SITUATION REPORT

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1. Ceaușescu's Speech at the April CC Plenum: Ideological Aspects

Summary: Rejecting both reformism and criticism of his regime, Romanian leader Nicolae Ceaușescu is reviving ideological concepts that he earlier laid aside as inappropriate for the present stage of "socialist construction" in Romania. Class struggle is again described as the driving force behind social progress. The revival of this theory has both internal and international implications.

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Background. One of the main threats to the international communist movement, according to Nicolae Ceaușescu, stems from "the pseudoscientific theories of the reformists and the revisionists," who deny the imperative of the "proletarian dictatorship" in the state. The statement is not a recent one. Ceaușescu made it in 1961 at a plenum of the Romanian Communist Party, then known as the Romanian Workers' Party, when he was one of several contenders for the leadership of the party, which was headed by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej.1 The plenum saw Dej purge Constantin Pîrvulescu after returning with Ceaușescu from the 22nd Congress of the CPSU in Moscow, in a move that cleverly exploited the new trend toward de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union to get rid of his own adversaries.

Soon thereafter, Dej presided over the beginning of the Romanian party's about-face in international relations and, consequently, in domestic policies. By 1963 the Yugoslavs, who had been the main target of Dej's and Ceaușescu's antireformist and anti-"revisionist" attacks in 1961, had established close relations with Bucharest. After succeeding Dej in March 1965, Ceaușescu amplified Romania's role as a "maverick" in the Warsaw Pact alliance. The main feature of Romanian policy became "simulated change," that is, the adoption of the rhetoric, but not practice, of internal democratization.2 Pîrvulescu and other leaders who had been purged by Ceaușescu's predecessor were rehabilitated; and more important, party theory was revised. Attacks against other communist parties were described as "unprincipled" and as interference in internal affairs, and the class struggle was implicitly declared to be no longer applicable during the stage of building what Ceaușescu called the "multilaterally developed socialist society." As if to emphasize this ideological departure, the party's theoretical journal changed its name in September 1972 from Lupta de Clasa (Class Struggle) to Era Socialista (The Socialist Era). Finally, in June 1982 Ceaușescu declared that the concept of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" was no longer applicable in Romania. Classes no longer had "antagonistic interests"; and, consequently, Romania had left behind the stage of proletarian dictatorship and had been transformed into a "workers' democracy."3
In the past few years, however, Romania's ideological stance has again changed radically against the background of the reforms underway in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Whereas political change was previously deflected through simulation, it is now explicitly rejected. Ceausescu has come full circle, returning to ideological positions that are identical, or very similar, to his earlier credo, which was forged under Stalinism.

The Revival of Class Struggle. The speech that Ceausescu delivered on the last day of the RCP plenum held in Bucharest from 12 to 14 April 1989 was not on the whole intended to cover ideological matters. Most of the self-congratulatory address concerned the paying off of Romania's foreign debt, economic "achievements," international affairs, and the imperative to continue implementing the rural resettlement program. Nonetheless, Ceausescu's ideological statements were important and marked a further stage in his explicit rejection of reformism. These statements were, however, not actually unexpected, coming as they did against the background of both the open letter protesting his policies that was sent to him shortly before the plenum by Pirvulescu and five other party veterans and the official reaction that hinted at possibly reviving the Stalinist theory of "intensification of class struggle on the eve of socialist construction" to justify a purge of the signatories.

According to unconfirmed but reliable sources, the six protesters are still being questioned by the secret police and at least some of them have been expelled from the party. Although Ceausescu did not mention them by name, he hinted at their criticism when he called for a "firm attitude" against "all those who endanger socialist construction, national independence, and the country's sovereignty." Going back on statements he had made earlier, however, the RCP Secretary-General stressed the need to adopt a "vigilant" attitude toward not only "deviant" individual cases but society as a whole. The class struggle, he said, had been, and remained, the main mechanism for social progress:

One can in no way conceive of socialist development while giving up, in one way or another, or diminishing, the class struggle. Class struggle has always been the basis for mankind's progress, for social development. . . . To say that class struggle must be replaced means to condemn socialism to stagnation; [it] means to come, in one way or another, to the support of capitalism and imperialism. And this is not possible!

In other words, in his quest to reject the idea of reform, Ceausescu went so far as to claim that genuine "stagnation," Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's preferred euphemism for describing the Brezhnev period, was not caused by refusing to cast off previous ideological tenets but, on the contrary, by
betraying the true socialist outlook. He thus managed to hint that the criticism of his policies of social development had been inspired from outside and that Romania had no intention of being led astray from its socialist course by foreign ideas. Reiterating previous statements, he said that one could not possibly "speak of perfecting socialism" while at the same time abandoning "socialist forms of ownership" and advocating "a return to capitalist forms." To protect the Romanian party from such "dangers," Ceausescu recommended re-editing and distributing widely the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. After the plenum, a new volume said to contain the President's "representative texts on the role of the working class as the leading class in Romanian society" was promptly released by the Political Publishing House in Bucharest. In a review of the book, the party daily Scinteia wrote on May 2 that "at a time when there are still misinterpretations about [the role of] the working class," that "contest its role . . . on the historical scene," and when "several authors speak of the diminution and even the disappearance" of this leading role, questioning "directly or implicitly" the "historical mission of the working class," Ceausescu's pronouncements on the matter "project an optimistic light" on the capability of the working class "to ensure the sustained progress of contemporary society."

While the Romanian leader stopped short of announcing a return to the "dictatorship of the proletariat," he made it clear at the plenum that the envisaged form of government remained that of the "vanguard" party of the working class. Although he had rejected this concept as far back as 1981, Ceausescu said that the RCP "is, and will remain, the party of the working class, the most advanced class of our society, whose historical destiny is to ensure the forging of socialism and communism."

International Implications. Hinting at the fact that other, unnamed, ruling parties were losing faith in their leading role, the Romanian leader said that he was deeply convinced that sooner or later the "working class" everywhere would realize that there was only one road to progress, namely, building socialism and communism under the guidance of the communist party. In other words, Ceausescu once more stepped into Enver Hoxha's shoes as the only leader still faithful to true doctrine. Indeed, his announcement at the plenum that Romania would never again become indebted to foreign countries and the enshrinement of this view in law also recalled Albania. It appears that, like Hoxha at his time, Ceausescu has become persuaded that "deviationism" prevails everywhere in the communist movement but in his own country. Remarkably, both Scinteia and Scinteia Tineretului (the Young Communist Union's daily), wrote on the 119th anniversary of Lenin's birth that the founder of the Soviet state had enriched revolutionary theory with several valuable theses, including "the possibility of socialist victory in a single state." Attributing to Lenin (rather than Stalin) the theory of "socialism in one country,"
the Romanian media thus appeared to be striving to legitimate Ceausescu's view that genuine socialism could be built even while the bulk of the international communist movement was being led astray by "deviationist" postures. (Stalin's name is too discredited to have served the papers' purpose.)

The views that Ceausescu expressed at the plenum had further international implications. While the Soviets have officially renounced "class struggle" in the conduct of foreign affairs, Ceausescu made it clear that his position was different. Referring to Third World countries, he said that Romania would continue to support their just struggle for national and economic emancipation, thereby again making explicit his allegiance to the former precepts of the international communist movement. The Romanian stand has undoubtedly been noted with satisfaction in capitals such as Havana, where Fidel Castro said during a visit by Gorbachev in early April that unlike Moscow, the Cubans "have no such certainty that imperialism has assimilated the new international reality, and we have reason ... to be suspicious of the [the imperialists'] behavior." 

Remarkably, the specter of "revisionism" also made a comeback at the April plenum after having been put aside by the Romanian party for many years. Addressing the forum, the CC Secretary in charge of ideology Constantin Olteanu pledged that the party would adopt a more combative position toward theories apologetic of capitalism, which contest the leading role of the communist party and of the working class in society, as well as toward revisionism [and] irredentism, toward those who falsify and denigrate [our] national history [and] minimize or negate our socialist achievements [or.] in fact, socialism as [a social] order.

It is true that Olteanu's statement was ambiguous enough to leave uncertainty about whether his reference to "revisionism" was aimed at reformist positions in the process of "socialist construction" or at the conflict with Hungary, which the Romanians accuse of territorial "revisionism" and "irredentism." The ambiguity was no accident. In the same breath, Olteanu managed to equate Hungarian-style reformism with territorial irredentism and to hint that those who criticized Romania's "achievements" under Ceausescu, as the six party veterans did, were in league with "revisionism" and had betrayed both the interests of their country and the true ideals of socialism. In similar manner, Foreign Minister Ioan Totu told the Grand National Assembly on April 17 that there had recently been "an intensification of hostile propaganda against socialist countries," which he described as a "true anticommunist crusade." "Imperialist circles," he said, "distort socialist reality, including that in our country," and promote "theses of a revanchist, nationalist, chauvinist, and irredentist nature."
Furthermore, these circles went so far as to "issue certificates of good behavior for socialist achievements in one country or another," in what was only an attempt by "all those who pose as defenders of human rights to divert attention" from the deplorable violation of basic human rights in their own countries.\(^\text{16}\) Totu's remarks were obviously directed at the same circles as Olateanu's, for the Romanian media has frequently drawn attention to what it wishes to portray as the dire consequences of the Hungarian reforms, among which it counts unemployment, inflation, and a growing foreign debt.\(^\text{17}\)

Michael Shafir


5 For more on Romania's antireformist postures, see Michael Shafir, "'Ceausescuism' Against 'Gorbachevism'," RAD Background Report/95 (Eastern Europe), Radio Free Europe Research, 30 May 1988; and Romanian Situation Reports/8, 10, 14, and 2, 23 June, 23 August, and 2 December 1988 and 2 March 1989, items 2, 7, 1, and 1, respectively.


7 See items 2 and 3, below.


10 See item 2, below.

11 *Scinteia* and *Scinteia Tineretului*, 22 April 1989.


13 See Romanian SRs/14 and 3, *RFER*, 2 December 1988 and 29 March 1989, items 2 and 1, respectively.

15 Scinteia, 14 April 1989.

16 Ibid., 18 April 1989.

17 See, for instance, ibid., 13 and 15 April 1989; and Contemporanul, 3 March 1989.
2. **Romania Pays Off Foreign Debts and Will Not Take Out New Ones**

Summary: Romania has succeeded in repaying all of its foreign debts, but doing so has caused a disruption of economic and social development. The public, including some intellectuals and former communist political leaders, have openly expressed their discontent with this policy. Ceausescu, in an attempt to escape responsibility for the debt arrangements, obtained retroactive approval from the Grand National Assembly, since, with very few exceptions, he contracted the debts himself.

* * *

The Contradictory Nature of the Repayment. Nicolae Ceausescu announced to a Romanian Communist Party (RCP) Central Committee plenum and a session of the Grand National Assembly in April in Bucharest that by the end of March Romania had completely paid off its foreign debt.¹ This was confirmed by Western sources, which said that Romania had not only liquidated its official credits owed to different states but had also paid the last installment of a loan of 1.5 billion dollars to the International Monetary Fund three years ahead of schedule and had discharged virtually all of its financial obligations to commercial banks and other international financial institutions.² In his speech, Ceausescu said that in 1980, the debt had amounted to 11 billion dollars. He also said that Romania had long since liquidated an undisclosed debt in rubles, which was not included in the amount mentioned above.

Although the liquidation of the debt seems a most impressive feat, it did, in fact, cause a serious disruption of both the economy and Romanian society. In the 15 years from 1975 to 1989 the repayment policy concentrated on saving as much hard currency as possible for rapid dept repayments. This had a severe effect on both normal economic development and the standard of living. This policy entailed cutting imports from the West in order to save hard currency, which in turn deprived the economy of the updated equipment and technology needed for modernization. Thus, the economy is being crippled by obsolescence, despite Ceausescu's claim that the repayment has not hampered Romania's economic development.

At the same time, the country increasingly failed to fulfill its economic plan targets. The national income (roughly the domestic net material product) has declined.³ During the next five-year plan, this trend will continue, bearing witness to how the Romanian economy has been sapped by the repayments. The national income, for example, was planned to increase by 60.4–65.4% during the 1986–1990 period; the goal for the 1991–1995 period will be lowered to an increase of only 40–50%.⁴
Moreover, a draconic austerity policy aimed saving as much hard currency as possible to repay the foreign debt has resulted in the exportation of a great share of the goods essential to the public. In a report on Romanian human rights violations, Senator Dennis DeConcini (D: Arizona) and the Chairman of the congressional Helsinki Commission, US Representative Steny H. Hoyer (D: Maryland), wrote that

fuel and electricity have been rationed for years [in Romania]. Staple foods, including milk, bread, and flower, are rationed and in many localities even these are unavailable. Meat is a rarity. Soup bones only occasionally appear in stores. Decades of financial misplanning and inefficient industrial development have led to the dire condition of the Romanian economy, making it the poorest in Europe after Albania.6

Popular Discontent. The years of repaying the foreign debt (1975-1989) have witnessed the most serious displays of popular discontent in communist Romania. In 1977 some 20,000 miners in the Jiu Valley protested their working and living conditions, and in 1987 20,000 workers in Brasov made a similar protest.6 Intellectuals—for example, Professor Doina Cornea from Cluj, the writer Dan Petrescu from Iasi, and the poets Dan Desliu and Mircea Petrescu from Bucharest7—to name only a few, protested against Ceausescu’s policies mainly in 1988 and 1989. The same was done in March of this year in an open letter addressed to Ceausescu by a group of six former top Communist officials—former RCP Secretary-General Gheorghe Apostol; Constantin Pirvulescu, a founding member of the party; former Deputy Prime Minister Alexandru Birladeanu; former Foreign Minister Corneliu Manescu; Silviu Brucan; and Grigore Raceanu.8

Ceausescu’s reaction has been brutal. A report on the world human rights situation released at the end of 1988 by the US State Department said that 15 of the workers involved in the demonstrations in Brasov had died in custody. Recently, Ceausescu had the stepson of one of the six protesting party veterans arrested and was preparing criminal proceedings against him for treason, thereby trying to implicate the signatories of the letter as well. In his speech to the RCP CC plenum on April 14, Ceausescu did not make any specific reference to these protests or to their repression. He nevertheless said euphemistically that repaying the foreign debt had made moves for strengthening order and discipline necessary.

Ceausescu’s Nationalistic and Anti-Western Stance. The openness of Romania’s announcement about repaying the foreign debt was unusual. Never before had Ceausescu been so talkative about this matter, the precise details of which hitherto belonged to the realm of state secrets. Ceausescu’s only previous references to the foreign debt had had been his insistence on the necessity of eliminating it. In an attempt to avoid personal responsibility for having acquired the debt,
mention was never made of the circumstances that led to Romania's heavy indebtedness or its mismanagement of the funds. The Romanian media, on the other hand, were full of criticism of the West's "plundering" the developing countries (among which Romania includes itself) through its lending policies. Ceausescu said that although Romania's debt was only 7 billion dollars in 1980, by 1989 it had cost a total of 21 billion dollars to repay it. More than 7 billion dollars of this was interest, which he called "tribute" in an allusion to the time when the Romanian principalities had to pay tribute to the Ottoman Empire. Only now, the President implied, could Romania claim to have become truly independent.

There is reason to believe that Ceausescu now chose to be open about the debt in an attempt to claim personal credit for its liquidation and, at the same time, to defuse popular discontent with the years of poor living standards by blaming the situation on the West.

Ceausescu's preoccupation with escaping responsibility for the debt and its disastrous impact on the economy and society is also evident from the unusual measure of having the Grand National Assembly approve the servicing of the debt. Previously, Romania's surrogate parliament had hardly been involved in the matter, except for approving a few foreign debts that amounted to a mere one billion dollars of the eleven billion dollar total. By this "special" decision of the GNA, Ceausescu succeeded in implicitly slipping through a retroactive approval of the debt; and in a display of what the concept of the "mobilized society" is about, following the GNA legislation, mass rallies were organized all over the country for seven consecutive days. According to the official media, enthusiastic support was expressed for the leadership's "achievements."

No More Foreign Debt. In an effort to assuage public anxiety about a possible repetition of these financial adventures, the Grand National Assembly, on Ceausescu's initiative, has passed a law barring Romania from taking out new foreign loans. This places Romania in a class with Albania as the only European countries whose laws forbid them from borrowing from abroad.

Still No Good News for the Populace. Ceausescu failed to say that now the foreign debt had been paid, the country's economic policies could be revised to improve the public's deplorable living standard. This was a deliberate, if oblique, way of making clear the official intention of continuing the austerity program in order to support the further rapid industrialization of the country. For this reason, none of the austerity measures—such as rationing fuel, electricity, and food—introduced in 1979 and 1981 have been repealed. Indeed, the public's meager food supplies have actually been seriously
reduced for 1989; the meat ration in 1989, for instance, will be half that of 1988. The Romanian ordeal is thus continuing.

Paul Gafton

1 Radio Bucharest, 14 and 17 April 1989.
4 Compare Scinteia, 28 June 1986, with Ceausescu’s speech on Radio Bucharest, 14 April 1989.
8 Romanian SR/3, RFER, 29 March 1989, item 1.
9 Ceausescu’s speech on Radio Bucharest, 14 April 1989.
10 Buletinul Oficial al RSR, Partea I, nos. 22, 62, and 65, 17 March and 2 and 16 August 1980, respectively.
11 Agerpres, 17 April 1989.
12 See Gazette Zyrtare, 30 December 1976; Albanian Constitution, Article no. 28.
3. Territorial Reorganization Approved

Summary: In a new step toward implementing Ceausescu's controversial resettlement program, the Romanian Grand National Assembly has approved a law reorganizing the country's counties, municipalities and communes.

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Reports, Resolutions, Laws, and Speeches. Despite growing domestic and international criticism, Nicolae Ceausescu seems more determined than ever to go ahead with his controversial rural resettlement plan. On April 7 the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) Political Executive Committee decided to submit a report on territorial planning and modernization of settlements to the forthcoming Central Committee plenary meeting. The report said that during the period from 1991 to 1995, guidelines should be established for the economic and social development of all communes, towns, and counties.¹

A week later, in a speech at the Central Committee plenary meeting, Ceausescu elaborated on how he thought Romania's countryside could best be administered. As usual, he pictured an ideal rural commune with its own small industry and services, including schools, medical facilities, and cultural centers.² The meeting produced a resolution, with one section devoted to the renewal of settlements and the "systematization" of the countryside. It opened with an eulogy to Ceausescu, for his "decisive contribution" to the vast program of rural reorganization, which started in 1968.³

Ceausescu seems to view the program as one of his major political achievements. Last year the 20th anniversary of the promulgation of the original law was marked by a flurry of articles in the press. Ceausescu apparently decided, however, that the law needed to be improved and updated. A draft bill on changes to the law on the territorial division of the country was presented to the Grand National Assembly (Romania's parliament), which adopted the bill unanimously. The new law stipulates that the country is to be reorganized into 40 counties, 265 municipalities (28 more than before, all of them new agro-industrial centers), and 2,359 communes (346 fewer than before).⁴

The new agro-industrial centers, which have already been elevated to the status of municipalities, are an integral part of the rural resettlement plan, which envisages moving residents of destroyed villages into this new type of settlement. The most striking aspect of the new law, however, is a 13% drop in the number of existing communes. The decrease was not unexpected, because Ceausescu, while promising vaguely in November that the number of communes would remain the same at the end of the "systematization" drive, put their number at "some 2,300"
instead of the 2,705 that had been cited earlier in Romania's statistical yearbook.\(^6\) A puzzled Western journalist remarked at the time that it was as if some 400 communes had already been liquidated, at least on paper.\(^6\)

The changes outlined in the new law appear to provide the administrative framework for continuing the resettlement drive while fending off international protest. It is not clear that all 28 of the new agro-industrial centers are urban enough to deserve their new status; and it is almost certain that not all of the communes that disappeared from the administrative map include villages that have already been destroyed; but the intention is clearly to forge ahead with the scheme at full speed, particularly now that additional funds have become available since Romania paid off its foreign debt.

It is obvious that the decision to cut the number of communes by 300 to 400 had already been made before Romania's surrogate parliament approved it. Any role still played by the Grand National Assembly is strictly limited to sanctioning ready-made laws and lavishly praising the "history-maker," as Prime Minister Constantin Dascalescu dubbed Ceausescu on April 17.\(^7\) The extravagant description was probably rivaled only at the last session of the Socialist Democracy and Unity Front, an umbrella organization of the RCP, when Nestor [Voronescu], the Metropolitan of Oltenia, said that:

despite the defamations coming from certain ill-willed circles abroad, [circles] traditionally hostile to the Romanian people, we wholeheartedly support the current modernization of communes and villages in our country. \(\ldots\) We support this drive in words and deeds, knowing that it brings not only a modernization of all aspects of life but also the preservation of all past achievements in the arts and architecture (including monuments of religious art) [and] of our entire cultural heritage.\(^8\)

In view of the fact that many churches have already been destroyed as a result of the resettlement program and that, according to some sources, up to 5,100 more are threatened by the current "systematization" drive,\(^9\) such statements from a senior Orthodox Church leader amount to what The Times of London has described as "one of the most shameful instances of dereliction of duty in the history of Orthodox Christianity."\(^10\)

Bats and Clubs Against Mergers. It very likely that the number of communes will be reduced by merging, rather than destroying, them. The plans, nevertheless, appear to have caused considerable concern in the countryside. Villagers are upset not only over the loss of prestige and funds for settlements that are to lose their designation as communes but also because they are uncertain about the authorities' true intentions. People fear that the next step will be to reduce the number of villages by scrapping those that have been branded as "unviable."
Three separate reports recently received in the West document an incident that occurred at the end of January in Petrova, a commune in Maramures County consisting of only one village. Much to the inhabitants' anger, the county authorities decided to remove Petrova's status as a commune and incorporate it into the neighboring commune of Leordina. Because Leordina also had only one village, the move might have made some sense, since it could have led to cuts in administrative staff and public spending. The villagers from Petrova—Romanians, Ruthenians, and, to lesser extent, members of other ethnic groups—refused, however, to accept the merger. They brought clubs and bats to a meeting with the county party secretary for propaganda, who had been sent to "convince" them. The propaganda secretary was beaten up and had to be taken to the hospital, and a security officer was manhandled. The community also deposed the mayor, a native of Southern Transylvania, on the spot and elected a local resident to replace her. Special security troops arrived from Sighet but failed to intervene, and it was First Secretary Vasile Barbulet of Maramures County who finally managed to calm the crowd.

It is interesting to note that as long ago as in the summer of 1986 a Western journalist who visited Maramures was told privately that the regime had been slow in carrying out the resettlement plan there for fear of strong reactions from the local peasants.

Singing Different Tunes. The determination with which the regime has clung to the rural resettlement plan has considerably damaged Romania's image abroad. In a bid to defuse international criticism, Romanian officials and diplomats have launched a campaign to convince the West that none of the villages will be destroyed. They insist that no villagers are being forced to move and that all are free to decide for themselves where to live. So-called "unviable" villages will be allowed to die a natural death, the officials say, adding occasionally that the state can no longer provide funds and services for such settlements. In tune with the propaganda offensive, the official press has stopped giving details of the plan's implementation. Publications in the provinces, however, continue to show a certain amount of candor, at least in assessing the scheme's ultimate goals. The cultural weekly Cronica in Iasi has written that

This category [villages without prospects for development] includes small and very small villages with declining populations, limited economic potential, and houses scattered over large areas; no "systematization" or modernization is justified in their case. Therefore, no new structures will be built there; [and] their populations will gradually be concentrated in villages with prospects [for development]. In time, villages lacking prospects [for development] will disappear of their own accord, thus bringing about a considerable reduction in the current number of villages.
Such assessments are a far cry from the reassuring statements made by some Romanian officials.

Dan Ionescu

1 Scinteia, 8 April 1989.
2 Ibid., 15 April 1989.
3 Ibid., 16 April 1989.
4 Agerpres (in English), 18 April 1989.
7 Agerpres (in English), 18 April 1989.
8 Scinteia, 15 April 1989.
11 For the structure of Petrova and Leordina, see Buletinul Oficial al RSR, Partea I, no. 54-55, 27 July 1981, p. 109. There were 188 one-village communes as of June last year. See Revista Economica, 17 June 1988, p. 4.
13 See Romanian SRS/15 and 2, RFER, 29 December 1988 and 2 March 1989, items 3 and 5, respectively.
4. Ceausescu Claims That Romania Could Make Nuclear Weapons

Summary: Nicolae Ceausescu has publicly claimed that Romania could make nuclear weapons. While giving assurances that for reasons of principle Romania would not use that capacity, Ceausescu implied that the decision was linked to future nuclear disarmament and was a matter of choice for Romania, without mentioning his country's obligations under the nuclear nonproliferation treaty. Ceausescu's recent statement on the right to have chemical weapons and now his comments about nuclear weapons indicate that he is giving the question of national military deterrence some thought, without any conceivable need to do so. His claim of a nuclear weapons potential seems highly implausible given the country's known economic and technical capabilities.

* * *

Addressing a plenum of the Central Committee of the Front of Socialist Democracy and Unity on 14 April 1989, Romanian party and state leader Nicolae Ceausescu claimed that Romania had the capacity to make nuclear weapons. He went on, however, to give assurances that for reasons of principle Romania would not use that capacity.

We can make any type of equipment... There is [., however,] only one field in which we do not wish to do it: the field of nuclear weapons. Yes, we do have that technological capacity as well; but we do not go ahead, because we are firmly opposed to nuclear weapons, whose use would mean the destruction of life on our planet; and we urge the elimination of nuclear weapons from all states and a world without arms and wars.¹

Ceausescu's statement makes Romania the sole East European state openly claiming to have the capacity to make nuclear weapons. The Romanian leader is known to have made this claim but without publicity on at least two previous occasions. In a wide-ranging interview for the Hearst newspaper group and the BBC in 1984, excerpts of which were published in the USA, Ceausescu was quoted as saying that Romania's industrial and technological development had reached the point at which "if we wanted to manufacture a nuclear weapon today, we could do so."² The Romanian leader repeated this claim at his contentious meeting with Karoly Grosz and other Hungarian party leaders in Arad in August 1988. Hungarian National Assembly Chairman Matyas Szu õ was at that time the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party Central Committee Secretary for international relations and took part in the meeting in that capacity. He has quoted Ceausescu as saying there that Romania "was capable of
manufacturing everything, including nuclear devices." According to Szuros, the Hungarian delegation was not sure "whether this was an insinuation, or whether it simply served to illustrate [Romania's] state of industrial development."³

Ceausescu's claim, then, is not in itself new. There are, however, several novel elements in it. One is that Ceausescu has now chosen for the first time to make this claim publicly. The other is the element of conditionality that would seem to be implicit in the way that Ceausescu explained why Romania had chosen against "going ahead," indirectly linking that option to future nuclear disarmament. In presenting the decision as a matter of choice for Romania, Ceausescu made no reference to Romania's obligations under the nuclear nonproliferation treaty (NPT). Although Romania is a signatory to that treaty, Ceausescu has occasionally implied in the past that nonnuclear states might be justified in linking observance of that treaty in the long term to progress on nuclear disarmament. In an interview, for example, with a mass-circulation Brazilian daily--Brazil is one of several nonnuclear countries (some of them signatories to the NPT) believed to conduct research on nuclear weapons--Ceausescu argued that observance of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty ought to be made conditional on nuclear disarmament goals beginning with the

removal of all nuclear arms from the territories of [nonnuclear] states. If agreement is not reached on that, there is no doubt that some of those states would be fully justified in reconsidering their position on that treaty."⁴

Ceausescu's latest statement on nuclear weapons also should be seen in connection with his New Year's Eve statement on chemical weapons, in which he professed concern that Romania along with other nonnuclear states had been put "at the discretion of those who have nuclear weapons." He asserted, moreover, that nonnuclear states had the right to possess some form of deterrent of their own. That function, Ceausescu argued, could be served by chemical weapons; and he announced accordingly that Romania would not forego chemical weapons until nuclear weapons had been eliminated worldwide.⁵ Taken together, these statements would seem to indicate that for some reason Ceausescu is at present giving some thought to the question of national military deterrence. In his latest statement, shortly after the passage in which he spoke about the capacity to make nuclear weapons, Ceausescu added that throughout Romanian history "our people took up the arms whenever necessary for the freedom and independence of the country. We hope not to be forced again to resort to arms." He did not, however, offer any clue regarding potential threats to Romania. The admonition appeared aimed in all directions and could be seen as a reflection of a siege mentality in response to the regime's deepening international isolation.
Ceausescu's announcement about Romania's potential to manufacture nuclear weapons (should it choose to do so) diverges, as does his position on chemical weapons, from the position of the USSR and the other Warsaw Pact states, which have shown great interest in discouraging proliferation and take an unequivocal stand on the matter. Moscow has not as yet reacted to Ceausescu's announcement, at least not publicly. The Moscow media, insofar as can be determined, have not reported Ceausescu's claim and chose to ignore the entire speech in which he made it; they did, on the other hand, report extensively on another speech that Ceausescu made on the same day.

It is difficult to take Ceausescu's claim about Romania's alleged capacity to make nuclear weapons at face value. Romania is, after all, one of only two Warsaw Pact states without an operating nuclear power plant. A plant with imported Canadian technology is under construction at Cernavoda (east of Bucharest) but is many years behind schedule owing to poor performance by the Romanians; the first reactor is expected to become operational in the early 1990s. It is also well known that the Canadian reactors are not meant to generate anything else but electric power and that they use natural (unenriched) uranium. Romania would have to obtain additional technology or develop it itself if the nuclear fuel to be used in these reactors were to be reprocessed in a way that would permit the production of weapons-grade uranium or plutonium. Whether Ceausescu's claim rests on a Romanian nuclear research program with military applications, on technology obtained illicitly from elsewhere, or on mere wishful thinking cannot be determined at this stage. Until more is known, his announcement that Romania can produce nuclear weapons seems implausible in light of the country's present economic and technical capabilities and performance. Nor does it reflect any conceivable need for an enhanced national military deterrent, even though this may be what the leader has in mind.

Vladimir Socor

1 Radio Bucharest (a live broadcast of Ceausescu speech), 14 April 1989. 9:00 P.M.; and Scinteia, 15 April 1989.

2 A BBC transcript of the full text of the interview, 19 July 1984.

3 Radio Budapest, 14 November 1988, 6:15 P.M.


5. **Romania in the Dock: Persecution of Dissidents and Other Violations of Human Rights**

Summary: Romania's growing international isolation has reached new heights as a result of the persecution of dissidents.

* * *

Romania's continual violation of human rights and Ceausescu's reprisals against dissidents and six former RCP officials who sent him a letter of protest have triggered a fresh wave of international criticism. As the impetus toward reform grows in some of the countries belonging to what used to be called the East bloc, Romania's hard-line positions are becoming more strident and Bucharest's isolation is increasing. The trend culminated recently in a decision by the European Community to suspend negotiations with Romania on a trade and cooperation agreement.

US Reactions. In Washington the State Department canceled a high-level bilateral meeting and warned the authorities in Bucharest in strong language to stop their repressive policies against Romanians who criticized their government. Senator Dennis Deconcini and Congressman Steny Hoyer, respectively the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe, praised the courage of the six former RCP officials who had signed the letter of protest and of other critics of the regime and expressed their "strongest moral support."

On April 11 and 12 Ceausescu met with Robert Robertson, Vice President of American Businesses for International Trade, who was visiting Bucharest with a delegation of US businessmen. The talks were attended by Romanian Deputy Prime Minister Stefan Andrei and US Ambassador Roger Kirk. Earlier Ceausescu had announced that Romania had paid off all its foreign debt ahead of schedule. Against the background of such an apparently favorable financial situation, the Romanians now wanted to pursue "the broad possibilities of increasing and diversifying trade and of developing economic cooperation." Ceausescu implied that renewing most-favored-nation status for Romania would be a purely commercial decision. His view, however, was completely different from that of the US authorities, who continued to stress the priority of human rights in US-Romanian relations.

The position was emphasized in Washington by Condoleeza Rice, Director of Soviet and East European Affairs on President George Bush's National Security Council. She said on April 21 that while the USA was encouraged by political developments in Poland and Hungary, it did not feel the same way about Romania: "It is our policy to differentiate between the states of Eastern Europe and to encourage and conduct broad relations with those that have made choices about trying to reform politically and economically."
Meanwhile, the State Department has been preparing a strategic policy review report on Romania that is to be presented to President Bush in the near future. It is already known that Ceausescu has no chance in the near future of achieving his present aims with respect to the USA. Those goals include increasing Romanian exports, obtaining licenses for high technology, some high-level visits to enhance the prestige of the Romanian regime, and the resumption of his country's MFN status.

French, British, and West German Protests. On March 16 the protracted human rights issue caused the French government to recall its Ambassador to Romania and postpone the planned annual meeting of the Joint Governmental Commission. On March 22 President Francois Mitterrand expressed his moral support for Romanian critics of the Ceausescu regime, and on April 5 the Paris daily Liberation again ran a story on 83 French families who had paid the Romanian authorities up to 1,000 dollars apiece to "adopt" Romanian children and were still waiting for the children more than a year later.

Criticism over Romanian human rights abuses has also continued in the United Kingdom. On April 6 William Waldegrave, a junior minister at the Foreign Office, decided to cancel a visit to Romania until it showed a willingness to honor the full range of its international obligations on human rights. Bucharest reacted angrily and recalled its ambassador in London for consultations over alleged scheming between the British and Hungarian governments against Romania's territorial integrity. The London-based International Press Institute renewed its call for the release of three Romanian journalists who were arrested for allegedly printing and distributing leaflets criticizing their government. (Ceausescu did not answer the institute's previous protest.) On April 14 British Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe declared that his country would continue to mobilize as much protest as possible against the "intolerable conduct of the Romanian government of President Nicolae Ceausescu." He added that "condemnation of that cultural and human savagery is widespread." Howe made it clear that the British ambassador would remain in Bucharest to "fight against conditions under the Ceausescu regime." Meanwhile, a member of Parliament from the opposition Labour Party, Paul Flynn, branded Ceausescu as a "leader who increasingly oppresses his own people with the primitive cruelty and arrogance of a medieval tyrant."

West Germany also has taken a hard line with Romania. After Romanian police prevented the West German ambassador in Bucharest from meeting former Romanian Foreign Minister Corneliu Manescu, one of the six signatories of the letter of protest to Ceausescu, Bonn recalled the diplomat and canceled a meeting of the Joint Commission that had been scheduled to take place at the Hanover Trade Fair on April 7. On April 8 former West German Chancellor and acting President of the Socialist International
Willy Brandt added his voice to the growing chorus of international protest. He said that the policies of Romania's leaders were damaging to themselves and their country, and he called on the Ceausescu regime to live up to its human rights obligations. Referring to Ceausescu's village resettlement program and policy toward ethnic minorities, Brandt said that the assimilation of minorities had always impoverished Europe. He also revealed that he had written a letter to Ceausescu in August 1988 expressing concern at developments in Romania but had received no reply.8

A week later Chancellor Helmut Kohl said on television that his government had good reason to spend vast amounts of money bringing ethnic Germans out of Romania. Shortly afterward, in a move that could not fail to be seen as a direct challenge to Ceausescu, the West German ambassador returned to Bucharest with an invitation from Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher to Manescu to visit Bonn.9

Other EC countries have taken similar stands. The Dutch government announced on April 6 that it was indefinitely postponing talks with Romania on the implementation of a cultural accord. In Belgium the three-month-old movement Operation Villages Roumains gained momentum after 206 of the country's 281 French-speaking communes had joined it by the end of April. By "adopting" one Romanian village each, the Belgian communes hope to prevent the villages from being razed as is allegedly planned under Ceausescu's rural resettlement program. Funds have been flowing in to the Belgian organization, which is printing posters and pamphlets, and organizing Romanian folk festivals; a similar campaign has been organized by French and Swiss communes.10

Another Hungarian Move. The case of Corneliu Manescu was also raised by the Deputy Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament and former Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Peter. In an interview published in the HSWP daily Nepszabadsag on April 21, Peter expressed his concern over the treatment of Manescu who, he said, had been placed under house arrest, threatened with trial and deportation, and was now critically ill. Warning that Manescu's life could be in danger, Peter invited him to Hungary for medical treatment and said that steps had been taken to arrange the trip.

Other Diplomatic Initiatives. The European Economic Community went even further in the wake of Bucharest's refusal last March to give the EEC details about the fate of more than 20 Romanian dissidents who had protested against Ceausescu's plan to destroy villages. During an EEC meeting in the Spanish city of Granada, the French, British, and Belgian Foreign Ministers as well as Jacques Delors, President of the EC Commission, told Radio Free Europe's Romanian Service on April 15 that "Romania's case is serious and upsetting" and revealed that the topic was on the agenda at their talks.11 Concrete
measures were taken during an EC Foreign Ministers meeting in Luxembourg on April 23: in an initial, unprecedented move, the community formally suspended negotiations with Romania on a comprehensive trade and economic cooperation agreement. The 12 Foreign Ministers reiterated their "deep concern at the Romanian government's continued failure to meet its human rights commitments." They said that negotiations could resume only if Bucharest's human rights record improved and that further action would be considered if the situation in Romania continued to deteriorate. At the same time, the European Community announced that it would lodge a complaint against Romania at the Human Rights Conference due to be held in Paris next month.12

Romania's case was also discussed at the London Information Forum, part of the follow-up to the 1975 Helsinki Accords, which was attended by representatives of 35 countries. The human rights situation in Romania was condemned by, among others, the US, British, and Canadian delegates, who said that Romania had failed to fulfill its obligations under the Helsinki Accords. They also rejected Romania's self-proclaimed right to scrap some of its commitments as defined under the accords. Canada's representative said that "our concern about (Romania's) violations of the Helsinki Accords and the Vienna Document cannot be described as deplorable interference in the affairs of other countries."13

Despite growing international protests, Ceausescu seems unconcerned. Meanwhile, the rigidly controlled local media recently added insult to injury when it reported that on April 19 Bucharest had witnessed a huge demonstration, where the participants had "feted the Romanian President" not only for having paid off the foreign debt but also for "his outstanding success in building socialism and for increasing Romania's international prestige."14

Mihai Sturdza

2 See item 2, above.
5 Reuter, 16 March 1989.
6 Ibid., 6 April 1989; The Independent, 5 April 1989; and AP, 7 April 1989.
8 Sueddeutsche Zeitung, 4 April 1989; and UPI, 5 April 1989. See Willy Brandt's interview in the Sueddeutsche Zeitung, 8 April 1989.

9 RFE/RL Correspondent's Report, (Bonn), 17 April 1989.

10 AP, 6 April 1989; and La Libre Belgique, 24 April 1989.

11 Broadcast on 16 April 1989.


14 Agerpres, 19 April 1989.
6. Doina Cornea Criticizes Ceausescu Again

Summary: The Romanian dissident Doina Cornea has sent Nicolae Ceausescu two open letters again protesting against violations of the constitution and the persecution of critics of the regime.

* * *

Doina Cornea, one of the most outspoken Romanian dissidents, has again written to President Nicolae Ceausescu accusing him of having turned Romania into a "huge prison." She has urged him to end policies such as the rural resettlement program and to stop persecuting people who express opinions that conflict with those of the regime. The letters, simply dated March and April, were the most recent of five that she has written to Ceausescu over two years. Cornea has been subjected to increased police surveillance and other harassment because of her strong criticism of the Romanian leader's policies.

Romania as a "Huge Prison." Cornea accused Ceausescu of having turned the country into a "huge prison" in which people were permanently assaulted and humiliated:

We are, in fact, occupied by an invisible army of Securitate men under your direct leadership. They have infiltrated everywhere, even into the privacy of our homes. You have crushed people's innermost being, humiliating their aspirations and their legitimate claims, humiliating their conscience, [and] compelling them, under pressure and terror, to accept the lie as truth and the truth as a lie.

Cornea said that Ceausescu was virtually emasculating the constitution: "Institutions hardly function anymore. They have been abolished and merely figure as names: justice, army, party, education, etc."

The tone of her letters was "direct and blunt" but justified, Cornea said, by "the urgency of the conditions" in which the population was living and by the regime's repressive policy, which was "even more devastating than the economic disaster" Ceausescu had caused.

The People's Defenders. Cornea asked if "it is now the poets' turn" to be oppressed and if it were really necessary to reiterate that poets were "the soul of the nation" and not instruments of the "useless ideology" that Ceausescu had imposed on the people. She wondered what would have become of Romanian culture if the national poet Mihai Eminescu had been silenced by King Carol I because of his articles and writings that were often "troublesome to the regime."
She appealed to Ceausescu to stop repressing and harassing the poets Ana Blandiana, Dan Desiu, and Mircea Dinescu, because they were poets of the "entire nation" and not Ceausescu's "personal objects." They belonged to the people and were their "spokesmen" and their "defenders." No one was taken in by the "show trials" at which poets were prosecuted as profiteers, she said, alluding to the fact that after Desiu sent Ceausescu a letter accusing him of violating the Romanian Constitution, the authorities threatened to prosecute the poet for black-market trafficking in coffee.2

The real profiteers, according to Cornea, were those "who sell the bread, milk, and meat, taking them out of the mouths of children"—a clear reference to Ceausescu's austerity program that has been imposed in past years to accelerate payment of the country's foreign debt.

An Appeal to End the Harassment of Journalists. Cornea also urged Ceausescu to stop persecuting journalists and printers "whose only fault lies in no longer being able to live a lie." Police arrested three Romanian journalists—Petre Mihai Bacanu, Anton Uncu, and Mihai Creanga—and a print worker, Alexandru Chivoci, in Bucharest in January for printing and distributing leaflets criticizing Ceausescu's policies. They are likely to be charged under article 166 of the Romanian Criminal Code, which covers "propaganda against the socialist state"; and they will face a maximum sentence of 15 years in jail.3

Romania's Socialism Called Anachronistic and Repressive. Cornea appealed to Ceausescu to stop the persecution of six former senior Romanian Communist Party officials who had criticized him in an open letter in March 1989. The six had protested against violations of the Romanian Constitution, the management of the economy, and policies that had brought about Romania's international isolation.4 Cornea said that instead of persecuting them, "it would be wiser to take their suggestions into account with a view to pulling the country out of its decaying condition." She said that she believed they were "rightfully reproaching" Ceausescu for having "forced the country into an anachronistic and repressive type of socialism." The Jiu Valley strike by 33,000 miners in 1977, the protests in Brasov by thousands of workers, and the protests by individuals whose "names are known and dear to the country's citizens" were all evidence that "the people have been fed up for a long time with the type of socialism" Ceausescu was imposing on Romania, she said.

Cornea Denounces the Measures Taken Against Her. In a second letter to the President, the Romanian dissident described her own ordeal that had resulted from the regime's reactions to her earlier protests. She lives in almost total isolation and has suffered various forms of harassment including, she said, a beating at the Securitate offices. Cornea charged that in violation of the constitutional guarantees of privacy (Article
34), her correspondence had been monitored regularly and almost all of it confiscated and that telephone conversations had been cut off or bugged and recorded by the Securitate. She reminded Ceausescu that citizens had a right to express opinions on issues of public interest. Articles 23 and 34 of the constitution guarantee freedom of opinion and the right to petition. "Revealing abuses and injustice" should be a "condition for maintaining social order," not a reason for persecuting those who exercise this right.

She wrote that not only were she and her family constantly harassed, but relatives, friends, acquaintances, neighbors, and even people she met accidentally in town were "interrogated, persecuted, [and] threatened." In an attempt to isolate her completely, the authorities had even prevented her from attending Sunday Mass.

Cornea said that the measures used against her were "illegal and revolting" and violated the constitution and the conventions on human rights that the Romanian government had signed. The purpose of violating privacy, of these "brutal and arbitrary practices deprived of any legal foundation," was to isolate those who protested and "to crush the people's conscience through intimidation and terror," she added.

Cornea reminded Ceausescu that "history does not forgive" and would not forget that he had "started pulling down the country's centuries-old villages, destroying their natural order," that he had demolished "the oldest and the dearest" churches and razed the medieval rulers' tombs.

Cornea concluded the letters by warning Ceausescu that he would eventually be judged by his "moral actions" and not "the gigantic, useless, and hideous concrete construction" with which he was trying to replace spiritual needs.

Assessment. Cornea's letters seem to attest to an increasing sense of solidarity among the country's dissident community that has emerged in the past few months. Her protests, together with the letter from the six party veterans, Dan Desliu's open letter, and Mircea Dinescu's interview with Liberation, illustrate the growing disaffection in Romania.

Crisula Stefanescu


3 AP (London), 7 April 1989.

4 See Romanian SR/3, RFER, 29 March 1989, item 1.
7. Mircea Dinescu's Letter of Protest to the Chairman of the Writers' Union

Summary: The Romanian poet Mircea Dinescu was dismissed from his job, blacklisted as a writer, and placed under constant surveillance after he had expressed enthusiasm for Gorbachev's reforms and given an interview in which he criticized Nicolae Ceausescu's policies. In a letter to the Chairman of the Romanian Writers' Union he protested these measures against him and provided some details about an incident involving another dissident writer, Dan Desliu.

* * *

Mircea Dinescu, one of Romania's most prominent young poets (he was born in 1950), recently criticized constitutional violations in Romania and party and state leader Nicolae Ceausescu's policies in an interview with the French daily Liberation. As a result of what he said in the interview, Dinescu was expelled from the party and, on 14 March, dismissed from the editorial board of the literary weekly Romania Literara. He then sent a letter (a copy of which has reached RFE) to Chairman of the Romanian Writers' Union Dumitru Radu Popescu, protesting his dismissal and the constant police surveillance to which he was being subjected.

A paradoxical feature of Dinescu's letter is that he addressed his complaints to Popescu in his capacity as Chairman of the Romanian Writers' Union to protest his dismissal by the same Popescu in his capacity as editor in chief of the RWU's weekly Romania literara. According to Dinescu, Popescu had told him that he was being dismissed from the editorial board for having "accepted invitations to foreign embassies without requesting previous permission and for receiving visits from writers, journalists, and diplomats from both capitalist and communist countries." How, asked Dinescu in his letter, could he be held responsible for violating a decree (decree number 408 on contacts with foreigners) that had never been published and when "fundamental principles of the writers' status are [being] violated."

Dinescu said that he had repeatedly emphasized that a writer was a public person and that everything he wrote or thought about was addressed to the wider public, "without ideological partisanship," and that he was not in possession of any state secrets. The writer's role, he said, was to reveal the essence of "existential and professional secrets"; and direct contacts with people helped him in "fulfilling his destiny as a writer."

Dinescu deplored Popescu's lack of solidarity with him as a writer and recalled that in Romania, where everything was
strictly controlled by the state, a writer dismissed and blacklisted was deprived of the means of supporting his family (Dinescu has two children). He had sent his letter to the Chairman of the Romanian Writers' Union, however, because he still regarded that body as the writers' trade union, despite its lack of activity. He referred here to the fact that not only had the writers' conference not taken place that was, according to the statutes of the union, to have been held in 1986 but that even the writers' council, to which Dinescu himself belongs, had been prevented by the authorities from meeting in the last four years.

Dinescu noted sarcastically that before he had heard his "sentence" from Popescu he had thought that he was being summoned to add his name to a protest against the imprisonment of Vaclav Havel's and the death sentence on Salman Rushdie.

Under Constant Surveillance. According to Dinescu's letter, the police started keeping him under surveillance in 1988, after his return from the Soviet Union, where he had given an interview to Radio Moscow in which he expressed his "enthusiasm for the magical effects of the words perestroika and glasnost". Although he had been officially invited to the Soviet Union by the Chairman of the Writers' Union of the USSR, he had not initially been given permission to go by the Romanian Writers' Union and had eventually managed to make the trip only as a private person.

Dinescu went on to say that after he had delivered a speech entitled "Bread and Circuses" at a conference on literature at the Academy of Arts in West Berlin from 14 to 18 September 1988, surveillance of him had increased. Two women had been added to the team of four men who kept an eye on him from their "headquarters," a blue minibus that was usually parked at the end of his street. Wherever he went, whether it was a private house or an institution, and however long he spent inside, they waited patiently for him.

Another very strange thing happens whenever a friend—a Romanian, a German, a Hungarian, a Jew, or [someone of] any other nationality—calls me up, telling me that he will pay me a visit: the six mysterious persons appear at the corner of the street . . . .

Dinescu said that another reason for his surveillance was that he had decided to have his forthcoming collection of poetry, "Death Reads The Newspaper," published abroad. The book had originally been accepted by the Cartea Romaneasca publishing house but had been censored by the Council of Socialist Culture and Education; Dinescu had therefore decided "to export it."

Forgive me for my vanity as an author, but after eight volumes of poetry published in Romania and several others in foreign languages and after four Romanian Writers' Union
awards and a prize from the Romanian Academy, I began—in
my naiveté—to believe that I was a free man, that I was
born free and that I was to die free, that freedom was the
raw material of my profession and that I could not exist
without it.

"Two Wonderful Porcelain Microphones." Dinescu began his
letter by telling a story about two Romanian writers who had
been sent several years ago to a communist country to meet some
local writers. The name of the country was not mentioned, but
it is clearly North Korea. Dinescu related that one day the two
Romanian writers, both from Transylvania, had been sitting at an
isolated table in the lounge of their hotel, drinking tea and
talking. Waiting for dinner, one of the writers, unaccustomed
to the exotic food, had said to the other: "How good it would be
now to have some goose soup with noodles, like in Transylvania."
Two hours later they were taken aback when they were brought a
golden bowl full of goose soup with noodles. Neither the
appetizing smell of the soup nor the ceremonial smiles of the
maître d'hôtel and the waiter had been able to remove the dismay
from the faces of the poets, who had drunk their tea from two
"wonderful porcelain microphones."

A Listening Plate: the Romanian Variant of the Wonderful
Porcelain Microphones. The day that Dinescu was dismissed from
România Literară a strange incident happened to another opponent
of the regime, Dan Desliu. In an abruptly interrupted
telephone conversation on March 14 with a Romanian-language
editor of the Voice of America, Desliu succeeded only in saying
that he had been attacked and beaten in the vicinity of the
Romanian Writers' Union building and that his briefcase had been
stolen. Dinescu's letter provided more details about this
incident:

Well, in broad daylight, in the courtyard of the writers' union [building], while the poet Dan Desliu was waiting for
a taxi he was attacked by a fellow who snatched the
writer's briefcase and fled down Victory Street with the
worn-out vinyl briefcase, which contained a ball-point pen,
a pretzel, and a plate . . . .Desliu's desperate shouts and
chase after the plate thief were to no avail, the militia
men, in abundance on Victory Street, assisting in the
pursuit with a strange timidity.

Dinescu wrote that a week before the incident Desliu and he
had been together in the cafeteria of the Romanian Writers' Union. After they had left, one of their colleagues had observed
three men desperately looking for a plate that had been lying on
the table occupied by the two writers that had been taken away
by mistake with other plates to be washed. Dinescu wrote that
after he had been told about this seemingly incredible story, he
and Desliu had returned to the cafeteria on March 14 with "the
villainous thought" of stealing "the listening plate." While he
was having lunch with other writers, the waiter, on the pretext
of bringing some more bread, had replaced the basket of rolls with a plate containing slices of bread. Desliu took the suspect plate away with him, determined to "study it quietly at home." It was on his way home that his briefcase, containing the plate, had been stolen. Dinescu said in his letter that there was no longer any doubt that "a listening plate" was being placed on the tables of talkative writers.

After this incident, Desliu's home was ransacked; and the authorities threatened to prosecute him for trafficking in coffee beans. Desliu began a hunger strike in protest. According to the French publication Liberation, he has been hospitalized; but it is not clear whether the hospitalization was voluntary or whether his hunger strike, which began in March, was still going on.

Crisula Stefansescu


2 Decree 408 apparently stipulates that Romanian citizens must report all contacts with foreigners within 24 hours. Furthermore, Romanian citizens are forbidden from offering lodgings to foreign visitors other than immediate family members.

3 See Romanian SR/11, RFER, 16 September 1988, item 6.

4 See ibid., no. 11, 29 March 1989, item 3.

5 22-23 April 1989.
8. **Seven Intellectuals Protest Against Dismissal of Mircea Dinescu**

**Summary:** Seven Romanian intellectuals have written to the Chairman of the Romanian Writers' Union to protest against the dismissal of Mircea Dinescu as editor of the literary weekly Romania Literara. They called on him to fulfill his duty to defend the members of the Union.

* * *

Seven prominent Romanian intellectuals have sent a letter to Dumitru Radu Popescu, Chairman of the Romanian Writers' Union (RWU), urging him to defend Mircea Dinescu and end the persecution of the writer. They recalled that "the RWU exists to protect the creative forces of Romanian culture."

The seven are Geo Bogza, aged 81; Stefan Augustin Doinas, 67; Dan Haulica, 67; Octavian Paler, 63; Andrei Plesu, 40; Alexandru Paleologu, 70; and Mihai Sora, 73. Most of them made their appearance on the literary scene before World War II, and all but Bogza have been persecuted under the communist regime.

The letter started by expressing "perplexity and concern" over Dinescu's arbitrary dismissal from his job as editor of the literary weekly Romania Literara, saying that no law could justify the severe measure. Because the writers' community had received no explanation for his "unexpected elimination," it went on, they had no alternative but to "indulge in speculation." The signatories warned that in the end, persecuting writers could only be "detrimental to Romanian culture."

They recalled the persecution of Tudor Arghezi (1887-1967) and Lucian Blaga (1895-1961), two poets who were subjected to "chicanery and prohibition" in the 1950s, thus establishing a parallel between the devastating years of the Stalinist era and the present.

Dinescu's dismissal from Romania Literara could not be viewed independently of the general interests of Romanian culture, they said, adding that as writers they refused to make a distinction between their love for the country and their concern for Romanian culture.

Posterity undoubtedly would not forgive us—nor or us—if we were unmoved when a fellow writer finds himself in a situation that does not allow him to make use of his talent.

The letter mentioned another outspoken Romanian poet and essayist, Ana Blandiana, who had been deprived of her fundamental professional rights, that is, "access to literary
magazines and publishing houses." Eight months ago Blandiana's column disappeared from Romania Literara, and her name has now vanished from all publications.3

It would be difficult, the intellectuals wrote, for the RWU to explain to its members how it had been possible to "reduce to beggary" a poet of Dinescu's caliber, for a writer who is dismissed and blacklisted in Romania is deprived of his livelihood. Dinescu himself had written a letter of protest to Popescu after the RWU Chairman, who is also Editor in Chief of Romania Literara, dismissed the poet from his job as an editor of the weekly.4

The signatories appealed to Popescu to end "an injustice and a mistake with extremely harmful moral, professional, and human consequences." In view of Popescu's past record, however, he is unlikely to oblige. Indeed, according to unconfirmed but reliable sources, one of the seven, Andrei Plesu, has been punished. Western diplomatic sources say that he has been assigned a low-level job at a provincial museum in Bacau although his professional background undoubtedly qualifies him for a considerably more important job.

Moreover, according to Radio Budapest, which was relying on French sources, all the signatories to the letter defending Dinescu except Bogza have been barred from publishing.5

Crisula Stefanescu

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1 See Romanian Situation Report/3, Radio Free Europe Research, 29 March 1989, item 4. See also item 7.

2 Geo Bogza, a prominent journalist, is still active in cultural life. He writes a column in Romania Literara and is a member of the Romanian Academy and the RWU Bureau. Stefan Augustin Doinas, an outspoken poet, was jailed during the Stalinist period. His work was again published in the 1970s. He has written many volumes of poetry and did an exceptional translation of Faust into Romanian. He is also a member of the RWU Bureau. Alexandru Paleologu is a distinguished literary critic and essayist whose works were banned during the Stalinist period. His has expressed liberal positions on many issues concerning literature. Octavian Paler is also a liberal journalist and an excellent essayist. One of his novels, Un Om Norocos [A Lucky Guy] (1984), was harshly criticized in 1985 during a so-called "literary trial" reminiscent of the Zhdanovist-Stalinist period. He is also a member of the RWU bureau. In an article entitled "Aesthetics and Politics" published in 1987, Paler stressed that a writer should not be indifferent to the world he lives in (see Romanian SR/7, RPER, 26 May 1988, item 6). Dan Haulica, is a remarkable essayist and the Editor in Chief of Secolul 20, one of the most important periodicals in Romania. Two years ago Secolul 20 appeared to be in danger of closing down and Haulica was subjected to a campaign of denigration. After nine months absence, it reappeared, but only after Haulica had been awarded the Grand Prize for the
Best Review Dedicated to the Arts in the World by the George Pompidou Cultural and Artistic Center in Paris (see Romanian SR/8, RFER, 23 June 1988, 8). Andrei Plesu, an art historian and philosopher of aesthetics, has published several brilliant books and is one of the most prominent young intellectuals. Mihai Sora is an important Romanian philosopher. He studied in Paris and, being a staunch socialist, returned to Romania in 1948 soon after the communist takeover. Sora was active in literary life for some time until the regime curtailed his activities. He is known to be one of the main figures in the literary renewal that occurred in Romania after the Zhdanovist period.

3 Ana Blandiana was blacklisted after she published a book of poems for children including a poem entitled "A Star from My Street." The poem alludes to the repression in the country; and its main character, a tomcat named Scallion, bears a number of similarities to Nicolae Ceausescu.

4 After the death of George Ivascu, the previous Editor in Chief of Romania Literara, Popescu, who was Chairman of the RWU and Editor in Chief of another weekly, Contemporanul, also took over as Editor in Chief of Romania Literara. It was under his leadership that Blandiana's column was banned.

5 Radio Budapest, 27 April 1989, 4:00 P.M.

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