

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANIAN FOREIGN POLICY DURING COMMUNIST PERIOD

Associate Prof. Dr. Cristina NEDELICU*

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Ömer METİN**

Abstract

The topic of the paper is related to the development of the Romanian foreign policy during few decades of the Communist era. The initiative is based on the general observation that starting the 60's Romania started to distance herself from Moscow's guidance and it developed stronger ties with Western countries, but also with the so-called Third World group. This is the general context which made possible questions such as Had Romania developed an autonomous foreign policy? If yes, who designed it? or What exactly meant an autonomous policy?

Key words: Romania, foreign policy, communist, ideology

Özet

Bu çalışma, Romanya'nın komünist dönemdeki dış politikasının on yıllık dönemler halindeki gelişimi ile ilgilidir. 1960'lı yılların başından itibaren Romanya'nın, Moskova'nın liderliği ile arasına mesafe koyduğu, Batılı ve Üçüncü Dünya Ülkeleri ile de bağlarını güçlendirdiği gözlemlenmişti. Bu durum beraberinde Romanya'nın özerk bir politika izledi mi sorusunu gündeme getirmekteydi. Eğer yanıt evet ise bunu kim tasarladı? **Ya da bu gerçekten özerk bir politika mıydı?**

Anahtar Kelimeler: Romanya, dış politika, komünist, ideoloji

* University of Bucharest, Department of International Relations

** Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi, Tarih Bölümü

Introduction

Second World War produced major changes in Romania's general situation. The inclusion in the soviet sphere of influence produced both political and socio-cultural developments, which marked the future of the country for the next five decades.

The paper brings into light some information on the foreign policy, which evolved from total submission to Soviet purposes and objectives to a certain degree of autonomy. This paper is made of three parts. The first is dedicated to presenting Romania's political status after the Second World War, which determined its immediate options at the end of the war. The second part refers to Romanian foreign policy during the period of absolute influence of USSR, while the third is concerned with the autonomous phase.

1. Romania's status at the end of Second World War

In identifying the directions that were followed in Romanian foreign policy after the Second World War is necessary to take into account the new status of the country in the post war period. A general overview surprises Soviet troops stationed in Romania, a country abandoned by the Western powers, which made the evolution of Romania to resemble that of the other satellites of the USSR.

The first stage of the communist regime in Romania (1944-1958) was defined by Stephen Fisher-Galați as a period of destruction of Romanian national ideology, which was labeled as "bourgeois", concomitant with the diminishment of national sovereignty that took place because of the Soviet military occupation"¹. The same period was described by Michael Shafir as a one of "primitive accumulation of legitimacy" by the Communist Party², and by Kenneth Jowitt as a process of "breakthrough", marked by total destruction of those values, structures or behaviors considered by the communists as potential sources of resistance or alternative centers of power³. In retrospect, we see that the second half of the twentieth century brought

¹ Stephen Fischer-Galați, *The New Rumania. From People's Democracy to Socialist Republic*, Cambridge, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1969, p. 135.

² Michael Shafir, *România. Politics, Economics, and Society. Political Stagnation and Simulated Change*, London, Boulder, Frances Pinter, 1985, p. 56.

³ Kenneth Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development. The Case of România, 1944-1965*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1971, p. 7.

the eastern half of Europe a political regime imposed by the Soviet Union with the support of Red Army.

After the war, the issue of spheres of influence moved from the military field to diplomacy. Moscow recommended the new Communist Eastern European countries to continue to work with career diplomats, as they needed their experience and relations in signing Peace Treaties. During the interwar period, the South-Eastern and Central Europe had close ties with Western democracies, particularly France mainly because their diplomats were trained in Paris. Communists in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary needed these networks, given that their states were labeled as defeated. Therefore, the new communist governments have been careful with the “democratic reform” of their Foreign Ministries. Career diplomats were kept in jobs until the signing of the Peace Treaty because their experience was vital in negotiations. However, after the signing of the Treaty, their role has ended and the communists began to remove them using various means.

In Romania, after the peace treaty was signed (February 1947), the Communist Party propaganda started to attack the Foreign Minister George Tătărescu, who submitted his resignation on November 6th. In this context, some Romanian diplomats (Gafencu, Visoianu) left the country by mid-1946.

After Ana Pauker became Foreign Minister, Romanian foreign policy moved away from traditional partners and focused almost exclusively on the USSR and the socialist camp. Pauker’s influence is reflected in the mimetic behavior of the embassies staff which looked for the Soviet guidance in all their actions. There are numerous diplomatic reports, notes or diaries where is frequent the mentioning of the need to have a recommended action by the Soviet representative in that country before the Romanian personnel dare to take any action.

After the change of the Foreign Ministry leadership diplomats were called back to the country from foreign missions. In their places were sent new people, whom lacked specialized training, some of them being recruited among factory workers. They had hardships in integrating the rigors of diplomatic life and rules. In his memoirs, Mihai Beniuc, former Romanian ambassador, wrote about the situation of the embassy from Moscow and mentioned that the new employees were constantly dissatisfied and insubordinate to rules and regulations required by diplomacy¹.

¹ Mihai Beniuc, *Sub patru dictaturi (1947-1975)*, București, Editura Ion Cristoiu, 1999, p. 77.

As for Middle East, the diplomatic involvement wasn't at a high level: there were only two diplomatic offices responsible with the entire area and they were in Egypt and Turkey. Only after the 50s this situation was to change.

Foreign policy was heavily influenced by internal policy, where the political power was in the hands of communists, and also by the general background, where the Cold War just started. Therefore, analyzing Romanian foreign policy in the period 1947-1980, one may notice that two main phases can be distinguished.

2. The period of absolute Soviet influence (1947-1958)

This phase coincides with Gheorghiu-Dej government in Romania and of Stalin's in Moscow. The vision of the policy was imposed by Gheorghiu-Dej, elected First Secretary of the Communist Party in October 1945, subsequently single party leader until his death in 1965, who admired and followed Stalin's political model.

After the end of the war, Romania entered the Soviet sphere of influence, a fact that was done with the consent of the West. Thus, the Allied Control Commission imposed in Romania in September 1944, was made of Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union representatives. After the British and the Americans withdrew, the door was open for Soviets and the process of *Sovietization* remained under the care of the USSR Ambassador in Bucharest, Sergey Kavtaradze. By the withdrawal of the Red Army in 1958, the Soviet Embassy was a secret command center of Soviet actions in the country.

From diplomatic point of view Romania found herself almost isolated at the end of the war. This situation was the result of its involvement in conflict on both camps: German and Entente. After August 23, 1944, when Romania left the Axis for the Entente, the new government found that it was considered more or less as an "enemy" Therefore, after 23 August 1944, Romania had uncertain diplomatic status. Although the relationship with the Nazis ended from August 1944 and afterwards until the end of war Romanian forces fought near the Allies, Romania was included in the group of the defeated countries. As a result, the armistice conditions were tough for Romania. In addition to economic provisions related to war damages, the Soviet Union included some drastic political terms. It was also determined that until the Peace Treaty was signed, an Allied Control Commission was

to operate in Romania to ensure compliance with the armistice provisions. Moscow had an important role in this context, because it received the task to oversee the process implementation.

Although in August 1944 in the government structure existed a portfolio designated for the Foreign Ministry, diplomatic relations were absent because they had been interrupted during the conflagration. The only external negotiations were made with the Allied Control Commission. Specifically, the issue of reopening diplomatic relations could have been raised only after the end of the war, a task undertaken by George Tătărescu, an experienced diplomat and Foreign Ministry. Moreover, in all states from Moscow's sphere of influence the situation was similar.

Czechoslovakia was the first state Romania restored the diplomatic relations in June 1945. However, politically, this had little importance since Czechoslovakia ended its existence in 1938 when Hitler abolished it. The first important step that Romania made was to obtain Soviet Union's recognition in August 6, 1945, which was done rather as an act of support for the communist Groza government.

As a direct result of Romania's new situation, the early years of "popular democracy", which coincided with the last years of Stalin (1948-1953), manifested a complete docile foreign policy, as "prescribed" by Moscow. In February 1948, Romanian government bounded with the Soviets by a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual assistance for twenty years, followed by similar agreements with Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary, all of them signed during 1948. The treaty concluded with Yugoslavia in 1947 was denounced by the latter country's exclusion from Cominform (whose office was in Bucharest) and Gheorghiu Dej immediately engaged in a violent campaign to expose the path of Tito. From a military perspective, Soviet rule was as complete and it manifested both by direct military occupation of the country and by Romania's inclusion in the Warsaw Pact.

Basically, the first decade after the war, Romanian foreign policy can be characterized as a decade of imitation of Soviet actions, while the forum where Soviet satellites could have manifested was the Warsaw Pact. Romanian foreign policy actions followed those established by the Soviet

⁵ Vlad Georgescu, *Istoria românilor de la origini până în prezent*. București, Editura Humanitas, 1995, p. 269-270.

diplomats; a decision was announced only after Soviet position on that issue was known and permission was given. However, among the causes of this lack of attitude and thinking in foreign policy can be included also the internal struggles which took place within Romanian structures and nobody was ready to assume a bold position, when simple executants were needed.

During the period Pauker was the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1947-1952) contacts were established mainly with the socialist countries in order to better secure the soviet area of influence. For example, it were signed treaties of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance with Bulgaria (January 1948), Czechoslovakia (July 1948), and it were established diplomatic relations with the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the Democratic Republic of Korea, Albania, India, Vietnam, and Israel. It can be seen from these examples that the focus was mainly on East.

After removing Pauker, Simon Bughici became the head of MFA, who previously used to be Romania's ambassador at Moscow (1949-1952). As well, during his tenure (1952-1955), Romania's main partners were USSR, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and China. Novelties were the trade agreements with Egypt (January 1954), India (March 1954) and Indonesia (July 1954), indicating the first signs in establishing relations with countries from the so called "Third World." Moscow's line continued to be reflected in MFA's activities. However, Romanian diplomacy had its main success in December 1955, when Romania became member of UN. The same line of obedience was manifested during Grigore Preoteasa mandate, Foreign Affairs Minister from 1955 to 1957.

The idea of imitation was emphasized by other authors. In the analysis conducted by Pierre du Bois, the author insists that Romanian Stalinism was an exact copy of soviet Stalinism and nothing more. Leonte Răutu, former chief of Propaganda and Culture division of the Communist Party (previously named Workers Party) was quoted by du Bois in his work and he declared that Romania *imitated the Soviet Union in all areas...*⁶. However, it must be mentioned that the situation wasn't just the result of local leaders desire to imitate the Soviet model. It should be noted that Romania was totally supervised by the Soviet troops camped in the country and in this context little freedom of action was possible.

Moreover, du Bois shows that the Soviets were present everywhere.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 27.

They divided the land, implemented administrative control and organized the economy or oriented the culture and education and guided the foreign policy. They were masters of the game. Romanian communists were their servants, all of the file, including those from the Politburo⁷.

In the context of Soviet dominance, Romania became a founding member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in 1949 (CMEA) and of the Treaty of Warsaw (1955). In 1955 the Soviet Union created the Warsaw Pact, the military alliance of communist states, and Romania had to be among its founding members. Initially, Romania's position in this body was one of faithfulness to the Soviets, but in the early 60s this compliance has subsided considerably. While the behavior of Romania within the Treaty reflected an increasingly independent foreign policy, but despite the efforts of Romanian diplomats, the general policy of the country had to take place within the accepted and tolerated limits set by the USSR.

However, the most important evidence of fidelity was in 1956, during the Hungarian uprising, when Romania was the most active ally of the Soviet Union. Echoes of the uprising, which began with great popular demonstration in Budapest on October 23, 1956, in which Stalin's monument was destroyed, were soon felt in Romania. On 27 October in Bucharest, Cluj, Iasi and Timisoara were held demonstrations of students and workers. The protests asked the removal of compulsory Russian language from schools and universities. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, who was leading a delegation to Yugoslavia, returned abruptly to the country. Thousands were arrested in cities where there had been protests, especially among students who participated in the demonstrations in Cluj and Timisoara. One of the most powerful actions took place in Bucharest⁸.

On 30 October, the military regime was established in Timisoara, Oradea and Iasi and in that time the Soviet troops crossed the eastern border of Romania and headed for the West to Hungary. Basically, Romania had provided its territory to be crossed by the Soviet armies in order to invade another country, which was, at least theoretically, independent.

Common interests with the Soviet Union were responsible for the attitude adopted by Dej and the rest of the Romanian communist leaders. They

⁷ Ibidem, p. 33.

⁸ Stelian Tănase, *Elite și societate. Guvernarea Gheorghiu-Dej, 1948-1965*, Humanitas, București, 2006, p. 141.

feared that a successful revolt against the communist rule in Budapest could also spread among the Hungarian population in Transylvania, and that non-communist Hungary could lay claim to some parts of Transylvania. Their fears were fueled by the participation of Hungarian students and workers in the demonstrations that took place in Cluj, Timisoara and in the Hungarian Autonomous Region⁹.

On November 1, 1956, Malenkov and Khrushchev made a secret visit to Bucharest to discuss the Hungarian crisis with communist leaders from Romania, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. Romanian trio made of Dej, Ceausescu and Bodnaras took part in the meeting and made lobby for a military intervention against the Hungarian government of Imre Nagy. It's worth mentioning that Dej and Bodnaras were the first foreign leaders who visited Budapest after the Soviet invasion success.

Romanian communists showed from the start, much hostility towards I. Nagy and supported the Soviet repression. On the other hand, in December 1956, after they proved their obedience to USSR, they spoke again about *the Romanian way of establishing socialism*, which wasn't exactly an orthodox manner of dealing with the unique ideological stand supported by Moscow and demanded increased economic aid from Moscow¹⁰.

But the presentation of the 1956 situation realized by Silviu Brucan, former Romanian Ambassador to USA and a high level communist official, shows clearly that not only the interest of Romanian communists to maintain their positions determined them to be actively involved in the crisis in Budapest, but also the fear that the Soviets would invade Romania. When Dej met with Brucan, the first one said that *if we do a 180 degree turn in our relations with the Soviets, we are lost*¹¹. The context of this statement was that of the increased tensions between Khrushchev and Dej, the latter one considering that it was time to put aside differences of opinion. Meanwhile, Dej's words, analyzed in terms of future actions, show that a safety position for communism in Romania could be ensured only by distancing Romania from USSR in order to be less exposed to the political environment of the Communist camp. This explains the requirement Dej addressed to Brucan: to realize a secret document to be submitted exclusively to the members

⁹ Ibidem, p. 142.

¹⁰ Vlad Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

¹¹ Silviu Brucan, *Generația irosită*, București, Editura Teșu, 2007, p. 77.

of the Politburo where should be analyzed the means to gradually assert a more independent Romania. Dej's desire was that *everything to happen slowly, gradually, tactfully and without thoughtlessness*¹².

The Soviets were satisfied with Romania's role in October and November 1956, and this proved to be helpful two years later, when Khrushchev decided to withdraw Soviet troops from Romania. The most significant of the withdrawal was psychological. Romania continued to be closely linked to the Soviet bloc and under surveillance since Soviet divisions were still in southern Ukraine and in Moldova, from where they could intervene immediately in case of emergency (disobedience). However, Dej regarded the Soviet troops withdrawal as a concession ripped from Moscow and having gained some confidence, he could start albeit with caution, a policy beyond the Soviet net.

3. Period of rebellion against Soviet direction (1958-1980)

This was manifested from 1958, while the 60s and 70s marked the most important moments of distancing the USSR. A brief overview of the Romanian diplomatic initiatives that have brought Bucharest respectability in the eyes of the international community and a special status within the socialist community include: a fair attitude in the Sino-Soviet conflict (it should be noted that the Chinese Communists chose Romanian capital to express a violent attack on the Soviet Union 1960); the resumption of relations with Yugoslavia (in 1963, the Romanian leader visited Yugoslavia, concluding the agreement for the construction of hydro - energy plant); Romania opened its embassy in Tirana, although Albania was in conflict with the USSR; the Legations of Britain and France in Bucharest were raised to embassy level (in 1963); for the first time in UN history Romania vote was contradictory to the Soviet Union and its allies (1967, Romania refused to break diplomatic relations with Israel); starting the 70's Romania started to receive numerous Palestinian delegation, even though some of them represented parties hostile to the Soviet regime; Romania established diplomatic relations with West Germany (1967), Romania refused to participate in the invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968); a better relation with the West (de Gaulle visited Romania in 1968 and Nixon in 1969); involved in the mediation of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem (1977), etc.

¹² Ibidem, p. 79.

The year 1958 marks the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the country and the establishment in Romania of a new ruling elite dominated by Maurer's strong personality, Prime Minister from 1961 until 1974. With Dej's consent, the new team quickly stepped on an unthinkable policy to the West. While Western companies were announcing their willingness to lend money to Romania (1958), Alexander Bârlădeanu visited various Western capitals, leading an economic delegation (1958), followed a year later by the Prime Minister himself, and in 1960, Romania has signed agreements with major Western governments in order to compensate the assets nationalized in 1948, thus removing a serious obstacle in establishing further economic treaties¹³.

Maurer became Foreign Minister as well in mid-1957 just to highlight the need for change. Later, in January 1958, the portfolio was given to Avram Bunaciu (1958-1961) and he started to work on the main objective to establish good relation with West. Therefore, there were numerous visits to France, Switzerland, Britain, the Netherlands and Italy in order to develop Romania's relations with capitalist countries. As well, it was signed an agreement between Romania and the U.S (March 1960) and it was reinforced the relation with China. The opening towards West was continued and Corneliu Mănescu, Foreign Minister from 1961 to 1972, led the Romanian delegation to UN General Assembly sessions and headed the Romanian delegation at the 18 Nations Committee responsible for disarmament. George Macovescu, who succeeded Mănescu went on the same line aware of Ceausescu's desire to depart the Moscow line¹⁴.

The turning point in the evolution of the Romanian communist regime was considered the deviation from the Soviet foreign policy, which took place gradually during 1958-1964. The process began in 1958, when Soviet troops left Romania, and continued in subsequent years, culminating in April 1964, when Romanian leaders rejected "Valev plan" the division of labor within the CMEA.

The Third Congress of the Romanian Workers Party (later it change the name into Romanian Communist Party), which took place in 1960, gave clearer forms and principles to national communism, again proclaiming the right of countries to industrialize rapidly. As a consequence, Romania

¹³ Vlad Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

¹⁴ George Macovescu, *Jurnal. Volumul I (1952-1982)*, București, Editura Domino, 2006, p. 117.

started the construction of steel plant in Galati as a test pawn in its relations inside CMEA. A year later, just returned from Moscow, where he attended the XXII Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (1961), Dej repeated that Romania had had the de-Stalinization process. From that moment until the his death (March 1965), relations with the Kremlin would worsen continuously aggravated primarily by the insistence of the Russians, who sought to transform the CMEA into a supranational economic body, in which the Northern countries were given industrial prerogatives, while the Southern countries were to supply raw materials and agricultural activities¹⁵.

Moscow increased the pressure by launching Valev Plan, according to which most of the Moldavia, half of Romania and Bulgaria were part of a predominantly agrarian economic region. Under this plan, presented in Moscow in August, 1961, this body would receive a supranational planning role.

During CMEA summit conference from Moscow, 1963, Gheorghiu Dej firmly rejected Valev Plan, but in 1964, Khrushchev launched a new appeal in this regard. Called in the country to write a text by which to express Romania's position on Valev Plan, Brucan laid the foundations of what it was to be the *Declaration of April 1964*.

In response to this plan, which aimed to transform Romania in supplying agricultural products to communist industrialized countries, the government issued the Statement of April 21, 1964, considered by analysts as a nationalist and anti-Soviet political document. According to Robert Farlow, principal coordinates of the new foreign policy of Romania were autonomous economic policy, limited military cooperation within the Warsaw Pact and the relative political autonomy in relations with the Soviet Union¹⁶.

The document amounted to a revolution in the socialist camp and managed to capture the attention of the world. In fact, the document resumed Khrushchev principles of peaceful coexistence between capitalism and socialism, referring to respect for national sovereignty and independence, equal rights, non-interference in internal affairs, the principle of territorial integrity.

Echoes were above expectations. A note from May 4, 1964 show that

¹⁵ Vlad Georgescu, op.cit, p. 273.

¹⁶ Robert Farlow, *Romania's Foreign Policy: A Case of Partial Alignment*, in „Problems of Communism”, 13, May - June 1964, p. 14-24.

the office of "Free Europe" in Paris received a circular from Munich which assessed the policy of Romania as the real beginning of independence from the USSR, both from political and economic point of view. The document also mentioned the Party's attitude towards the Soviet-Chinese conflict, Romanians showing their intention to contribute to settling the conflict¹⁷. This attitude of power was completely new for Romania in her relation with USSR. Sino-Soviet conflict has also increased the Romanian-Soviet tension. At the Third Congress of the Romanian Workers Party, in June 1960, Dej used Chinese formula of *equality between all socialist states* to justify its own policy of autonomy from the Soviet Union, and supported China's decision to reject the restructuring plan of CMEA.

Sino-Soviet dispute was necessary for Dej to create an independent policy towards the USSR, but the Romanian leader was careful to maintain neutrality towards both parties. China needed Romania, just as Romania needed China in order to create a sustainable gap inside the communist giant.

Conclusion

The principles assumed by Romania's new foreign policy revolved around a few standard phrases such as maintaining national sovereignty, equal rights for states, non-interference in the internal politics of other countries, the rejection of force and use of force, mutual benefits, inalienability right of every state to build its own future while preserving their own desires and legitimate aspirations. The main promoter of this policy between 1965 and 1989, Nicolae Ceausescu, led to Romania in order to gain a clear place in the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet-controlled organization, but also in order to gain prestige in the international arena.

This policy and, in particular, Romania's refusal to participate in the intervention against Czechoslovakia (August 1968), which suppressed "Prague Spring" brought Ceausescu, for a time, a great international popularity.

An analysis of domestic and foreign policy of Ceausescu regime was provided by Michael Shafir. Using the phrase "simulation of change - simulation of permanence", the author shows that the regime simulated the change in

¹⁷ Florian Banu, Liviu Țăranu, *Aprilie 1964 "Primăvara de la București"*. *Cum s-a adoptat "Declarația de independență a României?"*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, p. 292.

domestic area through propaganda slogans like “new economic mechanism” or “new agrarian revolution”, while in the area of foreign policy the regime simulated its adherence to the Soviet bloc, while ensuring Western Europe on its foreign policy autonomy¹⁸.

After Dej’s death, March 1965, Nicolae Ceausescu, followed his line. By adopting this attitude Ceausescu provided the West with the opportunity to exploit an apparent gap in the communist camp. Romania was the first of Moscow’s satellite countries that established diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany (1967) and the only country in Eastern Europe that had relations with Israel in 1967. In 1971, Romania joined the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), and the following year joined the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. In 1973 Romania received preferential trading status of the Common Market.

Establishing diplomatic relations with West Germany took place as a result of increasing economic contacts, which initially led to an economic agreement signed in October 17, 1963. Although Romania believed that it was very important for European security the conclusion of an inter-German peace treaty, this attitude was not sufficient to establish diplomatic relations between Romania and West Germany, since the latter one considered that only the reunification of Germany was an acceptable position. In these circumstances, it is easy to understand the opposition manifested by the Communist Germany and USSR towards Romanian initiatives. Nevertheless, Romania has assumed the increasing tensions in her relations with the Communist Germany, virtually her partner in the coalition (Warsaw Pact)¹⁹. In January 1967, Corneliu Mănescu and Willy Brandt, the two foreign ministers agreed on behalf of their governments to establish diplomatic relations at ambassadorial rank only with a simple handshake²⁰.

Moscow did not easily accept that fact and continued to pressure the Romanians. During a telephone conversation between Ceausescu and Kosygin, the latter insisted on the participation of a Romanian representative at a conference of the socialist countries on foreign policy issues. Ceausescu

¹⁸ Michael Shafir, *Romania: Politics Economics and Society. Political Stagnation and Simulated Change*, Londra, Editura Frances Pinter, 1995, p. 193.

¹⁹ Nicolae M. Nicolae, *O lume așa cum am cunoscut-o. Amintirile unui fost ambasador al României*, Editura PRO DOMO, București, 2000, p. 25.

²⁰ Nicolae M. Nicolae, *op.cit.*, p.34.



explained that he understood this conference only as an exchange of views, and that he didn't accept his foreign policy decision to be questioned. Ceausescu clear stated that *if the at the conference will be discussed Romania's foreign policy actions or other country's foreign policy, we (Romania) will not participate. If it is envisaged that type of action, we (Romania) will certainly not participate in any way*²¹. Confronted with the categorical position of the Romanian leader, Kosygin was forced to accept Romanian delegation position in order to prevent its departure from the conference, which would have allowed Western world to see the divisions from the Communist bloc and would lead to enhancing the Romania's prestige.

From 1965 until 1981, Ceausescu's political ability assured his undisputed leadership of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP). He appealed to nationalist sentiments to increase his popularity and at the same time to distance Romania from USSR. Ceausescu's regime managed to give Romania prestige in the international arena in the 60s and 70s, which was shown by the visits at the highest level between Romania and the U.S and by the fact that Romania had and expressed specific opinions on the most important issues of the period: East-West relations, the Middle East conflict, disarmament, etc.

It can be said that Ceausescu fully enjoyed the autonomy position in relation with the USSR. Romania's position against the USSR intervention in Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968 was an act of courage and Ceausescu earned respect from the country and the world.

In August 1969, Richard Nixon was the first U.S. president to visit a country which was member of the Warsaw Pact. In the next decade, the United States encouraged the policy of autonomy promoted by Nicolae Ceausescu, who skillfully exploited this position to remove other's criticism mainly on his domestic policy, which he called "interference in internal affairs".

After Richard Nixon became president the focus of U.S. strategic was on two areas: East-West relations (especially the relationship with China) and solving the Middle East conflict. In search of solutions, in 1967, Senator Nixon made a visit to Romania to probe the real possibilities of Nicolae Ceausescu and his ability to get involved in finding and implementing sustainable solutions in the East. In 1969, Nixon, this time as president, re-

²¹ Arhivele Naționale ale României, Fondul CC al PCR, Cancelarie, Dosar 14/1967, fila 7.

turned in an official visit to Romania and on this occasion between the two have established personal relationships praised during Ceausescu's visit to the U.S. in December 1973. From Nixon's statement shows that Ceausescu has contributed greatly to opening dialogues that otherwise would have remained, perhaps forever closed.

Corneliu Mănescu, former foreign minister, said that an important role in the rapprochement between Romania and the U.S. was played by the way Nixon was received in Romania in 1967, when he was just senator. About this episode, the former foreign minister, said that *in 1967, when Nixon came to Bucharest, he wasn't very important. He had lost the elections and it seemed that he no longer represent anything. In his tour through Europe, Romania was the only country that received him carefully. The Soviets received him in a low level. Yugoslavs, Poles and Czechs have not received him. The only place where he enjoyed attention was Romania. Throughout his visit to Bucharest he was accompanied by one of my best employees - Mircea Malița. Malița accompanied Nixon to dinner, theater etc. They had discussions which revealed that the man had something very special in his mind, something which for those years appeared as exceptional. He wanted America to get closer to China. When Nixon became president of America, he began to implement his ideas*²².

During Nixon's visit to Romania, the discussions approached issues such as the development of bilateral relations, both heads of state agreeing that these relationships needed to be developed. However, Nixon believed that the time had not yet come for Romania to receive *the most-favored-nation clause*, mainly because of the war in Vietnam.²³

From the transcript results that, beyond politics, where the interests of nations can intersect for certain periods, Ceausescu genuinely liked Nixon. After their meeting, Ceausescu admitted that *he can still learn something from imperialists*²⁴, referring to the open way in which they approached the speaker.

Nicolae M. Nicolae shows that Ceausescu was watching very closely the evolution of relations between the two countries seeking to avoid any

²² Lavinia Betea, *De vorbă cu Corneliu Mănescu - Conexiunea moscovită a problemei transilvane*, în "Revista Magazin Istorie", nr. 12 2000, articol accesibil și pe site-ul www.memoria.ro

²³ Arhivele Naționale ale României, Fond CC al PCR, Cancelarie, dosar 109 1969, Stenograma ședinței Comitetului Executiv al CC al PCR, 4 august 1969, fila 3.

²⁴ Ibidem, fila 12.

topic that could have damaged this relationship. An example of this attitude it is contained in the pages of his memoirs, where he reported that in 1973 during the official visit to Washington it was provided the signing of a joint declaration by the two presidents. Romanian experts of MFA wrote few pages of comments on the document sent by the Americans, but after reading them, Ceausescu decided not to make any changes stating that he would sign it as the Americans prepared it, because they knew better to write such a document²⁵.

Nicolae M. Nicolae pointed out that during Nixon's presidency, Romania was interesting for the Americans only insofar Nicolae Ceausescu could carry out the mediation activities, in the areas the Americans needed. Ceausescu understood very well the American interests and sought to take advantage, mainly in the economic area. In this context, an important role for Ceausescu's purposes was played by Nixon's public statement on the importance of nations' independence. The declaration was made public on the occasion of Ceausescu's visit to Washington in 1973. His words were exactly what Ceausescu wanted to hear. However, his interests were not related only with public statements. As a proof is the fact that when Nicolae M. Nicolae was appointed ambassador in Washington, he had the objective to raise trade value to 1 billion USD.

Former Romanian ambassador shows that the foundation of the development of relations Romanian-American relations, it was the American pragmatism that discovered that Ceausescu was a useful interlocutor, not so much for the development of relations between the two above mentioned countries, but for the discovery of paths to get closer to China and to settle the conflicts in Vietnam and Middle East. Ceausescu was convinced that the political relations reached its peak and, because of this, he felt it was time to support more the development of economic relations between the two countries.

The situation has undergone a significant change when Jimmy Carter became president, because it was a shift in the policy. At that moment, the focus was on the issue of human rights as a whole, not customized to a particular problem, as it was previously the emigration to Israel (which Romania supported in order to receive American financial aid). The shift

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 62.

towards human rights moved American interest in the domestic policy area and Romania had insurmountable difficulties in this area. As a consequence, the relation entered a period of stagnation, which later even deteriorated.

However, despite the stagnation in the relation with the Americans, Ceausescu continued the policy of autonomy from USSR. In 1979 he criticized the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and in 1981 he recommended caution in USSR's response to the Poland crisis. In 1982 he opposed the increasing arms costs in the Warsaw Pact and even reduced those of Romania. In 1984 he refused to join the Soviet-led boycott against the Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

Ceausescu tried to use his position to play a mediator role on the world stage, but Romania's economic failure led to the disillusionment against his regime. While in foreign policy Ceausescu demonstrated the same skill as Gheorghiu-Dej and Maurer in setting an autonomous policy for Romania, in domestic policy he failed to meet expectation and turned into a tyrant.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archive sources

- Arhivele Naționale ale României, Fond CC al PCR, Cancelarie, Dosar 109/1969, Dosar 14/1967,

Published sources

1. Banu, Florian, Țăranu, Liviu, *Aprilie 1964 "Primăvara de la București". Cum s-a adoptat "Declarația de independență a României?"*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2004,
2. Beniuc, Mihai, *Sub patru dictaturi (1947-1975)*, București, Editura Ion Cristoiu, 1999,
3. Betea, Lavinia, *De vorbă cu Corneliu Mănescu – Conexiunea moscovită a problemei transilvane*, in "Revista Magazin Istoric", nr. 12/2000, articol accesibil și pe site-ul www.memoria.ro
4. Brucan, Silviu, *Generația irosită*, București, Editura Teșu, 2007,
5. Farlow, Robert, *Romania's Foreign Policy. A Case of Partial Alignment*, in "Problems of Communism", 13, May - June 1964,
6. Fischer-Galați, Stephen, *The New Rumania. From People's Democracy to Socialist Republic*, Cambridge, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1969,
7. Georgescu, Vlad, *Istoria românilor de la origini până în prezent*, București, Editura Humanitas, 1995,
8. Jowitt, Kenneth, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development. The Case of România, 1944-1965*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1971,
9. Macovescu, George, *Jurnal. Volumul I (1952-1982)*, București, Editura Domino, 2006,
10. Nicolae M. Nicolae, *O lume așa cum am cunoscut-o. Amintirile unui fost ambasador al României*, Editura PRO DOMO, București, 2000,
11. Shafir, Michael, *România. Politics, Economics, and Society. Political Stagnation and Simulated Change*, London, Boulder, Frances Pinter, 1985.