

Romanian "Dissidence" Within the Warsaw Pact 1955-1968. Perception on Both Communist and Western Sides

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1. Political and military relations between member states. Romanian position before 1958

After the creation of the Warsaw Pact, the leader of Kremlin, Nikita S. Khrushchev set up several approaches trying to promote an embellished image of the Soviet bloc in the Western countries. This way, he used the sessions of the Political Consultative Committee to make known his foreign policy initiatives, concerning the security issues on the European continent.

Generally, during the first years following the setting up of the Pact, the activity of this institution was actually insignificant for building up and giving substance to a political and military alliance. The Soviet Union mainly focused on using the institutions of the Pact as a tool for the control and subordination of its Eastern European allies. The Soviet General Staff proceeded to a step-by-step replacement of the Soviet counselors by a Soviet military representative of the Warsaw Pact in each of the alliance member states¹. They have been assigned to conduct and assess the military training and the programs regarding the endowment of the concerned national armies in order for these ones to fully meet the political and military demands of the Soviet Union.

Up to 1958, Romania proved to be a faithful ally of the Warsaw Pact. Even if the communist orientation promoting nationalist claims initiated by Gheorghiu Dej, somehow tending to take distance from the political guidelines imposed by the Soviet Union, (situation largely encouraged by the "new openness" promoted by Khrushchev), gained momentum, there were no controversies or misunderstandings during the meetings of the Political Consultative Committee that could have been attributed to the Romanian representatives. The dramatic moments of 1956

(the Hungarian revolution and the riots in Poland) did not indicate Romania as a "troublesome" ally, as it was to be perceived later, but for sure as one of the most devoted supporters of the actions undertaken by the Soviets.

Despite of the fact that the bipolar world acquired the specificities of the existence of two opposed political and military blocs, it took place, at Geneva, between the 18th and the 23rd of July 1955, the high level meeting of the United States President, Dwight Eisenhower, the Prime Minister of France, Edgar Faure, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Anthony Eden and the President of the Soviet Union's Council of Ministers, Nikolai Bulganin. The declared purpose of that meeting was to decrease tensions on the European continent, including with respects to the nuclear weapons problem, the German issue and the confidence building up in Europe. The American President presented what it was to be known in the future as the initiative "open skies" and proposed that the American and Soviet sides made available to each other a list containing each one's strategic military equipments and to allow the air surveillance to certify that no surprise attack has been initiated. The Soviet side rejected the plan. Also, at Geneva, the American and Soviet leaders convened to sign a moratorium regarding nuclear tests, but, obviously, it did not allow the controls². However, the meeting can be considered as a beginning and a positive evolution, since, for the first time after 1945, the two sides engaged in a constructive dialogue.

The 20th CPSU Congress of February 1956 constituted a particular moment in the evolution of the events in the communist world. In the secret report, that denounced the crimes

committed during Stalin's government, Khrushchev stressed that the relations with the Western side, grounded on the policy of peaceful coexistence³. Although the ideological confrontation, specific to the bipolarity of the global balance of power, continued, the Cominform, institution set up by Stalin in 1947, at Szklarska Poreba, was dismantled in April 1956. This background encouraged the misperception of the Soviet Union's interests and objectives with regards to its satellites, by the top Party and state decision makers in certain Warsaw Pact member states. In fact, Moscow had no intention to allow uncontrolled evolutions in these states, especially if it put at risk the strategic security or Moscow's fundamental objective – the consolidation and expansion of communism. The Soviet Union still needed the military, economic and political potential of its European allies. In the event of a strategic offensive against NATO, towards the Western Europe, the territories, economies and the armed forces of Poland, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic were indispensable for the Soviet Union's military endeavor. The situation was similar for Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, in case the Soviet aggression targeted the Southeastern Europe. The satellite states GDP were 2/5 of the Soviet Union's one. The Soviet military and industrial complex was supplied with some of the most important raw materials (as for instance uranium), coming from the Warsaw Pact states⁴. At political and military levels, the existence of the Warsaw Pact highlighted Moscow's determination to take advantage of a powerful tool in order to impose its will in Central and Southeastern Europe.

The first session of the Political Consultative Committee took place in Prague, on January 1956. It marked the inclusion of the armed forces of the German Democratic Republic into the structure of the Warsaw Pact Unified Armed Forces. During the session, the leader of the Romanian delegation, Chivu Stoica, announced the reduction of the Romanian Armed Forces by 40,000 troops⁵.

However, in this framework of relative relaxation between the two antagonistic political and military blocs, and also, within the Warsaw Pact, large scale vindictive actions took place in June, at Poznan, in Poland. Besides the economic claims, there were also explicit political ones: the withdrawal of the Soviet armed forces from

Poland and, even more serious for the communist Polish leaders, the desertion of the communist construction. The movement spread fast and reached the capital of the country, Warsaw.

Despite of the displayed "new-look" and of the promise made to Tito in 1955, of not interfering any longer in the domestic policy of his allies, Khrushchev could not allow that the situation in Poland have gotten out of his control. Accompanied by Molotov, Mikoian and Kaganovici, he arrived unannounced at Warsaw, fully determined to take energetic measures. In October 1956, after several discussions, Khrushchev recognized Gomulka as first secretary of the Polish United Workers Party, abandoned the rough intentions that took him to Warsaw, but, at the same time, the Polish reformers did not achieve their major objectives either⁶. However, the sacrifice made by giving up the vindictive program saved Poland from facing a situation similar to the one that Hungary found itself very soon.

The initial claims of Hungary took after the ones of Poland. The group of Imre Nagy demanded increased political autonomy, economic independence and withdrawal of the Soviet armed forces from Hungary. There were also more radical claims, such as Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and the abandon of the production and propriety socialist principles. The Soviet reply was quick and harsh, and materialized in a first military intervention on October 24. Faced with the radicalization of the situation in Hungary and a tensed situation in the Suez Channel area, the Soviets agreed to discuss, on October 28, the withdrawal of their troops from Hungary. But, two days later, the Kremlin abandoned this solution. On the 1st of November 1956, Imre Nagy announced the leaving by Hungary of the Warsaw Pact, demanded the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops from Hungary, proclaimed the country's neutrality and asked the four Great Powers to recognize it⁷.

The leadership in Moscow already had to deal with a strong dilemma. Not to intervene militarily would have signified that the situation in Hungary could have evolved against its own strategic interests and, at the same time, it would have created a dangerous precedent and a possible example to be followed by the other member states of the Warsaw Pact. To intervene militarily would have consequently proved that the independence and sovereignty of Hungary, as

of any other Warsaw Pact member state, was nothing more than a political declaration. Khrushchev chose the alternative that was also to be used by his successor, Brezhnev, in August 1968, namely the political consensus for action together with the other communist leaders, without asking them to participate in the foreseen military action.

In order to establish close relations with all the communist leaders and convince them of the need for an intervention that could "save" communism, Khrushchev secretly met, between the 1st and the 3rd of November, with the Poles at Brest, with Dej and Novotny (at that time in visit to Romania) at Bucharest, and with the Bulgarians at Sofia. From Sofia, he flew to Brioni, in Yugoslavia, where, together with Malenkov, he discussed with Tito, who accepted not to condemn the intervention in exchange for putting Kadar in power. They also consulted the Chinese leaders that proved to be strongly in favor of the military solution. All the communist leaders, without exception, agreed that in Hungary things were turning into a "counter-revolution", that Moscow was decided to put to an end.

Empowered by the Soviet leadership, Iuri Andropov, the Soviet ambassador in Budapest, the future KGB chief and leader of the Soviet Union, passed on the Kremlin's agreement to initiate negotiations for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Hungary. In reality, Marshall Zhukov had drawn the intervention plans, while General Malinin set up the command and the HQ of the Soviet intervention armed forces.

On the 4th of November, the Soviet divisions, backed by 1,300 tanks, launched the offensive against the positions of the Hungarian revolutionary forces within the country, particularly in Budapest, and shortly after crushed their resistance⁸. The Hungarian refugees' leaders in the Yugoslav Embassy were arrested on November 22nd and transported to Romania, where they were kept for some time. Imre Nagy was brought back to Hungary in 1958 where he was tried, then convicted to death and finally executed. On the 12th of December 1956, the General Assembly of the United Nations condemned the Soviet action in Hungary, with 55 votes against 8. The lack of effective and practical reaction of the Western countries during the Soviet intervention was absolutely striking, but it could be logically explained given the

regional geo-political and geo-strategic configuration in 1956. The United Kingdom and France were directly involved in the Suez crisis. The United States, despite public declarations supporting Hungary, were not willing to take the risk of a conflict with the Soviet Union, since Hungary actually belonged to the Soviet influence area in Europe, being, in fact, a founding member of the Warsaw Pact.

Evolutions in Warsaw and Budapest were carefully watched by the leadership of the Romanian Workers Party. The anticommunist movement of Hungary and the claims regarding the Romanian territory constituted reasons of serious concern for the decision makers in Bucharest, fact that made the leadership of the Romanian Workers Party to apply a large scale program of measures (with reference including to enhancing the Party's control over the armed forces) aimed to consolidate the regime⁹. By the adopted position of support to the Soviet military intervention in order to suppress the revolution, indicated the communist regime in Bucharest as one of the most faithful Moscow's allies. On the 1st of December 1956, during a retrospect drawn at the meeting of the Politburo of the Romanian Workers Party, Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej stated that he considered the intervention of the Soviet troops both as a necessity and international duty. He made known his point of view in the context of a presentation of the Romanian communists' action when Imre Nagy had been brought to Romania out of his post revolutionary refuge of the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest.

The unconditioned fidelity to the Soviet Union's political directives for Eastern Europe, including with regards to the repression of liberalization and national legitimacy efforts of the communist leaderships, under the cover of destalinization in Hungary and Poland, represented the essential feature of the Romanian attitude during the first years of the Warsaw Pact's existence. This understanding of the events could be supported by the fact that, in May 1958, the Soviet Union withdrew its troops from Romania. It was within this framework that the subsequent openness and delimitations in Romania's relations with the Soviet Union would take place.

Moreover, the Bucharest communist regime was not at all perceived in Occident as inspiring confidence. As a case in point, the dispatch no. 834 of the 25th of September 1957, sent to the French minister of foreign affairs, Pineau, by the

French minister in Budapest, Paul Boncour, stressed that the German Democratic Republic and Romania are Moscow's "sleeping dogs" (*chiens couchants*)¹⁰.

Dej took advantage of the events that took place in the two countries to speed up the process of getting out of Romania the Soviet military presence. The initiative of the Soviet troop's withdrawal from Romania belonged to the Romanian side and was presented to Khrushchev by Emil Bodnăraș, minister of the armed forces of the People's Republic of Romania, with Dej acceptance, in August 1955, on the occasion of Khrushchev's visit to Bucharest. At that moment, the proposal was rejected by the Soviets. The Romanian leadership's unconditional support for Khrushchev, during the Hungarian revolution, was meant to increase the Soviet leader's confidence in the Bucharest team.

On the 15th of April 1957, a Soviet – Romanian agreement regulated the legal regime of the Soviet troops presence in Romania. Bodnăraș visit to Moscow, in March 1958, boosted the discussions regarding the Soviet armed forces possible withdrawal from the country¹¹. In 1958, there were dispatched in Romania two Soviet army corps, comprising four divisions, mainly located in three areas: Focșani – Râmnicu Sărat, Constanța and Arad – Timișoara, with an effective counting around 40,000 troops¹².

On the 24th of May 1958, the session of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact member states took place in Moscow. The final communiqué underlined that "the Political Consultative Committee approved the Soviet government proposal, in accordance with the Romanian government, regarding the withdrawal, in the near future, from the territory of the People's Republic of Romania of the Soviet troops, located there according to the Warsaw Treaty"¹³. Letting alone the striking untruth expressed in the communiqué (the Soviet troops had been present in Romania since 1944 and not according to the Warsaw Treaty), this fact, by itself, regarding the withdrawal, would essentially mark a turning point in the Romanian – Soviet political and military relations. The session of Moscow also settled that in 1958 the Warsaw Pact should reduce its armed forces by 419,000 troops, as follows: the Soviet Union – 300,000, Romania – 55,000, Bulgaria – 23,000, Poland – 20,000, Czechoslovakia – 20,000 and

Albania – 1,000. Moreover, the Soviet government decided to withdraw a division from the territory of Hungary. In the end of the communiqué, the Political Consultative Committee decided to make the NATO member states a proposal referring to the conclusion of a non-aggression pact between the two political and military opposing blocs. Present at this session, the People's Republic of China delegate observer also signed the communiqué.

The Soviet troops withdrawal from Romania has been delivered between the 15th of July and the 15th of August 1958, based on the agreement concluded between the Romanian and Soviet defense ministries (later, during the same year, the Soviet counselors acting out in various fields, also, begun to leave the country), and it perfectly fit to the Soviet Union strategic and security interests¹⁴. Besides the reasons expressed by the Romanian part, and accepted by the Soviet counterpart, the decision of the troop's withdrawal was also due to the Soviet Union intention to rebuild its international image, strongly damaged after the military intervention in Hungary, as well as to the need to cut its military expenditures for maintaining troops in the satellite states¹⁵.

The action itself did not affect the Soviet Union security, because Romania did not border any NATO member state, but only the Warsaw Pact ones and the relations with Yugoslavia had been normalized. On the other hand, Khrushchev wanted to increase his credibility in West by pretending to be the supporter of the relaxation policy on the continent, through effective both political and military measures. Not in the last, it is worth pointing out that by withdrawing the Soviet troops from Romania, Khrushchev intended to consolidate the national legitimacy of the Romanian Workers Party in front of the Romanian nation, and also to prove both the allies within the Pact, as well as, the West that socialism could be built up in a "people's democracy" state even in the absence of the Soviet armed forces¹⁶. One cannot deny in the facts analyzing, the Bucharest communist leadership initiative to request Nikita S. Khrushchev, through Emil Bodnăraș, the troops withdrawal, that was initially rejected by the soviet leadership. The genuine historical cliché of national-communist provenience that Bucharest succeeded in "imposing" Moscow to withdraw

the troops from Romania is very difficult to prove without a documented argumentation.

Most of the analyses give different explanations to the withdrawal, but all of them underline Moscow steady interest in acting in this unprecedented manner. Other analyses advance the idea of Romania's waning strategic importance which allowed Romania's behavior as a "troublesome ally" of the Warsaw Pact¹⁷. However, it is without doubt that the premises for

a real detachment from Moscow rooted at the Romanian decision making levels, fact that was to become obvious the years to come and marked a significant openness in the field of foreign policy. Until the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, Romania continued to be the only member states on the territory of which there were not dislocated either Soviet troops or military bases. It is worth underlining the fact that, in 1958 Romania mandated abroad 12 military attachés¹⁸.

2. The international political and military framework of the Warsaw Pact actions between 1958 and 1964. Premises of the Romanian "dissidence"

European continent has been marked in the period 1958 – 1961 by increased tensions between the Soviet Union and the West, because of the German issue and particularly, the status of Berlin. The climax has been reached in August 1961, when the Soviets, with the support of the Eastern Germany's leaders decided to build up the Berlin Wall¹⁹ that continued to be until 1989 the symbol of Europe division into two opposing political and military blocs and generally speaking, of the Cold War. The most relevant expression of this tension was pointed out on the 26th-27th of October 1961, when the Soviet and US tanks found themselves face to face at the frontier check point "Charlie", in Berlin. However, the leaders of the two superpowers refrained themselves from encouraging the dispute to escalate. In 1961, on this background of tension in Central Europe, the Warsaw Pact undertook three large-scale military exercises²⁰.

It is striking that in the case of the German issue, the leaders of all the Warsaw Pact member states backed the Soviet position. At the Political Consultative Committee session of March 1961, at the August reunion of the leaders of communist and workers parties that took place in Moscow, in the Berlin declaration of the governments of the Warsaw Pact member states of August, and at the Warsaw meeting of the defense ministers of the same countries, of September 1961, the leading thread was the blaming of the rebuilding of the Western Germany military potential, of initiating negotiations regarding a peace treaty with Germany and not in the last, of turning the Western Berlin into a "free and de-militarized city"²¹.

The beginning of the '60s also testified the more and more obvious Sino – Soviet split at various levels, having deep impact in the whole communist world. Romania continued to take advantage, in its own interest, of this state of being. The Warsaw Pact cohesion tended to become just a political "label" within the framework of an escalation in the Sino – Soviet dispute. A series of events were to seriously shake the seeming collaboration between the Soviet Union and some of the satellite states, reason why, the Kremlin used the alliance as a tool of preventing possible defections within the Pact and as an invasion force against these states potential trials to detach themselves from the Pact.

Relevant for illustrating this fact was the case of Albania that, in accordance with its Maoist orientation, stopped to participate in the activities of the Warsaw Pact beginning with March 1961, and in September 1968 Albania withdrew from this political and military organization. It was to have a series of implications by depriving the Soviet Union of an important military basis of Vlora, fact that reduced significantly the naval facilities at the disposal of the Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean Sea, although the Soviet Maritime Military Fleet recorded at that moment, under the command of Admiral Gorshkov, an impetuous development that made of the Soviet Union also a naval superpower²².

The issues of Albania's stopping to participate in the activity of the Warsaw Pact needs to be approached in a more differentiate way; given that it was the only founding member state that left the political and military alliance, which it belonged to. On the 5th of April 1961, the Albanese government addressed a letter to the

governments of the Warsaw Pact members states, regarding the Moscow session of the Political Consultative Committee of the 28th-29th of March 1961, where it was decided the withdrawal of the Soviet naval forces from the gulf of Vlora, following Albania's position towards "the imperialist Greek – Yugoslavian – American plot"²³. The expulsion of the Albanese military attaché of Moscow, on the 22nd of May 1961, accused of making anti-Soviet propaganda among the Albanese students and officers studying in the Soviet Union, fit into the same line of action. During the same month, the Albanese government recalled all the officers studying in the Soviet Union and asked the Soviet military attaché to leave Albania. As a retaliation measure, the Soviet government decided to withdraw all its officers that activated in the Albanese navy, but the Albanese government refused to let them go before the return of its officers to Albania from the Soviet territory. Also as retaliation, the Albanese government did not appointed any longer another military attaché in Moscow, but only sent a representative to the Unified Commandment of the Warsaw Pact Unified Armed Forces.

At the reunion of the first secretaries of the communist and workers parties, from the Warsaw Pact member states, that took place in Moscow, between the 3rd and the 5th of August 1961, Albania sent a delegation with a lower level of representation (its chief being Ramiz Alia) than the other participants, fact that was used by the Soviets as a pretext for not receiving the Albanese delegation to that session²⁴. In response to this situation, on the 25th of January 1962, the Albanese authorities declared the Soviet military staff of Albania, *persona non grata*²⁵. Albania pursued its actions with a series of protest letters addressed to all the Pact member states against the fact of not having been any longer invited to the proceedings of the Warsaw Pact²⁶.

Aiming to deny China's access, as an observer, to the proceedings of the Pact, the Soviet government addressed a letter to the leaders of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Vietnam, and Mongolia, on the 31st of October 1961, in which they were informed that their observers could no longer take part to the proceedings of the organization, because their level of representation did not correspond to the demands.

Regarding all these issues, Romania adopted in the following years a singular position, radically different from the other Pact member states. Romania requested the readmission of Albania to the proceedings of the alliance, so that to fix the August 1961 error, highlighting that the position adopted by the Pact towards Albania was creating a dangerous precedent. At the same time, Romania considered abnormal the attitude adopted towards China, concerning the problem of its observer's participation at the Political Consultative Committee²⁷. Moreover, the Bucharest regime proposed that the documents adopted at the reunions of the Political Consultative Committee should be signed by the States representatives and not by other persons, because the Warsaw Pact has been designed to function as an international interstate organization²⁸.

According to several historical assessments, the dispatching of Soviet missiles in Cuba, in 1962, generated the acutest crisis in the Soviet – US relations during the Cold War. Even if the two political and military blocs, NATO and the Warsaw Pact, were not involved in these events, the United States and Soviet Union found themselves to the brink of an open armed confrontation, fact that could have inevitably led to the beginning of hostilities between the two opposing military alliances, with catastrophic consequences for the entire planet.

At the beginning of October 1962, the Soviets sent to Cuba a division of SSM, consisting of five regiments endowed with a total of 38 missiles R-12, having an action range of 2,500 kilometers and 24 missiles R-14 with an action range of 4,500 kilometers. All these forces have been supported by 40 planes MIG-21, 11 submarines and a motorized brigade fully equipped, so that, the total of Soviet effectives dispatched in Cuba reached around 40,000 troops, grouped in 12 bases²⁹.

On the 14th of October, the United States uncovered the setting up of Soviet military bases in Cuba. On the 22nd of October, President John F. Kennedy addressed the American nation, informing about the uncovering of these missile bases and decided to keep Cuba surroundings in quarantine.

The next day, Khrushchev warned the leadership of the United States concerning the possibility of breaking out a nuclear war. Following the mediation by the Secretary

General of the United Nations and an intense exchange of messages between Kremlin and the White House, Khrushchev announced on the 28th of October his decision of withdrawing the Soviet missiles from Cuba, and Kennedy consented to lift the blockade and not to invade Cuba. Subsequently, the United States withdrew their "Jupiter" missiles dispatched in Turkey. Finally, on the 7th of January 1963, the Soviet Union and the United States informed the Secretary General of the United Nations, U Thant, on the ending of the crisis, and during the same year, they proceeded to installing a direct phone line between Kremlin and the White House, in order to avoid that a similar crisis situation happened again³⁰.

A peculiar fact drew the attention, right after the Cuban missile crisis, related to the mentioned events, and produced in the context of the obvious and gradual detachment from the Soviet Union of Romanian foreign policy coordinates. According to the assertion of the US diplomat, Raymond L. Garthoff, during a private meeting that took place on the 4th of October 1963, at New York, the Romanian minister of foreign affairs, Corneliu Mănescu, might have declared the State Secretary of the United States, Dean Rusk, that Romania would declare its neutrality in the event of a conflict provoked by the Soviet Union, without previously consulting Romania, and in discordance with Romanian national interests. He also informed the US counterpart that, there were no nuclear missiles on the Romanian territory. According to the same source, the Romanian official's endeavor constituted a certain *fact in the international relations practice*; since the American official did not make it known to the US allies either, for fear of possible leaks of information to the Soviets³¹. Without having the uncontested proof of the "neutrality" assumed by Romania in October 1963, that has not been confirmed up to the moment by Romanian archive sources or by the direct participants at the discussions, the fact itself is relevant given that the information provided by the Romanian official represented something unconceivable inside the military alliance of the communist states, so that Romania's action might marked the first fissure within the Warsaw Pact³².

The assertion of the US diplomat, Raymond L. Garthoff, according to which the above mentioned aspect represents the fundamental

reason why Romania gradually altered its position within the Warsaw Pact, could have a real ground, but, in our opinion, there were also other factors, without minimizing the economic one's importance, that contributed to this evolution. Between 1961 and 1964, Romania rejected the integrationist efforts of COMECON, based on the principle of labor division and, consequently, of stopping the country's industrialization process, returned to the certain national traditions and symbols, canceled the compulsory study of Russian language into the schools, begun to release the political prisoners, and so on. "The new trend" adopted by Romania in its relations with the Soviet Union did not escape the perception of the United States and others main Western countries. During a discussion at the beginning of August 1963, between Mircea Malița, Romanian deputy minister of foreign affairs, and William Crawford, diplomatic representative of the United States in Bucharest, the US diplomat underlined that "the legation communicated that the assessment of the latest events of Romania led to the conclusion that, it, undoubtedly, conducts itself by its own had, and the position of pursuing its own interests is firm and not a conjectural one"³³. During the same discussion, the Romanian leader, Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej, mentioned that "our position" imposed the perception that in Bucharest rule "people that oppose" to the Soviet Union. "And objectively, things are just like this. And we should not be ashamed to say that there are divergences"³⁴.

The US diplomat thesis puts this state of things on an equal position with Romania's open contestation of the Warsaw Pact. However, these kinds of indirect proofs, although relevant for the Romanian opposition to the Soviet domination and its will of acquiring increased freedom of action in the international arena, cannot lead to the conclusion that, in October 1963, Corneliu Mănescu proposed to the United States the neutrality status of Romania. The former minister of foreign affairs of the communist Romania, questioned after 1990 in this respect, stated that he had in view to make "Dean Rusk understand that Romania was not a country of war, Romania is not an enthusiastic partner of the Warsaw Pact, we do not support the war between the two opposing military pacts, that we can only adopt a reasonable position no matter what the problem is"³⁵.

The US professor Robin Alison Remington thoroughly remarked that the issue of Romania's relations with the Warsaw Pact at the beginning of the '60s cannot be dissociated, in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, from the economic one³⁶. Gheorghiu Dej's regime rejected all the initiatives launched within COMECON by the Soviets and obedient regimes of the satellite states, concerning the integration and labor division in the communist system, and promoted a sustained program of national industrialization³⁷. It is of high interest in this respect, that Romania categorically rejected the so called "Valev Plan"³⁸.

It has come up to the attention the fact that, in 1963, Romania adopted a singular position at the United Nations in relation with the Soviet bloc and voted for the first time differently from this one on the establishment of a nuclear free zone in South America³⁹.

At the session of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact member states, that took place in Moscow, on the 26th of July 1963, there was approached a wide range of issues, subject to disputes between representatives of Romania and the other Pact member states, especially the Soviet ones. The Soviets presented a communication in which they informed on the process of negotiations and the conclusion of the agreement settled between the Soviet Union, United States and United Kingdom regarding the ban of nuclear tests in the atmosphere, the outer space and the submarine one⁴⁰. The Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was signed by the three state representatives in Moscow, on the 5th of August and came into force on the 10th of October 1963. The Romanian representative, Corneliu Mănescu signed this treaty on the 8th of August 1963⁴¹.

It is important to analyze the dispute between the Romanian and Soviet representatives regarding the admission of the People's Republic of Mongolia into the Warsaw Pact. A few days before the reunion, the Soviet leadership sent to the participants a letter in which it was proposed the admission of Mongolia into the alliance. Romanian vehemently opposed this initiative and in the end it has been gainful. The arguments of the Romanian side proved with unshakeable logic that by admitting Mongolia into the Pact, the European regional nature of the alliance (according to article 4) would be altered, fact that would implicitly led to the general revision of the

Treaty and a change of substance of the international law aspects referring to the Warsaw Treaty. With the same determination, Romania proved that in case of an aggression directed against an European member state, the Mongolian contribution to the mutual defense would have been insignificant, while in a situation of aggression in Asia, against Mongolia, the support of the European communist states would have been considerable, which was in contradiction with Romania's national interests.

At the same time, the Romanian side demonstrated that Mongolia's likely Pact joining, would immediately activate all the political and military Asian US-led alliances, which would implicitly trigger increased tension in international relations. Not in the last, Romania was fully motivated to consider that Mongolia joining would impose to the Warsaw Pact an anti-Chinese purpose in Asia, fact that our country, given the good relations established with China, could not agree to. Based on the Romanian side arguments, the Soviet proposal was no longer discussed⁴².

The letter of the 14th of February 1964 addressed by Dej to Khrushchev fits into the same context of the Romanian "dissidence" within the Warsaw Pact, in which, among other things, Romania re-affirmed its support for the "wise" position adopted by the Soviets at the end of the Cuban crisis, but it could not "understand" how it was possible to take measures like these in Cuba without previously discussing them with the organization member states, according to article 3 of the Warsaw Treaty⁴³. There were criticized the methods used by Moscow in its relations with the other Warsaw Pact member states, directly referring to the placement of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba.

Moreover, the Bucharest regime leader expressed his opposition to the initiative of founding the Foreign Policy Commission of the Warsaw Pact that had been launched in a letter addressed to his partners by the Central Committee of the CPSU on the 2nd of January 1964⁴⁴. Dej considered that founding of a permanent commission like the proposed one would be equal to "giving up on the national sovereignty in the field of foreign policy"⁴⁵. The Romanian position remained unchanged in this respect, the Committee of foreign ministers being founded later, at the session of the Political Consultative Committee, which took place in Bucharest, on the 25th-26th of November 1976.

3. The political and military relations within the Warsaw Pact until 1968. The particularization of the Romanian attitude

A month after an official delegation undertook a visit to China and North Korea, on which occasion Mao Zedong became directly acquainted with Romania's position in the Sino-Soviet conflict, as well as, with the Romanian side's efforts to make the public polemic between the Soviets and the Chinese come to an end⁴⁶, on the 26th of April 1964, the Romanian Workers Party issued a declaration that actually represented Romania's clear detachment from the Soviet Union in the field of domestic and foreign policy, though without leaving the communist bloc and the Warsaw Pact⁴⁷.

"The Declaration of April 1964", as it has remained known, (the official title was "The Declaration on the position of the Romanian Workers Party regarding the problems of the international communist and workers movement adopted at the enlarged Plenum of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party of April 1964") represented a turning point. It also marked the initiation of the public process of Bucharest's detachment from Moscow, the assuming of autonomy in the international arena (notably in the ensemble of the international communist movement), the inauguration of a political trend in external relations that would bring to Romania the perception of "mutinous ally" within the Warsaw Pact.

It would be difficult to underestimate the importance of the April 1964 declaration for Romania's attitude within the communist military alliance. It boosted the process of outlining an attitude claiming the equality in rights of the Warsaw Pact members, which practically meant the very same thing with not recognizing the Soviet hegemony. At the same time, beginning with 1964, Romania's detachment in the field of military practice within the Warsaw Pact took a decisive course. Besides, "the Declaration on the position of the Romanian Workers Party regarding the problems of the international communist and workers movement" was delivered at the moment when Romania had already started the process of detachment from the Warsaw Pact⁴⁸.

The Romanian historiography considered the April 1964 declaration as the most important

public act of national provenience that fundamentally defined Romania's anti-hegemonic orientation during the following period. It is implied that the initiative of launching this document belonged to the Romanian side, so that subsequent discussions within the structures of the communist party, pointed out the anti-Soviet orientation, it actually advanced. This way of understanding the document origin is substantially enhanced by the fact that it was elaborated and made public in the context of several actions of the same nature undertaken by the Bucharest communist regime, being in fact their accomplishment and practically theorizing the position publicly expressed. We refer, as a case in point, both to the Romanian communists' position during the Sino - Soviet ideological conflict, as well as, to certain acts of Bucharest "disobedience" to Moscow, particularly in the economic field⁴⁹. Similarly, it refers to measures of limiting the Soviet Union visibility at the level of the Romanian public opinion (the closing of the book shop "Cartea Rusă", of the Romanian - Russian Museum, of the Russian language Institute "Maxim Gorki", of the Romanian - Soviet Institute, of the review "Timpuri Noi", the change of the Soviet names of streets, localities and institutions, less classes of Russian language in the school program etc)⁵⁰.

"The April 1964 Declaration" is the stepping stone of a genuine turning point in Romania's external orientation. Its relations with the West were to be developed from the perspective of balancing the Soviet hegemony, and the domestic political evolution would tend to escape the rough Stalinism that characterized the previous period, yet without generating an authentic liberalization. The fact of contesting the Soviet hegemony became manifest not only in the field of foreign policy, (the international perspective inter-blocs), but also within the bloc policy. Regarding the latter case, the guidelines had already been settled: the opposition to the economic integration plans within COMECON and to the asymmetric alliance of the Warsaw Pact. In the last case the direction had also been engaged, both during the Cuban missiles crisis,

as well as, by the negative answer to the Soviet request of the alliance enlargement towards Asia, in 1963. Referring to the first mentioned event, for instance, Ion Gheorghe Maurer said, during the debates occasioned by the 1964 declaration, that things were not too clear within the Warsaw Pact: "There were sent missiles to Cuba. We were *not* aware of this matter. For the time being we do not make of this any incrimination and do not raise any problem to anybody. The existence of these missiles in Cuba caused some international tension (...). Within the framework of this tension, after a time, one can foresee a certain policy. The supreme or single commander of the military forces of the Warsaw Treaty launched an order to all the participant armies in this group of military forces that alarmed all of them. In the Warsaw Pact, there is an article 3, which binds the signatory states to mutual consultation in international political matters of most importance. I am asking: all these matters would not have justified a consultation like this? Or, at least, the order of alarming the participant state armies would not have to be issued following consultations like these? These are problems! (...) These orders are issued, these actions are implemented, and nobody is asked about. At least, we have not been asked"⁵¹.

The analyzed period opened the way to economic cooperation with the Western countries, Bucharest having a series of contacts highly fruitful with the United States, France, West Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Austria etc. After legations have been turned into embassies and the appointment of the first United States ambassador in Bucharest, William Crawford, Romanian – US economic relations acquired new dimensions, unprecedented and simultaneously without correspondent in the communist bloc. Welcoming the United States President, Lyndon B. Johnson's policy of "building bridges" towards the communist world, the Bucharest regime proceeded to enhancing the bilateral relations, aspect that had serious implications for the endeavors of national economic development⁵². In the period 18th of May-the 1st of June 1964, Gheorghe Gaston Marin, vice president of the Romanian government made an official visit to the United States. The outcome of this visit was excellent. On this occasion it has been signed an important bilateral economic agreement⁵³.

At the same time, it has been re-established the thread of the traditional friendship between Romania and France, which was to bring about concrete results at several levels. During the visit to France, in July 1964, the president of the Council of Ministers, Ion Gheorghe Maurer approached together with the French officials aspects related to the cultural, consular and economic bilateral relations⁵⁴. One can notice the fact that during Maurer's meeting with General Charles de Gaulle in Paris, the latter promised economic help for Romania in case it would be isolated by the Warsaw Pact communist member states, as a consequence of the policy promoted by Bucharest decision-makers⁵⁵.

In October 1964, Leonid I. Brezhnev has replaced Nikita S. Khrushchev as the leader of the Party and Soviet State. The new Kremlin's leader was the promoter of the "limited sovereignty" doctrine referring to the Warsaw Pact member states, an adept of the primacy of proletarian internationalism and of the socialist system interests, on the national specific ones of each "allied" state. The implementation of this doctrine was to have fatal consequences for Czechoslovakia during the summer of 1968.

The session of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact participant states, that took place on the 19th-20th of January 1965, in Warsaw, stands out through the topics approached and needs to be detailed. This session was the last one in which Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej (he died on the 19th of March 1965, from a rapidly evolving cancer) participated and the first one attended by the new Soviet leader Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev. Moreover, the reunion was the first one to take place after the April 1964 Declaration of the Romanian Workers Party.

During the discussions, the representatives of the Warsaw Pact member states assessed the situation caused by the initiative of creating NATO Multilateral Nuclear Forces (FNM), the consequences and menaces to European peace and security and expressed their concern regarding this endeavor of the North Atlantic Alliance⁵⁶. The German Democratic Republic delegation submitted two projects to be analyzed and adopted. The first one referred to the project of a treaty on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The second one proposed that the foreign affair ministers reunion or of their deputies be turned into a permanent organism having its own law status.

Regarding the first project, Romania did not raise any objection to the idea of a treaty like this, but to the fact that the issue of this treaty necessitated a lot of time to be implemented, dedication and responsibility and underlined that the parts should have been asked in appropriate time in order to elaborate such a project. The Soviets rejected the Romanian point of view and demanded that the project to be examined.

Concerning the second project, the Romanian representatives argued that the transformation of a consultative reunion into a permanent organism broke the provisions of article 3, al.1, of the Treaty. They stressed that the important decisions that affected the member states common interests are the exclusive responsibility of the party and state leadership in each and every country and not of the ministers of foreign affairs⁵⁷. The objections raised by the Romanian delegation decidedly influenced the decision of rejecting the two East German proposals. At the same time, the Romanian delegation pronounced in favor of dismantling the two political and military blocs, but the delegations of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact other member states opposed that this idea to be included in the session final communiqué⁵⁸.

During the same conference, Dej qualified the exclusion of Albania from the Warsaw Pact proceedings, at Moscow initiative, as an illegal decision that had to be cancelled. He motivated that "if we do not do the right things, any of the socialist countries can find itself in the situation of being excluded from the proceedings of the Political Consultative Committee, as it happened with Albania"⁵⁹. To sum up the Romanian position on the nuclear non-proliferation, it comes to the attention the fact that the Romanian leader radically rejected the issue of condemning the creation by NATO of the Multinational Nuclear Forces, which actually constituted the purpose of the reunion, to be linked to the Warsaw Pact proposal of concluding a treaty of nuclear non-proliferation. Even if the reasons of the Romanian position, very radical in this matter, except for the rejection of the Soviet monopoly, including in the nuclear domain, have not been sufficiently clarified, it has been common knowledge that Romania perceived the nuclear non-proliferation as being part of a process of general nuclear disarmament, in fact of an effort to avoid the constitution of a nuclear monopoly⁶⁰. It is quite possible that the Bucharest

regime, by the radical adopted attitude, indirectly intended to provide explicit support to China, which had become since October 1964 a nuclear power.

The position adopted by Romania at the Warsaw reunion had a favorable echo in West. As a case in point, the Danish mass-media, that paid close attention to this session, made faithful presentations of Romania's position toward the Warsaw Pact, as well as, of the Romanian state political openness in its relations with the West⁶¹.

As a matter of fact, after 1964, Bucharest acted on a large front in order to acquire its freedom of action at international level and to limit the interference of the alliance hegemonic power. Therefore, there were undertaken actions directed towards defying the CPSU monopoly on the issues concerning the international communist and workers movement⁶², as well as, avoiding the economic integration, as a means to consolidate the national autonomy at international level.

After Nicolae Ceaușescu took over the power in March 1965, he continued the policy of detachment from Moscow and displayed an even more daring attitude than his predecessor. Referring to Romania's particular position within the communist states military alliance, General Anatoli I. Gribkov, former chief of the General Staff of the Unified Armed Forces between the years 1976 - 1989, remarked that "until 1968, namely before the allied troops entered Czechoslovakia, the relations with the Romanian leadership, both at political and military levels, were relatively normal. Once Nicolae Ceaușescu came to power in 1965, Romania's foreign policy begun to change substantially"⁶³. The same Soviet dignitary considered that "during Joseph V. Stalin's life, the Romanian leadership accepted its situation of subordination to the Soviet Union, also, by copying the functions of Soviet power institutions. In the after-war first years, it did not follow critic reactions towards the Soviet system, the force of inertia was quite strong, as long as there were dispatched Soviet troops in Romania. Their withdrawal from Romania, in 1958, represented a new stage in the country development process, marked by a political doctrine of the Romanian Communist Party towards national self-development, independence, and equality in rights of the Warsaw Pact member states. The Romanian leadership tended to national independence on its

own forces. During that period, the economic contacts with the Occident have been widened"⁶⁴. The same personality remarked that particularly after the April 1964 Declaration, Romania was referred to in West as "a dissident" within the Warsaw Pact"⁶⁵.

The new Bucharest leader's first visit to Moscow, on the 9th-11th September, actually turned into the first confrontation between Brezhnev and Ceaușescu. On his return to the country, Ceaușescu presented, at the informative session of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, all those issues taken into discussion at Moscow. The Bucharest leader made a genuine indictment to the hegemonic power, and attacked a variety of extremely sensitive problems concerning the bilateral relations, from the unsolved problem of the Romanian treasure to aspects related to certain activities within the Warsaw Pact"⁶⁶.

The middle of the '60s has been marked by a strong action of integrating the armies of the Warsaw Pact member states, directed, organized and firmly led by Moscow. The Soviet Union succeeded to integrate the member states armies to the prejudice of collaboration within the Warsaw Pact, by doctrine, the modalities of representation in the Pact ruling bodies, methods of training, endowment system, the way of exercising the command within the alliance structures. Since Moscow had launched this process within the Warsaw Pact, Bucharest had nothing else to do than to set up within this organization, its own foreign policy directions, publicly expressed in 1964-1965. The occasion was to come shortly, at the reunion of the chiefs of General Staffs that took place in Moscow, on February 1966. It was precisely with the purpose of promoting the principle of collaboration within the organization (it had been often faced with the lack of consensus) that Romania asked in February 1966, at this reunion, and at the May 1966 meeting of the defense ministers, the democratization of the Pact ruling structures and the development of military relations based on real cooperation within the alliance and not on integration"⁶⁷.

At the reunion of the chiefs of General Staffs, that took place in Moscow, on February 1966, the Romanian delegation presented its own point of view on the activity improvement of the Warsaw Pact military structures. According to this point

of view, the Romanian delegation pointed out the necessity to improve the Rules of procedure of the Unified Armed Forces Commandment, in order to correspond with the Treaty's provisions and initial purpose. Thereby, the attributions established in the Rules of procedure placed the Supreme Commander beyond the national governments and defense ministers and the General Staff of the Unified Armed Forces became a high rank echelon of the national General Staffs. In order to support its point of view, the Romanian side gave the examples of the circumstances of the 1961 Berlin crisis, as well as, of the events of Cuba.

The attributions of the Unified Commandment have been established in the Rules of procedure adopted in January 1956, that proved to be inoperative, given the fact that its provisions did not correspond any longer to the factual reality of the member states. In order to avoid the transformation of the Pact military ruling structures in supranational organisms initiating interferences that defied the member states sovereignty and independence, and more precisely ignored to "consult" these ones' political leaderships, the Romanian side made several proposals concerning: the rules of procedure, as well as, the other documents regulating the activity of this commandment should be based on the idea that each country's party and government held the exclusive responsibility for the ruling, organizing, endowment and training of all its armed forces, both in war and in peace time; the founding of the Military Council of the Commandment, as deliberative structure responsible with adopting decisions unanimously. The Military Council examined the problems that are the Commandment responsibility. It was composed of the Supreme Commander that was the president, its deputies and the chiefs of General Staff, as members. The proposals and recommendations made by the Military Council were submitted to the approval of the Warsaw Pact member states governments. The Military Council developed its activity on the basis of rules of procedure approved by the Warsaw Pact member states governments; each state contributed with troops that had the capacity to act jointly. They could be engaged in war only on the basis of a national decision and their coordination belonged to the national

commandments. It would have been reasonable that the procedures regulating the use of these troops take into account the idea that during the wartime they would act in accordance with the operational plans agreed by the participants concerned; the commandment should have a supreme commander, deputies of the supreme commander, one for each of the Pact member state, and a chief of General Staff, that put together to constitute the Military Council.

It was underlined that none of these ones should have other functions in the armed forces they were part of. It was suggested that both the Supreme Commander and the chief of General Staff should be appointed with the agreement of all the governments of the Pact member states, selected of each country's Marshals or Generals, for a period of 4-5 years. It was desirable that during the same mandate the Supreme Commander and the chief of General Staff come from different countries. The Supreme Commander Deputies were to be appointed by the government of the country they were representing, and their attributions made needless keep in function the representatives of the Commandment by the member states armed forces. The Unified General Staff was to include officers from all Warsaw Pact participant states armed forces.

At the Soviets proposal, during the two already mentioned reunions, there begun the discussions, in order to modify the rules of procedure of the Unified Commandment. The Romanian military delegation agreed initially with the draft of this document, but there have been made a series of objections, which were inserted, as an annex, to the Protocol of the defense ministers' reunion that had taken place in Moscow, in May 1966⁶⁸. The Romanian objections referred to the role and functions of the Political Consultative Committee, the attributions of the Unified Commandment and of the Supreme Commander, the setting up of several structures of the Unified Commandment and their attributions. They also referred to the existence of the Unified Armed Forces Supreme Commander's military representatives within the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact member states⁶⁹.

The Romanian side stressed that accepting to create the Military Council as settled in the draft, and the approval of its decisions by the Political

Consultative Committee, would have actually signified that the leading of the national armed forces be no longer the responsibility of each and every state's constitutional bodies, fact that would bring about deeply prejudices the national sovereignty of the Pact's member states.

At the same time, the Romanian delegation stated that the very existence of the institution of the Unified Commandment representatives run counter the principle of member states' equality in rights, stipulated in the Warsaw Treaty. Moreover, the Romanian part expressed its opinion in favor of canceling this institution and the rules of procedure that regulated the activity of this one, arguing that it was not necessary⁷⁰. The Romanian position gained initially an unexpected victory. Most of the Romanian proposals have been accepted, in the issued protocol of the reunion being mentioned the contradictory points of view⁷¹. The Romanian proposals included in the new rules of procedure draft referred to the following: the role of coordination (and not of command) of the Unified Armed Forces Commandment; the subordination of the aimed troops to be used by the Unified Armed Forces, to the respective national commandments; the officers' proportional representation in the composition of the General Staff of the Unified Armed Forces; the nuclear strategic forces would not belong to the Unified Armed Forces; the founding of the Military Consultative Council subordinated by the Political Consultative Committee⁷².

At the session of the Political Consultative Committee that took place in Bucharest, in July 1966, the Romanian side passed to the Warsaw Pact's member states defense ministries, the rules of procedure draft of the Unified Armed Forces Commandment that nevertheless was not discussed. One can suppose that the Romanian position, as expressed in this draft, run counter Moscow's intentions. Moscow's reaction was quick. First of all, the Soviets adopted the tactic of backwardness. The Romanian requests to include their demands in the discussed documents have been approved and then, in a tacit way rejected. Thereby, at the defense ministers' reunion that took place in Moscow, on the 27th-28th of May 1966, in the rules of procedure draft "there were included most of the principle matters that our delegation elaborated" and, at the same time, "there were excluded

certain provisions that did not correspond to our point of view, such as: the Supreme Commander right to control the Unified Armed Forces troops and the right to have his own representatives within the armed forces of the Pact's participant states; the Soviet Union strategic nuclear forces do not belong to the Unified Armed Forces; the creation of the Military Consultative Council subordinated by the Political Consultative Committee, that was to include the defense ministers⁷³. It is worth to notice the fact that in the protocol of the reunion of the defense ministers of the Warsaw Pact member states, that took place in Moscow, in May 1966, it was settled, at the point 5, to keep the percentage of each army participation at the Unified Armed Forces common budget, as it follows: Albania – 3%; Bulgaria – 7%; Hungary and the German Democratic Republic – each contributing with 6%; Romania – 10%; Czechoslovakia – 13%; Poland – 13.5% and the Soviet Union – 41.5%⁷⁴.

It was some time until the meeting of the defense ministers' deputies that took place in Prague, on the 29th of February-the 1st of March 1968. This break was used with success by the Soviet side in order to surpass the Romanian opposition, by avoiding that the rules of procedure be elaborated and by succeeding in materializing their own intentions through punctual actions, supported by the other minor allies within the Pact. Therefore, in Prague, the Soviet side openly opposed the Romanian delegation's proposal to bring into discussions the rules of procedure draft, advanced in July 1966. "At this proposal – as it was registered in the report made by the chief the Romanian General Staff and handed to Nicolae Ceaușescu – all the other chiefs of delegations and notably, General Sokolov and Marshal Iakubovski, stated that they were not mandated, they were not ready and there were not the appropriate circumstances in order to reply to the issues raised by the Romanian side"⁷⁵. Actually, on that occasion, the Soviet side imposed the debate on the issues of creating the Military Council and rules of procedure of the Unified Commandment General Staff. The above mentioned report testified that "taking into account the way that the reunion proceedings evolved, as well as, the delivered discussions, one can come to the conclusion that the representatives of the other armies of the Warsaw Pact member states wished to solve, by

sharing, the issues related to the Unified Commandment, respectively the issues of the Military Council, General Staff, Technical Committee and affirmed that all of them agreed to these issues. One can deduce that, for the first time, there were made efforts to solve officially the issue of creating the different bodies of the Unified Commandment, without approaching the essential topic, namely the elaboration of the new rules of procedure of the Unified Commandment"⁷⁶.

That tactics of backwardness, used by the Soviet side, reached the climax in 1968 when, on the 24th of May, Marshal Iakubovski delivered the rules of procedure drafts of the Unified Armed Forces, Military Council, and the joint anti-aircraft defense system to the Romanian Ministry of Armed Forces. It is necessary to underline that between 1955 and 1968, there took place only nine sessions of the Political Consultative Committee which proves that the Soviet Union was not really pushed by the wish to consult periodically, according to the statutory provisions, its "allies" within the Warsaw Pact. Sticking to the same trend of "dissidence" within the Soviet bloc, initially at the beginning of the '60s, in the context of dissensions within the Warsaw Pact and COMECON, Romania promoted a policy of openness towards the Western countries, incomparably in a much more visible manner than the other satellite states of the Soviet Union, aspect which was well perceived by the Western democracies. The Romanian demarches in the field of foreign policy, successful at the beginning of 1967, have been finalized with the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, Romania being the only Eastern country, besides the Soviet Union, that succeeded in this approach, fact which provoked the serious angry of the Eastern Germany government. A natural follow-up of the evolutions in bilateral relations was the visit to Bucharest of the West German foreign affairs minister, the future federal chancellor, Willy Brandt⁷⁷.

Nicolae Ceaușescu was to make another defiant gesture during the extraordinary session of the Political Consultative Committee that took place in Moscow, on the 9th of June 1967, when it was assessed the Arab – Israeli conflict, also known as the "six day war". The Romanian delegation, led by Ceaușescu adopted a different

position from the other representatives, including Tito, defended the Israeli cause and opposed to the slogan preferred by the communist state delegations, and particularly by the Soviet one, to destroy Israel, considered the only responsible with the breaking out of this conflict and denounced as an "aggressor". At the end of the reunion, the Romanian delegation was the only one to refuse signing the Moscow Declaration; the adopted declaration condemned the Israeli action and also promised to intensify the political, economic and military support to the Arab countries. Ceaușescu opposed the Soviets, considering that "if we adopt the declaration you proposed, the socialist countries will be isolated from the progressive movement of the West, including from the Western communist parties"⁷⁸. The request to condemn Israel for being an aggressor, as long as, the Arab states waged war with the purpose of annihilating the Israeli state, run counter the Bucharest regime position of recognizing each and every state right to a free existence⁷⁹.

The position adopted towards Israel and continuing to have diplomatic relations with this state after the "six day war" provided Romania with an extremely positive profile in the Western perception. Regarding the military hostilities that had been ceased, the Romanian point of view was presented in the government's declaration concerning the situation on the Middle East, publicly issued on the 11th of June 1967, which stressed that "the events proved that the use of force cannot constitute a solution to disputes between states..."⁸⁰.

Following this situation, on the occasion of the Romanian delegation's participation to the proceedings of the General Assembly of the United Nations, that took place in New York, in July 1967, during the meetings with the American State Secretary, Dean Rusk, and the US Vice President, Lyndon B. Johnson, concerning issues such as the Romanian support to opening an unofficial channel of negotiations between the US and North Vietnamese representatives, it was insured that the United States and implicitly the Western states would not oppose and even would support the Romanian minister of foreign affairs candidacy for the presidency of the General Assembly of the United Nations⁸¹. In September 1967, Corneliu Mănescu was elected with

overwhelming majority president of the 22nd session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, being the first dignitary from a communist country and the only Romanian one, to have exercised this high rank function⁸².

During May 1968, the French president, Charles de Gaulle arrived at Bucharest, while in Paris there were delivering large student and workers social movements, fact that increased the international visibility of the Bucharest regime, and also strengthened the Romanian "dissident" position within the Warsaw Pact.

It is significant for the study of this period that in the framework of the Soviet - Chinese split, strong trends of polycentrism, defined as the plurality of decision-making centers within the Soviet bloc, became more and more visible. Implicitly, the polycentrism contested the monolithic unity of the world communist system. As a process, the polycentrism depended on the affirmation of certain independent national communist parties without very close connections with Moscow. In Western Europe, the polycentrism was perceived as a synonymous of the independent position adopted towards the Soviet Union⁸³. Although it had neither the potential nor China or Yugoslavia positions within the communist bloc, or France within the Western side, one can advance the idea that under certain configurations and circumstances, or after a series of enterprises in the foreign policy, military and economic fields, Romania acquired, during the assessed period and within the logics of the bipolar balance of power specific to the Cold War, certain valences that could be perceived as characteristics of the bi-polycentrism.

The historical perspective highlights the fact that, at the beginning of 1968, the counting review of the Bucharest regime foreign policy actions was a substantial one. The economic relations with the West were in full development, the Soviet projects within COMECON were not affecting Romania, the friendship relations with the People's Republic of China knew an increased acknowledgment, and the critical modalities of approaching the Soviet Union's policy were put forward gradually, in parallel with Romania's decreasing participation at the political and military activities within the Warsaw Pact.

NOTES:

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- ²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 4
- ²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 5
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