

# RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

EAST EUROPE

E.W.

● RUMANIA

27 July 1967

## RUMANIA'S FOREIGN POLICY "DEBATE" - AN ASSERTION OF EMANCIPATION BUT NO POLITICAL SENSATIONS

The July 24-26 session of the Grand National Assembly, devoted largely to a discussion of foreign policy, was convoked on June 8, at the height of the Middle East crisis, and originally scheduled for June 28, but had to be postponed on June 21 due to the extraordinary meeting of the UN General Assembly. The session just ended in Bucharest was clearly intended to demonstrate, not least of all to the some 50 foreign journalists on hand, that Rumania's "go-it-alone" moves on the Israeli-Arab conflict, the establishment of diplomatic relations with the GFR and other initiatives were all facets of a coherent Rumanian policy, were the product of a "collective" Party effort, and had the backing of the Rumanian people "represented" by the National Assembly. Though it had been described as a "debate", the "big show" displayed at the Bucharest Palace of Congresses bore the unmistakable markings of a carefully staged Communist performance, in which Party leaders and ideologists had much more to say than the country's Foreign Minister, where interpellations were completely missing and where "unanimity" was a foregone conclusion.

Despite the hints to the contrary made by Rumanian diplomatic representations abroad in the past six weeks, the session turned out to be quite unsensational. What had been expected by many Western political analysts to signal a qualitative change in Rumania's foreign policy, after so many assertive moves as part of a policy of "kleinen Schritte", was actually a mass demonstration designed mainly to consolidate the gains achieved in the development of the country's political, economic and cultural individuality. The newsmen who speculated in May 1966 and again in July 1967 on Rumania's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact had to face the fact that Rumania's Communist leadership has no avowed intention of leaving either the East European military organization or Comecon, or of dissociating itself from the "world socialist system". Nevertheless, the just concluded session of the National

Assembly again demonstrated the progress made in recent years in the process of de-satellization in Eastern Europe.

### The Areas of Disagreement

This became particularly evident in the renewed Rumanian insistence on the norms governing relations between Communist countries and their parties. While parallels can undoubtedly be drawn with the Soviet position on a series of foreign policy problems (dissolution of NATO, withdrawal of troops, Vietnam, etc.), the numerous speeches delivered to the National Assembly underlined once more in detail the areas of dissent, notably on the question of Germany, the Middle East conflict and nuclear non-proliferation. This last theme, though not new (it has been mentioned in communiques issued in Cairo, Singapore and Tokyo), received particular attention at the session -- particularly in the speech of Bodnaras -- and placed Rumania very close to the position of such countries as the GFR and Japan on this issue. This latest emphasis on a position differing from that adopted by the Soviet Union and other East European countries (and, in this case, also the US) theoretically raises, of course, the question of a nuclear option as an alternative to unsatisfactory guarantees by the nuclear powers, but even more it touches on the familiar theme of non-interference in internal affairs, when it stresses equal rights of control.

The Middle East crisis itself offered a good opportunity for examining the role and "duties" of the great powers, notably the Soviet Union, and in this respect the speech delivered by Ceausescu before the National Assembly added new emphasis on the aspirations of small nations to political emancipation. Unclear, however, remains the exact significance of statements by the Party leader and other speakers to the effect that "a country deprived of part of its national prerogatives ceases to be free and sovereign" (Ceausescu) or of the reference by President of the State Council Chivu Stoica to the "full discharge of sovereign rights of each socialist state over the levers of command covering its entire territory and the inadmissibility of renunciation of any constitutional right of a socialist state." While even other Comecon member countries have admitted that the old (dating back to 1962) question of supranational planning -- to which the Rumanians objected in similar terms in their April 1964 Declaration -- is a "dead" issue, it is possible that similar problems have cropped up in recent years, perhaps with regard to some aspects of military collaboration as well as coordination of ventures in the foreign policy field. In this respect, Ceausescu's remarks on the Moscow communique of June 9 on the Middle East had been awaited with great interest, but the Party leader did not go here beyond the familiar statement that because of disagreement on some (unspecified) points of the document, the Rumanians had decided not to sign it.

The listeners must also have been disappointed by the few insignificant words which Prime Minister Maurer devoted to his meetings with President Johnson and De Gaulle, not to mention his

complete silence on the visit to Peking. The reports on the failure of this visit, published in the Baltimore Sun of July 24 and 26, could, if true, have explained Maurer's reluctance to deal with this subject.

Also noteworthy was Ceausescu's regret over the failure of Rumanian efforts at the UN to bring about an understanding to settle the Middle East crisis. He went further than previous statements on Rumania's position on this issue when he advised the Arab countries that their fight for national unity and social and economic development was incompatible with the demand for extinction of another state (Israel).

#### Ideological Foundations of Rumanian Foreign Policy

Interesting is also the new attempt made at the National Assembly session, particularly by Ceausescu, Paul Niculescu-Mizil and Leonte Rautu, to provide an ideological foundation for Rumania's foreign policy. Of particular significance in this respect was the discussion of the need for the existence of national states for a long time to come, and of the important role of the nation, as well as the distinction made between nationalism and chauvinism, viewing the latter as a negative doctrine aimed at expansion at the expense of other nations or encroaching on their rights. One can hardly doubt that Rautu's remarks on this subject (what irony that this old arch-Stalinist was picked to expand on this particular subject!) were a reply to the Pravda article condemning nationalism (and the support allegedly given it by "Western imperialism" with a view to splitting the East European bloc) which appeared on the eve of the National Assembly session. Also of some significance was Niculescu-Mizil's warning to Moscow that the development within the Communist world of diversity of views and of approaches to the problem of "socialist construction based on the creative application of Marxism-Leninism and to the national peculiarities of evolution of each country" was "inevitable and irreversible."

#### Tone of Moderation Toward the Soviet Union

The National Assembly was called upon to "legalize" this stand and to demonstrate the people's support for the regime's foreign policy. Nevertheless, the lack of a discernible "escalation" in regard to previous isolated foreign policy pronouncements, the absence of a polemical tone and of references to such controversial issues as the Karlovy Vary meeting or the renewed proposal by the Soviets of an international Party conference (both, to be sure, can be regarded as Party matters not within the purview of a parliamentary body) as well as the special reassurances given to the Soviet Union all raise the question of the motivation for such surprising moderation. Perhaps the moment has come for a stock-taking and consolidation of achievements in the establishment of the country's political individuality in the Communist camp and its image of a promoter of a policy of "active coexistence".



This may be all the more necessary as Rumanians will have to face fairly soon new problems posed by the pressure exerted for the convening of an international world conference and the renewal of the 20-year treaties with the Soviet Union and other East European Communist countries, not to mention the question raised by similar treaties concluded by East Germany with these countries. However, despite the rather confident manner in which all speakers have asserted Rumania's right to dissent and the differing positions taken in foreign policy matters, one should not overlook the problem of a certain degree of Rumanian isolation within Eastern Europe. The Rumanian absence from Karlovy Vary could be seen in this light, and even more so the Middle East issue, in view of the decision of Yugoslavia (also absent from Karlovy Vary) to side with Moscow and the Arab countries. The reported failure of Maurer in Peking and the postponement to next year of De Gaulle's visit to Rumania (not to mention the open Arab criticism of Rumania) could be seen as further indications of receding support in some areas. Could this account for the mild tone employed during the proceedings of the National Assembly and the rather generous words addressed to the Soviet Union? It is hard to say. In any case, Manescu and other speakers said that Rumania's stand had been very popular at the UN and that the country had never had so many friends. Many observers believe that "moderation after excitement", an attempt to consecrate and consolidate gains in foreign policy achieved thus far without incurring open Soviet criticism is the best course under the circumstances. Probably uncertainty over these motivations and not only disillusionment over unfulfilled hopes of sensations account for the wide spectrum of the Western press commentary on the Rumanian National Assembly session. The Eastern media, on the other hand, have commented in the usual selective manner.

#### Middle East Stand Vindicated

There is perhaps one additional point which explains not only the timing of the session but also the air of "confident moderation" displayed by the Rumanians. On June 8, when the Assembly was first convoked, it was clear that the Rumanian policy of non-interference and active coexistence was correct and that the Soviets had made a major mistake resulting in a military and political Arab debacle in the Middle East and the most painful loss of huge quantities of war material. As Manescu reportedly said to journalists in the Hague a few days ago, Rumania had often differed with the Soviet Union on such assessments and had been proven right. Indeed, the position taken by Rumania on the Arab-Israeli conflict, even during the period preceding the war in the Middle East, proved to be right. Expanding on this theme, Ceausescu listed a series of causes for the failures of "anti-imperialist forces" and the temporary successes of reaction and imperialism." Among them were lack of unity, the underestimation of the material and military power of imperialism (whose influence, however, according to the Rumanian Party leader, is decreasing) and the lack of preparedness of the "anti-imperialist forces."

While the last argument obviously applies to Arab countries, the other listed factors have been invoked in the past in regard to the war in Vietnam (lack of unity) and even to Indonesia, Ghana, etc. One should add here that Ceausescu's call for joint aid for Vietnam is more ambiguous (in regard to coordination) than previous statements on the subject.

#### Ceausescu on Relations with Foreign Countries

Ceausescu went to great lengths to underline Rumania's credentials as a member of the Communist world system in good standing. He warmly praised the Soviet Union, spoke of relations of friendship and fraternal cooperation with that country in the spirit of "old traditions which have acquired a new content under the conditions of the socialist order." He also spoke about the broad cooperation between the two countries in the political, economic and technical fields and stated that all possibilities existed for the intensification of this collaboration.

The Party leader then dealt with the neighboring and other East European Communist countries before reporting on relations with Communist China (characterized by expanding fraternal cooperation) and Albania. He pledged full material, political and diplomatic support for Vietnam and also had friendly words for Cuba, "the first socialist country on American soil." In general, in speaking about relations with the Communist countries, Ceausescu demanded more consultations and a larger exchange of information. The Party leader mentioned some progress in the development of economic and scientific relations with the US but said that their expansion was hampered by "discriminatory tactics" as well as by the Vietnam war. Interesting, it should be noted, was the demand by First Vice-Premier Gheorghe Apostol that all countries should have "normal relations" with both Germanies. While such a demand implies recognition of East Germany by Western states, it obviously also makes it understood that Rumania's example of establishing diplomatic relations with the GFR should be followed by other East European countries.

In view of the present situation in the Balkans and particularly Greece, Ceausescu's positive remarks on cooperation in this area and the fruitful results of Maurer's visit to Athens and Istanbul are open to some question. He did not comment either on the postponement of his visit to Yugoslavia.

#### Comecon and the Warsaw Pact

After assessing as positive the role played by Comecon in the development of economic relations between its member countries, Ceausescu dealt at length with bilateral and multilateral agreements with all "socialist" countries, in the field of commercial exchanges and joint achievement of economic objectives. Referring to the Central Committee Plenum of last March which decided on the

expansion of "economic and scientific cooperation with other countries, Ceausescu revealed that Rumania had approached all "socialist" countries with proposals for cooperation in production. The emphasis on this subject shows the important place industrial cooperation is beginning to occupy in Rumania's foreign trade preoccupations.

Dealing with the Warsaw Pact, Ceausescu said that "as a member of this organization, Rumania is doing its utmost to increase its defense capacity, so as to be ready to make, together with the other member countries, its contribution to the repulsion of any aggressor, of any imperialist plot" against the revolutionary conquests of the Rumanian people and other socialist nations." More interesting and expanding on Ceausescu's remarks in his Brasov speech of June 18, General of the Army Iacob Teclu, the former director of the Military Academy, said:

"Taking into consideration the colossal confrontation of forces and means which are engaged in a war, the complex content of measures to be taken and the geographical areas which could be involved in such a conflagration, the defense capacity of our country must be considered and approached on a broader basis than heretofore. This requires a modern, well-equipped army based on an advanced economy and permeated by a perfected patriotic and political conscience."

Teclu, who revealed here preoccupations similar to those which have been evident in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in the wake of the Middle East war, did not, however, return to the demand for the national command of each Warsaw Pact member country over its own national forces, set forth by Ceausescu in his speech of June 18. General Teclu concluded his speech by saying that the Rumanian Army would always be on the side of the armies of the "socialist" countries.

The rethinking demanded by Teclu and the demand made by Defense Minister Ion Ionita for an army that would be powerful from all points of view might conceivably also reflect some problems regarding negotiations between the Soviet Union and Rumania over modern equipment. Returning to a slogan similar to that of the need for a powerful economy of each Comecon country, Ionita said that "the more each socialist country takes better care of its defense capacity and its armed forces, the greater its contribution to the fulfillment of its international obligations will be."

#### The Basis of Relations with Communist Countries

Ceausescu in his speech stated that "in contrast to the relations imposed by imperialism, based on domination and persecution, the new-type international relations within the socialist system, based on socialist internationalism, respect for independence and non-interference, are gaining ground. However, the foreign policy



marathon at the Palace of Congresses showed that despite this assertion and protestations that relations with other "socialist" countries are at the center of Rumania's foreign policy, differences have emerged.

Trade union chief Constantin Dragan, who voted against the Soviets last December in Sofia, appealed for more autonomy within the WFTU and even demanded that decisions should be made without pressure and that measures aimed at isolating certain delegations or attempts to impose one's own will on other members of the world Communist body should be eliminated. Prime Minister Maurer characterized as "unnatural" that "methods and practices in contradiction to the standards of equal rights and non-interference in internal affairs...should occur in relations between socialist countries." He also stated that "the fundamental postulate governing Rumania's foreign activity is the conviction that aside from its own will, and thus from its own policy, no geographical, economic or military consideration can limit the capacity of a country, be it big or small, to contribute to the ensuring of an international climate which could give each country the opportunity to develop its creative energies, to engage unhampered with all its forces on the road of material progress and spiritual flourishing."

Thus, the Rumanian leaders are not abandoning any of the substantive positions of their foreign policy and are defending themselves against undue interference. At the same time, while stressing their loyal membership in the "socialist system" and thus disarming the critical arguments of their more orthodox neighbors, they have succeeded in underscoring the increasingly wide range of policy alternatives available even to countries closely and formally allied with the Soviet Union.

(Rumanian Unit)