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Research

## EAST EUROPE

● RUMANIA

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### CEAUSESCU REASSERTS RUMANIAN PARTY INDEPENDENCE

Summary: In a document ranking in importance with the April 1964 Rumanian declaration and his May 1966 speech, Ceauescu, in a Scanteia article, strongly reasserted the Rumanian position on national Communist independence, rejecting obligatory multilateral conferences, implicitly charging that "another Party" -- i.e., the CPSU -- had attempted to subvert his leadership, and warning that he would respond with "every measure" necessary. He also raised the possibility of differences in the RCP on internal matters. This paper discusses the possibility of such factionalism in the RCP.

Ten days after the conclusion of the conference of 24 European Communist Parties in Karlovy Vary and exactly one year after his major anti-Soviet speech of May 1966, Rumanian Party leader Nicolae Ceauescu took the occasion of the 46th anniversary of the founding of the RCP to restate, in very emphatic terms -- in the unusual form of a signed article in Scanteia (May 7) -- his determination to pursue a policy of independence in the face of any and all obstacles. While much of the article only restates the previous Rumanian position on national Communist Party independence, it nevertheless signifies a new major Rumanian challenge to the Soviet concept of a "socialist commonwealth" in East Europe, for it both rejects in principle obligatory multilateral Communist meetings and denounces an apparent Soviet effort to undermine Ceauescu's policies by wooing supporters within the RCP.

#### Rumania and International Communism

Ceauescu's article is, on one level, a definitive Rumanian statement of why the RCP refused to participate in the Karlovy Vary conference. The likelihood of that decision was hinted at several weeks before the conference and just after the end of the Warsaw preparatory meeting when Scanteia (February 28) declared that if multilateral or bilateral Communist meetings

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were to be "fruitful," they had to be carried out in a "climate of trust, esteem, and mutual respect, favorable to comradely, principled discussions," and had to refrain from judging the domestic or foreign policies of any particular Party. The paper also condemned "informing" on the activities of a Communist Party by a third Party. The Rumanian decision indeed to boycott Karlovy Vary was announced only on the eve of the meeting, when Bucharest voiced its objections to the "aim, character, and proceedings" of the conference.<sup>1</sup> In his latest pronouncement, Ceausescu has drawn the theoretical consequences of this move:

Each Communist Party has the legitimate right to participate in an international meeting if it considers it necessary and useful, as it also has the legitimate right not to participate. Internationalist solidarity is not contingent upon participation or non-participation in a conference. It has a much more profound content, which is manifest in the identity of goals of the Communist Parties, in the broad development of cooperation and mutual assistance among them, in the common struggle for the cause of socialism, peace, and social progress.

(Emphasis added)

Moreover, non-participation in a conference "must not affect whatsoever" inter-Party relations, Ceausescu continued, approving post-Karlovy Vary statements by Koucky in Czechoslovakia, Komocsin in Hungary, Kliszko in Poland, and Longo in Italy to that effect. In short, multi-lateral meetings could not be considered to be authoritative forums of the international Communist movement. There was no such thing as a European or world Communist conference, but, at the most, gatherings of interested Parties on a purely voluntary basis.

Emphatically repudiating participation in any Communist forum as a valid test of internationalism, Ceausescu stressed instead the importance of bilateral Party ties, citing an impressive list of recent such Rumanian contacts. Insisting on the necessity of discussions between Parties, he stressed that, in such discussions, there had to be room for the expression of all views, "without resorting to labelings and invective," stressing what unites, rather than what divides, and with practice the sole test of the validity of a position, and not any "authority" or international coordinating center" -- this last point being reinforced by a reference to the disastrous consequences of the Comintern. Repeating a now-familiar Rumanian position, Ceausescu asserted that such inter-Party relations ("new-type" relations, according to Scanteia of February 28) were one condition for the creation of true international Communist "unity." Another condition for that "unity" was recognition of the specific features, in particular the national distinctiveness, of each country's development of socialism, with each Communist Party the best and sole judge of the correct policies for the achievement of that goal.

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1) Agerpress, 25 April 1967.



Ceausescu coupled this reassertion of the Rumanian position with the sensational charge that "another Party" was attempting to deflect it from its autonomous course, by seeking to bypass his leadership and to establish direct ties with individual members and even "groups" within the RCP. (The charge was first made, in a much milder form, in Scanteia, February 28.) His words deserve quotation in full:

In the discussions with the representatives of a number of fraternal Parties [prior to Karlovy Vary], the question had been raised whether it is admissible or not for a Party member to establish, without approval and over the head of the leadership, relations with the representatives of another Party, whom he would inform on the activity in the ranks of the Party to which he belongs, to participate in actions against the political line of his own Party. There is only one answer: it is inadmissible under any form.... An attempt by a Party to establish relations with members or groups of another Party outside the organized framework means an encroachment upon the principle of proletarian internationalism, an action of splitting the unity of that Party. Any support given by a Party, regardless of the reasons put forward to members or groups of another Party, signifies an interference in its internal affairs, a disregard of the norms that must govern the relations between the Communist Parties.... Under such circumstances, each Party is fully entitled to take every measure it considers necessary so as to ensure its political and organizational unity, the implementation of its political line.

(Emphasis added)

Pointedly reminding his readers of the dangers of factionalism, Ceausescu made explicit a third Rumanian precondition for "unity" in international Communism -- the monolithic unity of each Communist Party.

### Internal Affairs

The key factor in Rumanian development, Ceausescu asserted in the section of his article devoted to domestic affairs, was the RCP, which, as a "Marxist-Leninist" Party, had to be totally united. Pay-lip service to free intra-Party discussion and "democratic centralism" he warned that all discussion had to be conducted within Party organs, that the Party could not be turned into a club of "endless discussions," and that the non-fulfillment of Party directives was a violation of Party discipline, which would entail Party sanctions. He explicitly applied these principles to Party leaders, pointing to the "far more serious repercussions" of violations of discipline by a "top Party worker." Possibly in this connection, he asserted the importance of self-criticism in Party life and warned of the continued danger of "antagonistic contradictions" in Rumanian society.

Proclaiming the continued validity of the Leninist-Stalinist principles of internal Party organization, Ceausescu also appealed for unanimous ideological clarity within the RCP. Again reasserting a now-familiar Rumanian position, but in so doing perhaps taking one more step toward the explicit elaboration of a specific Rumanian interpretation of "Marxism-Leninism," Ceausescu declared that, in determining its political line, a Communist Party had to "take into account specific conditions, varying from country to country." This stress on national "specifics" was reinforced by a brief balance sheet of the RCP's activities since its founding in 1921 which noted, inter alia, its constant opposition to "foreign imperialist domination." Briefly criticizing the Comintern for its centralist control of individual Communist Parties (although refraining from the detailed critique he formulated in May 1966), Ceausescu devoted more attention to the Party's mistakes in the immediate post-war period, when its lack of experience resulted in "inadequate solutions, ignoring of concrete conditions prevailing in Rumania, and erroneous tactics against the bourgeoisie, a policy which did not correspond to the imperatives of that [historical] stage."

This recall of the past failings of the RCP, Ceausescu made clear, was significant primarily for the lessons it furnished for the present and the future. Warning of the danger for the Party of both conservative and revisionist deviations from correct ideological principles, he made perfectly clear that, in the present Rumanian situation, he was attacking dogmatism in finding solutions to new problems. In his words, "the degree of knowledge and ideological maturity of the Communist are not measured by the number of quotations learned by heart...but by the correctness of the answer given to the new phenomena which have appeared in the process of social development." (Emphasis added) On the other hand, his general approach to the role of the Party embodied the strictest conservatism.

Restating the necessity of monolithic unity and ideological purity within the RCP, Ceausescu further stressed its growing leading role in Rumanian society. Granting -- for the first time -- that the Party would "wither away" with the attainment of full Communism, he declared that this process could only unfold through the current maximum strengthening of its leading role. Referring to the decisions of the Ninth Party Congress (July 1965), he enumerated its great responsibilities, declaring that the RCP "should directly lead the activity of all strata of society, exercise the responsibility entrusted to it by the people in the economy, foreign policy, culture, and the arts." It had to maintain "full revolutionary vigilance" against the influence of bourgeois ideology. The strengthening of the Party's role meant the necessity of adopting corresponding new organizational forms of relations between Party and state organizations, through which the Party would exercise control over state organs and work out solutions for economic and organizational problems, but not deprive social organs or collectives of their responsibility. The role of mass organizations, such as the trade unions, also had to be defined in a more precise way, with the goal of increased diversification in the methods of their work and their assumption of greater responsibilities.



### Significance

In terms of its importance for Rumanian policy, Ceausescu's May 7 Scanteia article must be ranked together with the April 1964 Rumanian declaration and Ceausescu's May 7, 1966 speech. Even after Rumania's agreement to establish diplomatic relations with Bonn and its boycott of the Karlovy Vary conference, the mere reiteration of the Rumanian position on national Communist independence would not in itself be of major significance. But Ceausescu's article embodies much more -- a clear "esoteric" charge that a foreign Communist Party has attempted to influence Rumanian policy over Ceausescu's head and a threat of sanctions within the RCP and, implicitly, of a rupture of relations with that Party if such efforts continue. While at one time such references might have applied primarily to the CCP, the context of Ceausescu's words, linked as they were with the pre-Karlovy Vary discussions, made it quite clear that the unnamed Party was, in fact, the Soviet Union or an East European ally such as East Germany, almost certainly acting, in the Rumanian view, as an agent of the USSR. (In the anti-Soviet nationalistic climate prevailing in Rumania, his reference will surely be taken to mean the USSR itself.)

The extent of the Soviet, or Soviet-backed, subversive action within the RCP could be minimized; Ceausescu's charges could be a gross overreaction to what could, in fact, have been quite cautious "lobbying" among important Rumanian Communists, first against the establishment of diplomatic relations with West Germany and, second, for Rumanian participation in Karlovy Vary. It could be argued that the Soviet leadership, aware of the failure of its predecessors successfully to infiltrate the Yugoslav, Chinese, and Albanian leaderships (and probably the Rumanian leadership itself in 1963-1964), has learned its lesson. Yet it should not be forgotten that both the major Rumanian statements of 1964 and 1966 on national Communist independence seemed to be, in terms of their immediate inspiration, Rumanian reactions to major Soviet efforts to restrict the Rumanian freedom of action -- in the first case, proposed bloc-wide planning, in the second case, (inter alia) an apparent attempt to strengthen the military structure of the Warsaw Pact. This history, the sharpness of Ceausescu's remarks, and the fact that the issue was first raised two months previously, suggest the possibility of a Soviet subversive effort designed to deflect the RCP from its uncompromising course of independence.

While such efforts could have been made any time in the past year, the charges in the Scanteia article of February 28, two days after the end of the Warsaw preparatory conference, and Ceausescu's words point to the pre-Karlovy Vary discussions. It might be recalled that the French Communist delegation to Bucharest in April 1967 was composed of Jacques Denis and Etienne Fajon, each of whom spent several years in Bucharest and presumably still has good connections there, which they could have tried to exploit. Last November, when Stoica visited East Germany, he and Ulbricht had, at the initiative of the latter, an unusual "private meeting," during which Ulbricht could have tried to urge him to oppose Ceausescu on policy towards West Germany. Both cases are, of course, purely speculative; attempts to establish illicit contacts with Rumanian leaders

could have been made on any one of a number of occasions, or even continuously over a longer period of time.

Perhaps even more surprising is Ceausescu's implication that such subversive efforts in fact met with some degree of success, that the unity of the Rumanian leadership, in pursuing its policy of complete national independence, may not have been as complete as has heretofore been supposed in the West. But, if this is the case, who are the dissenters? The Rumanian delegations which have visited and received other Communist Parties in recent months have been composed either of Ceausescu men such as Niculescu-Mizil or members of the old guard who, like Bodnaras and Stoica, have actively pursued the Rumanian policy of independence since it was inaugurated by Gheorghiu-Dej. The only top leader who has disappeared from public view in recent months is Petre Barila, an old "Moscovite" of Bessarabian origin, who was removed from the Politburo in the organizational reshuffle of July 1965 and who has apparently been inactive since early February. (He was previously reported to be ill.) Nevertheless, an additional possible sign of intra-Party dissent from Ceausescu's international policy was furnished by the March 1967 RCP Plenum which, while officially ending in "complete unity," published no statement on foreign and international Communist policy, in contrast to the two other subjects discussed.<sup>2</sup> At the March Plenum, old Communists, who supported the Gheorghiu-Dej independence line, could conceivably have argued that Ceausescu was needlessly exacerbating relations with the Soviet Union and recklessly exposing Rumania to the threat of international isolation. In particular, they could have argued that it was senseless to boycott Karlovy Vary, perhaps advocating the CPI's solution of attending, but simultaneously insisting on its exclusive right to formulate its own policies.

In contrast to the charge of connections with foreign Communist Parties, an inference that Ceausescu implicitly condemned, intra-Party differences on domestic matters would come as much less of a surprise. There was no reason to think that the RCP could forever remain immune to policy differences over such questions as economic reform, the foreign trade situation, foreign capital, and internal relaxation. At the December 1966 Plenum and the February 1967 foreign trade conference, Ceausescu attacked "some comrades" who resisted a frank discussion of Rumania's economic problems and opposed new forms of industrial cooperation and the profitability principle in foreign trade and industry. His latest attack on dogmatism in meeting new problems would seem to be aimed at the same target -- members of the old guard who oppose his plans for the rationalization of the Rumanian

- 2) It might be useful to recall that the March 1956 Plenum officially ended with "complete unanimity," yet it was revealed at the December 1961 Plenum that it was the occasion for a major clash between Gheorghiu-Dej and Miron Constantinescu over the interpretation of the 20th CPSU Congress.
- 3) Background Report, "Rumania's Situation and Prospects," 10 April 1967, by J. F. Brown, page 6.