of the Popular Councils of PCR, commenting on Mikhail S. Gorbachev's letter.

The letter sent to Mikhail S. Gorbachev contained the views of President Nicolae Ceaușescu regarding the agenda of the discussions expected to take place at the Malta Summit, as well as his view regarding the evolution of East-West relations, respectively: „**1. We**

believe that the situation in the socialist countries cannot be discussed during the meeting between the leaders of the USSR and the USA. The issues occurring in some socialist countries may only be discussed in a meeting between the leaders of the socialist countries. Moreover, the Romanian Communist Party has insisted on several occasions on the organisation of such a meeting of socialist countries, which so far has not taken place. If such a discussion does take place during the Soviet-American bilateral meeting, it will be deemed by all peoples as an interference in the internal affairs of the socialist countries. (...) 3. With regards to the wording of your message concerning the «new role» of NATO and of the Warsaw Treaty, we believe that the issue does not imply the establishment of a collaboration between the two military blocs, which would mean their permanent, but the application of the aspects jointly established by the European socialist countries regarding the simultaneous abolition - as soon as possible - of the two military blocs. (...) 5. Taking into account the anti-communist policy of destabilising the situation in the socialist countries, in which the United States of America play an active role, we believe that it must be firmly demanded that the United States cease and desist definitively from any policy of interference in the internal affairs of other states. 6. With regards to the German issue - which you have referenced in the message - we also believe it necessary to ensure the socialist development of the DR of Germany, and that the existence of the two German states constitutes a reality of present and future Europe that must be maintained and observed, for the sake of continental stability and peace. 7. We believe that it would be wrong and incomprehensible to raise the issue of de-ideologisation of interstate relations. Our party believes that as long as there is imperialism, there is class struggle and one cannot forsake ideological notions in international life. Incidentally, this is something that not even the imperialists are hiding. (...) 8. With regards to the proposal for the December 4th meeting to report on the results of the Soviet-American discussions, we do not believe that a high-level meeting is necessary for this purpose. This report may be provided diplomatically or, at the most, during a meeting between foreign affairs ministers” [3, p. 441].

However, the meetings of the Executive Bureau of the Popular Councils of the Central Committee of the PCR of November 13 and 16, 1989 revealed the fact that Nicolae Ceaușescu failed to understand and accept the new realities of East-West relations, as well as the processes of *perestroika* and *glasnost* occurring the space of the member states of the Warsaw Treaty. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that on October 13, 1989 the Scînteia newspaper published an “embellished” statement regarding the reasons why the leaders of the socialist countries were not allowed to act in support of the return to capitalism. Unfortunately, the leaders of the official PCR did not publish another important paragraph from Nicolae Ceaușescu ‘s statement, made during the meeting of the Executive Bureau of the Popular Councils of the Central Committee of the

PCR on October 12, 1989: “**In this context, I would like to refer to the fact that, after the end of the festivities** (in Berlin, organised with the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the proclamation of the GDR - n. n.), **the reactionary circles in the Federal Republic of Germany have once again staged a series of rallies against the German Democratic Republic. Of course, there is a situation there where 7-8 million people from the German Democratic Republic visit the Federal Republic of Germany on a yearly basis. Basically, they say there is a wall there. But there is no wall, so millions of people travel from the FR of Germany to the DR of Germany, thus finding an opportunity to organise reactionary rallies that have been dealt with, measures have been taken**” [3, p. 423].

The last meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Mikhail S. Gorbachev, that took place in Moscow, on December 4, 1989, brought no improvement to the relations between the two personalities of the socialist bloc, nor a harmonisation of views regarding the future of socialism in the world. The Romanian delegation insisted on the organisation of a meeting between the two prime ministers to assess certain aspects relating to economic relations, especially given that the USSR had announced its intention to switch economic relations with socialist countries to settlements in convertible currency and based on globally applicable prices. Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov proposed that the meeting take place on January 9, 1990, but Constantin Dascălescu, the prime minister of Socialist Romania, requested the expediting of the meeting, given that Romania was facing severe economic struggles.

Referring to this moment, historian Vasile Buga wrote: **It was at this moment during the discussion between the two prime ministers that Mikhail Gorbachev intervened and said: «You have until January 9th to live!», a statement construed by a series of high-profile Romanian media outlets, including political ones, in the sense that the Soviet leader prophesised that the Romanian leader would not live to see the day of January 9, 1990. I repeat, the remark was addressed to the two prime ministers. Actually, the statement is derived from a phrase often used in Russian: «pojiviom, uvidim» («we shall see what we shall see»), frequently used by Mikhail Gorbachev as well, when he wanted to avoid the commitment of setting an exact deadline” [4, p. 291 - 292].**

At the insistence of the Romanian leader, Mikhail S. Gorbachev accepted his proposal to organise a meeting of the PCR and CPSU delegations for the purpose of preparing a material on socialism and its perspectives, as well as of creating an initiative group, which would include the PCUS and whose intended purpose would be organising a meeting between the communist and workers' parties. Speaking about Nicolae Ceaușescu ‘s behaviour during the meeting of the Warsaw Treaty member states, taking place in Moscow, Mikhail S. Gorbachev stated: “**He (Nicolae Ceaușescu – n. n.) gives out a rather peculiar vibe: the sparkle in his eyes, a certain state of obsession and, at the same time, a kind of lagging in his reactions. He was**

concerned by the course of events and he was interested in my opinion about it” [4, p. 294]. On his way to the airport, Nicolae Ceaușescu was accompanied by Vitaly I. Vorotnikov, who went on to state: **“I went to pick up Ceaușescu from his house on the same evening (of December 4, 1989 - n.n.). I greeted him. He muttered something under his breath. We got in the car and made for the airport. N. Ceaușescu was sitting on the backseat, his head was tucked in the collar of his coat, he was silent the whole way. After we reached the airplane stairs, he said goodbye and got on the plane”** [4, p. 294 - 295]. The press release regarding the meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Mikhail S. Gorbachev, made with great difficulty and after consulting the two party and state leaders on several occasions, states that the meeting **“was conducted in a comradely atmosphere”** [4, p. 294].

The observers of the international relations scene thus understood that iciness had reigned over the discussion. The article *Martor ocular la ultima întâlnire Ceaușescu – Gorbachev (Eyewitness to the Last Meeting Between Ceaușescu and Gorbachev)*, published in the **Totuși iubirea (Yet the love)** magazine (issue 22/May 1991) included a statement from media advisor Constantin Mitea, who declared that the issue of the Romanian Treasury in Moscow and the cancellation of the consequences of the Molotov Pact – Ribbentrop were on the agenda of the Romanian delegation, in addition to the issue of bilateral economic relations and the establishment of a meeting of the leaders of the socialist countries to discuss the future of socialism in the world. Historian Vasile Buga believes that even if the first two issues appeared on the agenda of the Romanian delegation, they were not actually put up for discussion on December 4, 1989 because they **“required a more detailed discussion and different circumstances”** [4, p. 295]. Nicolae Ceaușescu’s regime was beginning to show signs of anachronous developments in the context of the new transformations happening in the international relations arena and the East-West dialogue.

The Final Moments of an Extremely Tense Relationship

In the context of the events occurring in Romania, that started in the afternoon of December 16, 1989, on the evening of December 20, 1989, at 8:00 PM, Nicolae Ceaușescu summoned Viulen G. Pozdniakov, the USSR ad-interim chargé d'affaires in Bucharest, to the headquarters of the Central Committee of the PCR, given that ambassador Evgeny M. Tiajelnikov was in the USSR. Historian Vasile Buga confirms that the transcript of the meeting between the two could not be found in the Romanian archives. The diary of Ivan P. Aboimov, USSR deputy minister of Foreign Affairs, who summoned Ambassador Ion Bucur on December 21, 1989 for a discussion about the meeting that had taken place in Bucharest the previous evening, provides us with some data regarding the way the meeting went.

Historian Vasile Buga confirmed that during the meeting with the Soviet diplomat, where he participated as a Russian-language interpreter, Nicolae

Ceaușescu expressed his *“surprise”* relating to the fact that **“the Soviet representatives made statements regarding the events in Timișoara and that the Romanian side is in possession of information according to which the event occurring there was prepared and organised ahead of time, with the consent of the signatory countries of the Warsaw Treaty, being planned within its framework”** [4, p. 300]. During the evening, the Soviet ad-interim chargé d'affaires in Bucharest would inform the USSR Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs that Nicolae Ceaușescu had mentioned the existence of data proving that the **“URSS intended to organise a military intervention in Romania”** [4, p. 300]. Nicolae Ceaușescu was referring to the statements of Eduard A. Shevardnadze, USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs, who, on December 19, 1989, while in Brussels, stated in response to a question from a Western correspondent that he did not know if there were victims in Timișoara, as a result of the use of force, but that he expressed his regret **“if there were any victims”** [4, p. 301]. In the letter addressed to the editors of the *Komsomolskaia Pravda* publication, dated January 5, 1990, on the occasion of his visit to Romania, the USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs in office wrote that on December 19, 1989, while he was in Brussels he declared that *“if indeed there are human victims, then of course I must express my deepest regret on the matter”* [4, p. 301], which meant *“the reprobation of violence in a «diplomatic form»”* [4, p. 301], which made Nicolae Ceaușescu extremely irritated.

During his dialogue with Ion Bucur, the ambassador of socialist Romania in Moscow, on December 21, 1989, the USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivan P. Aboimov rejected the accusations brought by some officials from Bucharest who **“during their discussions with the ambassadors of socialist states, had expressed the idea of an interference in the internal affairs of the SRR, which was apparently being prepared by the Soviet Union”** [4, p. 300]. I must mention the fact that the USSR Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs was referring to Ion Stoian, the Minister of Foreign Affairs from Bucharest, according to Ivan P. Aboimov’s testimony, on December 22, 1989, given to J. Birnbauer, Hungary’s ad-interim chargé d'affaires in Moscow. Senior Soviet diplomat, Ivan P. Aboimov, insisted on specifying during his dialogue with Ambassador Ion Bucur that, for now, he was not authorised to make an official statement on behalf of the USSR government, but that his actual statements **“undoubtedly reflects our (of the Soviets - n. n.) official position, and emphasises the fact that the Soviet Union builds its relations with the allied socialist states on the basis of equality, mutual respect and strict non-interference in internal affairs”** [4, p. 300]. Moreover, Ivan P. Aboimov **“personally and preliminarily”** [4, p. 301] qualified the accusations of President Nicolae Ceaușescu as **“unfounded and false”** [4, p. 301] thus, taking into account the severity thereof, they **“require a very careful examination”** [4, p. 301].

Ion Bucur, the Romanian ambassador in Moscow, was informed that as a result of the absence of official information regarding the events in Romania, the mass media in the Soviet Union would have to use the news

transmitted by foreign agencies, and that it had become impossible for Soviet MFA to respond to the requests of foreign journalists accredited in Moscow, as well as of Soviet deputies, in order to provide comments on the situation in Romania. The MFA in Moscow was “**extremely interested in receiving an official report about the essence of the events from the Romanian side, which would allow it to make a correct assessment of the same**” [4, p. 302]. At the same time, the limitation of the access of Soviet citizens to Romania, starting from December 17, 1989, was deemed as “unexpected” by the Soviet diplomat. The December 20, 1989 issue of the *Pravda* newspaper stated the fact that, on December 19, 1989, the *Intourist Agency* was “unexpectedly” informed that the reception of groups of Soviet tourists who were to come to Romania was postponed “due to unfavourable conditions”, namely the absence of snow in mountain resorts.

An aspect that caused numerous controversies during the Romanian Revolution of December 1989 is related to a possible request for Soviet military aid for Romania submitted by the new political leadership team in Bucharest. During the day of December 23, 1989, at 10.30 AM, announcer George Marinescu broadcast a message on the national television station, saying: “**We have just been informed that contact has been made with the Soviet Embassy, which has promised us immediate military aid, as foreign agencies took the liberty to send helicopters filled with armed men, with the aim of destroying what the Romanian people conquered**” [5, p. 212]. Shortly thereafter, Gabriela Neagu declared on the radio: “**We have received information according to which the aid of the Soviet army was requested through the Soviet Union Embassy, as the terrorists used helicopters through the foreign interventionists**” [5, p. 212]. The announcers did not know where this report came from, but it was a report that generated strong emotions from the Romanian people. The person requesting the intervention was not specified, and such an endeavour could leave room for many interpretations, in the context of the evolution of events starting at 6:30 PM on the evening of December 22, 1989.

At 6:40 PM, on the evening of December 22, 1989, Major General G. N. Bochayev informed the head of the Operations Directorate of the Romanian General Staff, through Colonel Mircea Dumitru, the head of the Special Bureau of the Operations Directorate of the General Staff, that the Chief of the Soviet General Staff, Army General Mikhail A. Moiseyev, and Colonel-General Veliovsky Rakhalsky, First Deputy Chief of Staff of the Command of the United Armed Forces (CUAF) of the Warsaw Treaty, “**assures the leadership to the Romanian army that there are no troop concentrations on the Romanian-Soviet border and there is no intention to carry out any military activity near the border**” [6, p. 321] and that “**they are ready to provide support in any field**” [6, p. 321]. This phone call came as a result of the discussions held with the Soviets on December 22, 1989, at the MApN headquarters, by Lieutenant General Dr. Ilie Ceaușescu, Deputy Minister of National Defence and Head of the Superior Political Army Council, around

12.00. An hour later, at 7:55 PM, Major General G. N. Bochayev called again and stated that “**there is no military training of any kind being carried out on the Soviet side at the border with Romania, in the Iași area, and if there are any doubts in this regard, a written confirmation may be requested by our (Romanian – n. n.) army from the Soviet army**” [6, p. 321].

The 2nd edition, revised and supplemented, of the volume *Pe muchie de cuțit. Relațiile româno-sovietice (1965 – 1989)/(On a Knife’s Edge. Romanian-Soviet Relations)* published in 2022, in Bucharest, historian and diplomat Vasile Buga revealed the fact that on the evening of December 22, 1989, at the Soviet MFA headquarters in Moscow, former Soviet diplomat V. Lapshin confirmed that the ad-interim chargé d’affaires in Bucharest at the USSR Embassy in Bucharest, Viulen G. Pozdniakov, “**handed him I. Iliescu’s request for military aid to the Romanian democratic forces**” [7, p. 407]. On the evening of December 22, 1989, the Soviet diplomats in Bucharest were informed of the decision of the USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs, Eduard A. Shevardnadze, on the USSR’s refusal to engage in the events taking place in Bucharest and that the Embassy was required “**to deny our (Soviet – n.n.) availability in terms of providing military aid**” [7, p. 407]. During the same evening, the USSR Foreign Minister again reiterated the decisions to be sent to the Soviet diplomats in Bucharest.

In the dialogue with the members of the *Senatorial Commission for the Investigation of the Events of December 1989*, President Ion Iliescu would mention the fact that, in the afternoon of December 22, 1989, at someone’s suggestion, he had a phone conversation with the USSR Embassy in Bucharest, from the headquarters of the former Central Committee of the PCR, pursuing two objectives: “**First of all, a report about on the movement and the suggestion of the beginning of a structuring process regarding an organised framework for new state structures and, secondly, for the assurance, in order to avoid any kind of potential desires for «brotherly support» that no one actually wanted**” [7, p. 406 - 407].

On the morning of December 23, 1989, at 08:15, the leadership of the General Staff in Moscow reiterated, through Colonel Kulikov, the chief of staff for General M. A. Moiseyev, that no military actions were being carried out by the Red Army on the Romanian-Soviet border. On December 23, 1989, around lunchtime, Colonel Mircea Dumitru to the cabinet of the Minister of National Defence where Ion Iliescu, Petre Roman, General Colonel(r) Nicolae Militaru, among others, had also gathered. At the request of Lieutenant General Nicolae Eftimescu, the head of the Operations Directorate of the Romanian General Staff, Colonel Mircea Dumitru called Moscow, using the special phone, asking to be connected to General M.A. Moiseyev, the head of the Soviet General Staff. “**After making this connection, Gen. Eftimescu told me to ask him, so I was speaking on Eftimescu's order, «if we could count on a possible Soviet military aid against the terrorist»; that is exactly how I wrote it down. The Soviet general provide a very brief reply: «such**

an issue can only be discussed by the governments». (...) **I do not know to what extent those gathered there had assumed the issue, or whose initiative it had been, I can only make assumptions, but no other issues were discussed during this conversation with Gen Moiseyev**” [6, p. 317], declared Colonel Mircea Dumitru before the *Senatorial Commission for the Investigation of the Events of December 1989*.

This telephone call seems to have been generated as a result of an extremely serious and incomprehensible military situation, especially for the members of the Council of the National Salvation Front (CNSF), given that the Ministry of the Interior and the Department of State Security (DSS) units had all fallen under the control of the MApN, on which the new political power structure in Romania was based. This perspective may help us understand the necessity of such a phone call made to the leadership of the Great Soviet General Staff. Ion Iliescu clearly stated: **“Moreover, I want to specify that the only connections and telephone conversations, during those days and nights, with the outside and, in particular, with Moscow, were established on behalf of the command group of the General Staff and, in particular, on behalf of General Gușă, who was also the one to inform me of such a discussion, as well as of the rejection of the idea of requesting any kind of aid. I can only confirm one thing: namely that as far as the political leadership of the Council of the National Salvation Front is concerned, no one has raised the issue of requesting any military aid from outside, our principled position clearly rejecting such an idea”** [8, p. 49].

During the same day of December 23, 1989, Major General Ștefan Gușă requested a conversation with his Moscow counterpart, to whom he would relay, as Chief of the Romanian Army General Staff any kind of Soviet military aid. At 4.05 PM, Colonel Mircea Dumitru informed Major General Dumitru Pănescu, in Moscow, that the new Minister of National Defence is General Colonel (r) Nicolae Militaru, who would informally take over command, given that he was still in reserve. Our representative at the CUAFF was to inform the USSR Ministry of Defence, the CUAFF and the Soviet General Staff about the new situation at the MApN in Bucharest. On December 24, 1989, General A. C. Gaponenko, the representative of the Commander-in-Chief of the CUAFF in Bucharest, returned from Chisinau and asked to be received by the Minister of National Defence, but Colonel-General Nicolae Militaru only received him on December 27, 1989, after great interventions, followed later by the new head of the Romanian General Staff, Colonel General Vasile Ionel.

Regarding the possibility of a Soviet military intervention in Romania, as a result of a “permission” granted by the US, the former US ambassador in Moscow, Jack Matlock (1987–1991) stated before the correspondent of *Radio România Actualități* in Moscow, Alexandr Belevski, during an interview conducted on April 4, 2013 [9], that on December 24, 1989, he had a conversation with Ivan P. Aboimov, Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR, during which the United States did not request a Soviet military intervention in Romania. The American diplomat mentioned the fact that the

United States informed Moscow that it was willing to accept the sending of planes for the purpose of evacuating Soviet citizens surprised by the events in Romania or who were facing difficult situations and not classify such actions as being an interference in Romanian internal affairs. One should also note that James Baker, the US Secretary of State, had stated during an NBC television show on December 24, 1989, that *“The United States would not object to an intervention of the Warsaw Pact in Romania, if such action were deemed necessary”* [5, p. 229].

On December 24, 1989, at 11:00 AM, General A. C. Gaponenko called the Ministry of Defence and informed the Romanian side about the fact that the Soviet commercial office in Victoriei Square was being machine-gunned, destroyed, looted, and requesting that it be taken under military protection, and, at the same time, for two TABs to be sent to accompany a bus carrying diplomatic staff, spouses and children of diplomats from the USSR Embassy, who were going to depart for the North Station. The Soviets wanted protection from the Romanian Army on route to the train that was to be used to evacuate the families of Soviet diplomats to their homeland. The operation was coordinated by Colonel Mircea Dumitru and carried out by two officers from the Special Bureau of the Operations Directorate, supported by a TAB.

During the 2nd Congress of the USSR People’s Deputies, Mikhail S. Gorbachev would inform the deputies about the recent events in Romania, noting that on the night of December 22 to 23, 1989 the situation went from bad to worse, and that the representatives and the CFNS stated their desire to develop collaboration with the USSR and that Romania would abide by the provisions related to the Warsaw Treaty. Vadim Perfiliev, the spokesman for the Soviet MFA, stated that: *“The Soviet Union is ready to immediately and effectively provide the Romanian people and the new leadership with humanitarian aid in order to contribute to the elimination of the consequences of the tragic events that took place in recent days. (...) The Soviet people stand in solidarity with the Romanian people in achieving the ideals of freedom, democracy and sovereignty”* [5, p. 229].

On December 24, 1989, the US Embassy in Moscow was informed that the Romanian side was aware that military hospitals had been installed along the Soviet-Romanian border in order to receive the wounded from Romania, and a set of 11 wagons (filled with goods worth 0.5 million roubles) was waiting for the its green light for departure. The USSR Red Cross and Red Crescent Society also stood by to provide aid to Romania, namely surgical instruments, bandages, medical kits, etc. The Moldavian SSR had prepared first aid supplies: medicine, food, clothing, etc. On January 5, 1990, the USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs, Eduard A. Shevardnadze, stated in an interview given for the *Komsomolskaia Pravda* newspaper, that the USSR Embassy in Romania had organised the receipt and delivery of aid provided by the Soviet Union, of which only medicines made up for approximately 700,000 roubles. On December 25, 1989, at the USSR MFA Presse Centre, Ivan P. Aboimov emphasised before the domestic and

international media that “**the issue of conducting any form of military actions or interferences in the events taking place in Romania had not been assessed within the Warsaw Treaty**” [7, p. 313 - 314].

The phone call of December 27, 1989 between Ion Iliescu, the President of the CFNS, and Mikhail S. Gorbachev, Secretary General of the Central Committee of the PCUS and President of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, as well as the dialogue with Evgeny M. Tiajelnikov, the USSR ambassador in Bucharest, that followed, seemed to bear the marks of a new beginning in Romanian-Soviet relations. However, Russian journalist Nikolai Morozov, a keen observer of the post-December Romanian political arena, noted the fact that although they did not display an obvious pro-Western stance, the new Romanian leadership sought to avoid creating obligations towards the Soviet Union. The first interview before the international press by the President of the CFNS was for the *Le Monde* correspondent in Bucharest. Thus began a new step in the Romanian-Soviet Relations, which later became Romanian-Russian.

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