

ASPECTS OF POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS OF ROMANIA IN THE FIRST DECADE OF THE “REIGN” OF NICOLAE CEAUȘESCU (1965-1975)

Mihaela BĂRBIERU*

Abstract: The period between IX-XI Congresses of the Communist Party still manages to offer several research themes to historians. Romania's foreign policy under Ceaușescu is reorientated and the communist leaders, from the desire to get as much power, put a distance from Soviet hegemony. The continuation of diplomatic relations with Israel after the war of six days, condemning the military intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 or the contrary opinion that our country had in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CAER) against the proposals from Russia, and developing friendly relations with the European Economic Community, the United States, China, etc. have been enrolled in this line. Nicolae Ceaușescu had also a series of initiatives designed to strengthen Romania's position abroad, and in this respect, we emphasize the central role in the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. In the attempt to underline the important role that Romania had on the international scene during Ceaușescu, our study analyzes aspects of Romanian diplomacy and foreign policy in the period 1965-1975.

Keywords: Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CAER), external relations, diplomacy, mediation, foreign policy.

After the death of Stalin, which was a shock to the communists of the time, a wind of change broke out which “generated revolts in Hungary and Poland and turbulence in the leadership of the communist parties”¹. The closing of the Danube Black Sea Canal and the collective management established by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, as well as other measures taken by it, created the favorable climate for Ceaușescu to make himself noted, so that from April 1954 he came to occupy very high positions on the steps of the power². After the death of Gheorghiu-Dej and the election of Ceaușescu as first secretary of the Romanian Labor Party (later the Romanian Communist Party – PCR) in the plenary of the Central Committee

* 3rd Degree Scientific Researcher, PhD., “C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor” Institute for Research in Social Studies and Humanities from Craiova, of the Romanian Academy; E-mail: miha_barbieru@yahoo.com.

¹ Lavinia Betea (coord.), *Viața lui Ceaușescu. Fiul poporului*, Bucharest, Adevărul Publishing, 2013, p. 5.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 5–6.

(CC) of March 22, 1965³, in Romania began what would later be called the *Ceaușescu era*.

The first years of Romania under the leadership of Ceaușescu were spent in a favorable climate on an external level, although the international context was not quite a quiet one, and here we consider, in addition to the American bombing of North Vietnam in 1964, the massacre of half of millions of communist followers in Indonesia at the end of 1965 and France's withdrawal from NATO in March 1966⁴. Internally, this period was characterized by the weakening of the terror introduced by the previous regime and by the continuation of the communist nationalist-type policy – rapid industrialization and foreign policy. Ceaușescu wanted to be seen in the West as the initiator of a policy of national independence.

At the beginning of the '60^s, by the policy of independence from the Soviet Union promoted by the Gheorghiu-Dej regime and by the manifestation of national interest, but without renouncing internationalism, Romania will occupy a distinct place within the Soviet bloc. The Bucharest regime initiated “a distance from Moscow, a settlement based on equality of bilateral relations and not a break with Moscow”, was a promoter of international rebound, lacking the desire to leave the Warsaw Treaty or CAER (Mutual Economic Aid Council), and wanted “freedom to pursue their own interests”⁵. Ceaușescu continued this policy, proving himself a staunch supporter of his own path “in the construction of socialism”, “upholding the national and international character of socialism”⁶. In the same period a distance between the discourse for peace and the Soviet one would have been also started for Romania, something that was not conceivable in the previous period, when an intense activity was carried out in support of the Soviet idea of peace, with tracing tasks, in this sense, to all socio-professional categories.

From the beginning, Ceaușescu intended to build an independent policy⁷. Thus, all the actions he has taken show his clear desire to transform Romania into a regional power. He will lead a policy of forcing Romania's participation in economic relations with other states, through artificially intensified economic cooperation. Ceaușescu's goal was a new stage in the evolution of the communist regime, a stage that would be different from that of his predecessor⁸. In this respect, the first step was represented by the IXth Congress of the PCR of July 1965. The political report of the CC at the IXth Congress decided “the directions of

³ Ion Calafeteanu, Cristian Popișteanu (coord.), *Politica externă a României. Dicționar cronologic*, Bucharest, Scientific and Encyclopedical Publishing, 1986, p. 274.

⁴ Lavinia Betea (coord.), *cited work*, p. 250.

⁵ Dan Cătănuș, *Tot mai departe de Moscova... Politica externă a României 1956–1965*, Bucharest, Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului Publishing, 2011, p. 345.

⁶ Ana Maria Cătănuș, *Tensiuni în relațiile româno-sovietice în anul “Primăverii de la Praga”*, in “Arhivele Totalitarismului”, no. 1-2/2006, p. 227.

⁷ Lucian Popescu, *Ceaușescu și obsesia pentru pacea mondială*, in “Historia”, available at <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/ceausescu-si-obsesia-pentru-pacea-mondiala>.

⁸ *Istoria românilor*, Vol. X, Bucharest, Encyclopedical Publishing, 2013, p. 277.

development of Romania in the next five years”, the continuous development of the economy standing “at the basis of the general progress of the Romanian society”. The central objective of the economic development was “the industrialization of the country, the development of the heavy industry, especially of the car-building industry”⁹. The Ceaușescu’s regime focused on accelerated development in order to transform the country from a predominantly agrarian state into a heavily industrialized one¹⁰, with a strong economy. Unfortunately, it did not take into account the factors that should have made the production more efficient (the environment¹¹, social factors, etc.), “the balance between the different economic branches”¹² and neither the specialized or during specialization workforce. Forced industrialization was achieved, through faulty government strategies and policies. Unfortunately, cost-benefit calculations and specific market projections were not the elements to be taken into account in such an action, as they were practically non-existent. As a result, the Romanian society faced inefficient productions, with very high costs, which led to a result far from the expected one, with serious consequences on the living conditions of the Romanians, which became by the end of '89 particularly difficult¹³.

The beginning period of the Ceaușescu’s regime was characterized by successes in the foreign policy plan. During the IXth Congress, Ceaușescu promoted ideas for collaboration and development of external relations with all countries, regardless of the political regime, but in priority with those of CAER. Between 1968-1972 the relations of collaboration and mutual assistance with the USSR were renewed on June 7, 1970, with Bulgaria on November 19, 1970, with Czechoslovakia on August 16, 1968, with Poland on November 12, 1970, with Hungary on February 24, 1972 and Collaboration treaties were concluded with the German Democratic Republic on May 12, 1971 and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in May 1976¹⁴. Through these treaties, both the development of political relations and the development of economic relations were envisaged, which meant intensifying and increasing trade.

⁹ Nicolae Ceaușescu, *România pe drumul desăvîșirii construcției socialiste. Rapoarte, cuvîntări, articole. Iulie 1965 – septembrie 1966*, Bucharest, Political Publishing, 1968, pp. 18–20.

¹⁰ The Political Report of the IXth Congress of the P.C.R. said: “Only on the basis of industrialization we will create conditions for the liquidation of the village's long stay in the back of the city” (Nicolae Ceaușescu, *România pe drumul...*, p. 21).

¹¹ In Romania, the pollution reached very high levels during the communist period.

¹² *Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România. Raport Final*, Bucharest, 2006, p. 49, available at http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT_FINAL_CPADCR.pdf.

¹³ Mihaela Bărbieru, *Aspects Concerning Foreign Economic Relations of Romania in the Years 1965-1989*, in “Anuarul Institutului de Cercetări Socio-Umane «C.S. Nicolăescu-Ploșor»”, no. XVI/2015, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Romanian Academy, p. 40.

¹⁴ Iulian Dănescu, *Dinamica relațiilor economice internaționale ale României în perioada fâuririi societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate*, in “anale de istorie”, year XXXII, no. 3, 1986, pp. 105–106.

Between 1965 and 1969, Ceaușescu's policy was dominated by four main directions: (1) the efforts made by him to gain his popularity by adopting populist measures; (2) the struggle to eliminate those with whom he shared power in 1965; (3) the ability with which he has acted abroad, having the special pleasure of being in the middle of the international scene and arousing the interest of the western world for the attitude of distancing towards the USSR in certain areas of foreign policy; (4) care to keep within the tolerance of Moscow¹⁵.

Until his death in 1989, Ceaușescu boldly promoted the image of Romania as an independent and sovereign state, and the former prime minister Maurer considered that «Each party has the right to draw its own political line, without any interference from outside. Each political party is responsible for its actions only in front of its people, so there is no “parent” party or a “big brother” party, as the Soviet one considers itself»¹⁶.

The principles on which Romania's foreign policy was based were equality in rights, non-interference in internal affairs, territorial integrity and national sovereignty, mutual benefit¹⁷. Among them, cooperation on principles of equality and mutual advantage in relations with other states, as well as non-interference in the internal affairs of the state, were the principles with which the Romanian communist leader gained his sympathy and prestige outside the communist bloc¹⁸. Prime Minister Maurer has fully contributed to the development of Romania's external relations by conducting numerous visits of high Romanian dignitaries in different countries (Austria, USSR, Iran, Hungary, United Kingdom, Denmark, Turkey, Greece, German Federal Republic, USA, Holland, Yugoslavia, Finland, Sweden, Israel, Czechoslovakia, Australia, Belgium, Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia, India), by receiving political delegations of high rank (India, Yugoslavia, Iran, China, Australia, Austria, German Federal Republic, Denmark, Turkey, Pakistan, Italy, France, Great Britain, Spain, USA, Finland, Netherlands – a total of 24 visits by heads of state or personalities high-level policies) or through Romanian diplomatic initiatives and participations within international bodies (17 Romanian diplomatic initiatives and participations at the United Nations)¹⁹.

The year 1967 was marked by two extremely important events for Romania from the perspective of foreign policy. First, relations with the German Federal

¹⁵ *Politica externă a României de la instaurarea lui Ceaușescu până la începutul revoluției culturale*; available at <http://www.rasfoiesc.com/legal/administratie/stiinte-politice/POLITCA-EXTERNA-A-ROMANIEI-DE-24.php>.

¹⁶ Lavinia Betea, *Partea lor de adevăr*, Bucharest, Compania Publishing, 2008, p. 329.

¹⁷ *Politica externă a României de la instaurarea lui Ceaușescu până la începutul revoluției culturale*, available at <http://www.rasfoiesc.com/legal/administratie/stiinte-politice/POLITCA-EXTERNA-A-ROMANIEI-DE-24.php>.

¹⁸ Lavinia Betea (coord.), *Viața lui Ceaușescu ...*, pp. 251–252.

¹⁹ *Istoria românilor*, Vol. X, Bucharest, Encyclopedical Publishing, 2013, pp. 300–304.

Republic at the embassy level were lifted, after the commercial relations were initiated in 1963. Then, in the middle of the year, in June, Ceaușescu stands out among communist leaders in Eastern Europe when, unlike them, he does not break relations with Israel. The 6-day war, in which Israel attacked Egypt by air, hitting military bases and airports to paralyze its defense capabilities, effectively destroying its armed forces, was a real disaster for Brezhnev and a prestigious blow for the Soviet Union. On June 8, both Ceaușescu and the other communist leaders were summoned to the Kremlin for the second day, in order to debate the situation created in the Middle East. Brezhnev reported that Nasser had not been supported by the USSR in its actions to close the Gulf of Aqaba. Nor had he been supported for the request for the withdrawal of UNEF (United Nations Emergency Force) troops stationed in the Sinai Peninsula. However, he expressed a desire to support it in the continents so as not to endanger the influence of *socialism* in the Arab world. The Communist leaders present declared their support for the Soviet policy in the Middle East, except Ceaușescu. He had a different point of view than the “comrades” present at the meeting. He asked for explanations regarding the cause that led to this situation, especially since the Soviet Union had provided Egypt with military assistance prior to the start of the conflict, both logistically and in terms of expertise. “How was it possible that under the conditions in which they were preparing and mobilizing all their forces, they would not take the basic measures and not know what the enemy will do? The intelligence services did not know the reality of Israel, its intentions. This should give us some thought”²⁰. Thus, Ceaușescu took a position antithetical to Brezhnev's position, which he believed Israel should be condemned for having committed an act of aggression. The Romanian Communist leader considered that in fact responsibility was divided, Israel being provoked by Nasser's actions “They set out to destroy Israel. The way the Arabs posed the problem did not serve to mobilize world public opinion in their favor. The slogan for the destruction of Israel raised the world against them. This is a slogan that cannot receive support. In this region there are many litigious problems, but their solution cannot be done by destroying Israel or the Arab states”²¹. Discussions were held regarding a potential joint statement to convict Israel as an aggressor state, but Ceaușescu again opposed it. While all the other Communist leaders broke off diplomatic relations with Israel at Moscow's proposal, he only signed a joint statement calling for peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Romania's refusal to break diplomatic relations with Israel and to catalog it as an aggressor state attracted the attention of the whole world in a positive way and contributed to the international prestige that Ceausescu was beginning to shape. For

²⁰ *Note de la întâlnirea conducătorilor partidelor comuniste și muncitorești și a guvernelor socialiste, Moscova, 9 iunie 1967*, ANIC (Central National Historical Archives), CC of PCR fund – External Relation section, file 43/1967, f. 16.

²¹ *Ibidem*, f. 15.

our country, the adoption of such a position meant a significant improvement in relations with the US. There was also an improvement in relations with Iran, which did not agree Egypt's policy.

By its position vis-à-vis the 6-day War, Romania has very clearly outlined its efforts towards asserting external independence and distancing itself from the Soviet Union. Romanian diplomacy, balanced and careful, made this position, contrary to the other communist states, improve relations with Israel and the US without compromising relations with China and other Arab states. In recognition of the Romanian foreign policy, Corneliu Mănescu, the Foreign Minister, was invited, in September 1967, to chair the UN General Assembly. It is noteworthy that this was the first representative of a socialist state to which such a position was entrusted²².

In the spring of 1968, impressed by the image of the new Romanian communist leader, Charles de Gaulle visits Bucharest. De Gaulle's intention was also to attract him to the project of a Europe released in the West from NATO tutelage and in the East from the Warsaw Pact. Ceaușescu was cautious and decided not to risk, which was not to the liking of the French president²³.

The peak of Romanian foreign policy during the communist period was the public condemnation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the troops of the Warsaw Pact member states. "... The penetration of the troops of the five socialist countries in Czechoslovakia is a great mistake and a serious danger for peace in Europe, for the fate of socialism in the world! It is inconceivable in today's world, when people rise to the fight to defend their national independence, for equality in rights, as a socialist state, as socialist states violate the freedom and independence of another state (applause). There is no justification and no reason can be accepted to admit, for a moment, only the idea of military intervention in the affairs of a socialist state (applause). Our party and state delegation that visited Czechoslovakia last week were convinced that the Czechoslovak people, that the Czechoslovak communist party, the Czechoslovak working class, the elderly, women, young people, unanimously support the leadership of the party and the state to ensure the triumph of socialism in Czechoslovakia (applause). The problem of choosing the ways of socialist construction is a problem of every party, every state, every people. No one can set himself up as a counselor, in the guidance of how socialism should be built! It is the task of every people, and we consider that in order to establish the relations between the socialist countries, between the communist parties, on a truly Marxist-Leninist basis, it is necessary once and for all to put an end to the mixing in the affairs of other states, other parties! (applause)... We are determined to act with all our strength, with all our responsibility, to contribute to finding ways to solve this situation created as

²² Emanuel Copilaș, *Imposibila independență: aspecte ale politicii externe românești în perioada comunistă*, in "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «George Barițiu» din Cluj-Napoca", LII, Supplement, 2013, pp. 257–281.

²³ Sanda Stolojan, *Cu de Gaulle în România*, Bucharest, Albatros Publishing, 1994.

quickly as possible by entering foreign troops into Czechoslovakia, so that the Czechoslovak people can carry on their activity in peace. We are firmly determined to act so that we, together with the other socialist countries, with the other communist and working parties, contribute to the elimination of divergences, to the strengthening of the unity of the socialist countries, of the communist parties, because we are convinced that only so do we serve the interests of the people, the interests of socialism in worldwide! (applause)”²⁴.

By condemning the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Ceaușescu becomes a true hero. It was for the first time that an alliance member state opposed opposition to a fact dictated by the USSR²⁵. Ceaușescu opposed to the violent settlement of the situation from the beginning, and his attitude was an impediment to the alliance. He becomes infrequent in the Warsaw Treaty and has not been invited to the preliminary discussions for the invasion. However, Ceaușescu continued to strongly denounce the invasion²⁶.

By refusing the Romanian armies to participate in the phenomenon known as the *Prague Spring*, the Brezhnev doctrine, by which Moscow tried to impose authority in the socialist camp through legitimate armed intervention, was rejected. As a consequence, the image of Romania improved further, and the Westerners considered the Ceaușist policy a good opportunity to destabilize the influence of the Soviets on the Eastern European satellites.

Regarding the relationship between Bucharest and Moscow, there were constant concerns from the Romanian state to respect the bilateral commitments and to organize talks with the Soviets to elucidate the asperities arising from such an opposing attitude. The efforts made by the Romanian state in promoting a correct attitude did not remain unchallenged, and in September 1968 the Soviet ambassador Basov considered that the relations between the two communist states were in a continuous improvement. It is noted that these opinions remained only at declarative level, in fact the Romanian-Soviet relations remained quite cold, “even after the signing of the treaty of friendship and mutual assistance of July 7, 1970”²⁷.

Through the events of 1968 August the myth of Ceaușescu's independence was born, and the possibility of reforms made some of the opponents of the regime to voluntarily join the Communist Party, such as Paul Goma. Romanians, but also

²⁴ For details, see <https://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2009/08/22/21-august-1968-ceausescu-condamna-invazia-sovietica-in-cehoslovacia/>.

²⁵ Lavinia Betea, *Apoteoza lui Ceaușescu – 21 august 1968*, in “Historia”, available at <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/apoteoza-lui-ceausescu-21-august-1968>.

²⁶ Dan Cătănuș (ed.) *România și Primăvara de la Praga*, Bucharest, Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005; Florin Constantiniu, *O istorie sinceră a poporului român*, Bucharest, Univers Enciclopedic Publishing, 2002, pp. 478–482; Emanuel Copilaș, *Imposibila independență: aspecte ale politicii externe românești în perioada comunistă*, in “Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «George Barițiu» din Cluj-Napoca”, LII, Supplement, 2013, p. 271.

²⁷ Ana Maria Cătănuș, *Tensiuni în relațiile româno-sovietice în anul “Primăverii de la Praga”*, in “Arhivele Totalitarismului”, no. 1-2/2006, pp. 230–231.

Westerners, reacted to this myth. The latter saw in Ceausescu an opponent of Moscow, their reactions soon appearing. Thus, just two days after the famous speech, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of England, arrived in Romania, claiming that the visit was based on considerations of Romanian-British commercial cooperation, but, in fact, it was “obvious that the British government congratulated on this visit Ceaușescu for the position adopted”²⁸. In the next 10 years there will be a multitude of initiatives that demonstrate the West's interest in the Communist regime in Romania, and Ceausescu took full advantage of this fact in order to create a favorable image in the West: the visits of the US presidents to Bucharest, Nixon in 1969 and Ford in 1975, as well as Ceaușescu's visit to Washington in 1970, a visit to London, the recognition of Israel and the German Federal Republic, Romania's acceptance into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1971 and the international Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1972. Ceaușescu will succeed to obtain important foreign loans, as well as western technology, and the year 1975 it becomes very important through the contribution made by Romania to the elaboration of the final act from Helsinki and by obtaining the clause of the most favored nation from the United States of America²⁹.

In the 1960s, despite the Chinese-Soviet disputes³⁰, Romania positions itself against the dissensions that appeared in the CAER (the Council of Mutual Economic Aid). Through CAER, Moscow launched the idea of specializing production as the best solution in the economic field for the countries of the socialist camp. The theory assumed that the industrialized states would have continued the industrialization process (German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia), and the least developed in this segment would have abandoned the development of heavy industry in favor of agriculture (Romania and Bulgaria)³¹. Romania considered that the Soviet proposal to rebuild CAER is not the most appropriate. Three dimensions were discussed – the political dimension legitimized by forced industrialization, the second dimension which showed that a radical reorientation could have had negative economic effects, in this sense Romania bringing to Moscow reproaches of ideological nature and the third dimension, perhaps most important, which highlights our country's ability to benefit from the conflict between the two sides (Russia and China), distancing itself from Soviet economic tutelage to rebuild its own economy centered on economic exchanges with communist states³².

²⁸ Ionuț Marcu, *Scena balconului din 21 august 1968 și nașterea mitului independenței lui Ceaușescu*, in “Historia”, available at <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/scena-balconului-din-21-august-1968-si-nasterea-mitului-independentei-lui-ceausescu>.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ Jean Francois Soulet, *Istoria comparată a statelor comuniste*, Iași, Polirom Publishing, 1998, *passim*.

³¹ Emanuel Copilaș, *Politica externă a României comuniste: autonomia unei insolite autonomii*, in “Sfera Politicii”, no. 152, 2010, p. 80.

³² *Ibidem*, pp. 80–82.

Following the Xth Congress of the PCR, which coincided with certain structural reforms of the CAER and the Common Market, Ceaușescu re-thinks Romania's economic strategy³³. A policy far from CAER was no longer profitable, since it needed, for economic growth, financing from external loans. By opposing Moscow he had obtained enough political capital, but under the new conditions he needed the CAER market.

At the Hague Summit in 1969, the European Economic Community (EEC) decided to accelerate European integration, and in 1970 was presented, by the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, a plan for the completion of the economic and monetary union of the states that extended over the next 10 years. Obviously, such a plan was not likely to please Moscow. As a result of its reaction, the Common Market states announced “the socialist partners (including Romania) that the bilateral trade agreements were no longer working”³⁴. Thus, new agreements involving the EEC as a whole were imposed and the right of Member States to negotiate economic agreements separately was lost. As a counterbalance, the Soviets also prepared the economic integration of the CAER member states.

Romania will undertake opposing actions against supranational planning, materialized during the XXVth session of the CAER of the *Complex Program for Deepening the Cooperation and Development of the Socialist Economic Integration of the Member States*, where programs were adopted that established the parameters of the organization's activity until 1990. The concept of socialist economic integration has also been launched³⁵. Ceaușescu, a supporter of East-West economic cooperation and considering that the two economic poles could negotiate much better in institutional discussions, tried to temper Moscow's intentions to isolate CAER economically. His action was not successful, being blocked for political reasons. The USSR considered that any official meeting with the Common Market meant political recognition of the EEC. The blockade against the Common Market was not an option that Romania would allow, so at the end of 1969 an agreement was signed with the EEC for exemptions for taxes on the export of live animals and lean meat³⁶. Although the situation was complex, the CAER Executive Committee of October 1970 nevertheless opted for a compromise solution and allowed the CAER member countries to initiate bilateral discussions separately with the Common Market, but on condition that the Community was not recognized from a political point of view³⁷.

³³ Mihaela Bărbieru, *Characteristics of the forced industrialization in Romania during Ceausescu Regime (1965-1989)*, in “Discourse as a Form of Multiculturalism in Literature and Communication”, Section: History and Cultural Mentalities Tîrgu-Mureș, Arhipelag XXI Press, 2015, p. 270.

³⁴ Ilarion Tiu, *Ceaușescu, între CAER și Piața Comună*, in “Cultura”, available at <https://adevarul.ro/cultura/istorie/ceausescu-caer-piata-comuna-1510accf34b62ed5875c14581/index.html>.

³⁵ Academia Română, *Istoria românilor*, vol. X, Bucharest, Encyclopedical Publishing, p. 707.

³⁶ Ilarion Tiu, *cited work*, available at https://adevarul.ro/cultura/istorie/ceausescu-caer-piata-comuna-1_510accf34b62ed5875c14581/index.html.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

During the debates for the drafting of the “Complex Program”, other tensions will be provoked by the Romanian side. After Romania reached its goal with the Common Market, it accused the Soviets that they wanted, through CAER, to control the foreign trade of the Member States, harming the sovereignty of the states. Ceaușescu considered that our country had nothing to do with an integrationist CAER and demanded that Bucharest be distanced from such practices. The reason why the communist leader adopted such a position was based on secret negotiations on accession to the IMF and the World Bank in order to obtain investment credits. If the Romanian economy was linked to the socialist countries in the future, it would have become a real problem to reimburse the credits, because the CAER would have imposed restrictions on trade with capitalist partners. Officially, Romania considered that the future of CAER should provide for an organization with independent states and economies³⁸. Ceaușescu also had attempts to unify the exchange rate, which is why he received numerous criticisms.

According to the American historian Larry Watts, although Ceaușescu had sideslips in the CAER, the Soviets were still willing to grant him concessions because he was more useful in the organization than outside it³⁹. Romania also needed the market of the organization to be able to sell its products, which – as we know – were not the most competitive products. Between 1965-1983, the exchanges between Romania and the partner states of CAER, as well as the export of our country to the partner countries, was greatly increased. The annual export of cars, machines and means of transport increased by about 10 times. The total weight of these products in the volume of Romanian exports increased from 16% in 1960 to 44.2% in 1983⁴⁰. Also, export has increased in other fields, such as electro-technical equipment, drilling and geological exploration machines and cutting machine tools, or has started exporting to measuring instruments and apparatus, communication or laboratory equipment and instruments for scientific research, etc.⁴¹.

On August 2nd, 1969, Romania welcomed Richard Nixon, the first US President to visit our country. It was basically the first visit of an American president to a communist country⁴², which generated negative reactions from the USSR. For another 6 years Ceaușescu would also receive Gerald Ford. Nixon came to visit shortly after the events of 1968, in a country that created the image of a distant relationship with Moscow. This event resulted in four trips of the communist leader to America in the following years – 1970, 1973, 1975 and 1978⁴³. Nixon will ask Ceaușescu to become a mediator between America and China, considering the

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ Larry Watts, *Ferește-mă, Doamne, de prieteni. Războiul clandestin al blocului sovietic cu România*, Bucharest, RAO Publishing, 2011.

⁴⁰ *Conjunctura economiei mondiale*, Bucharest, 1985, p. 135.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² Except the USSR.

⁴³ Ioan Mihai Pacepa, *Orizonturi roșii. Amintirile unui general de Securitate*, Bucharest, Venus Publishing, 1987, p. 34.

US-Romania relationship useful from this point of view. Following the American visit in 1970, our country will benefit from a series of economic favors, culminating in the granting of the most favored nation clause in 1975, subsequently lost due to the Communist regime's failure to respect human rights. In the same context, the US will support Romania's entry into several international bodies, such as GATT – the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (1971) or the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (1972). It is no wonder that relations with the USSR have become even more tense, given the openness of the Nixon administration to our country⁴⁴.

The mediation between the US and China since the beginning of 1971, to which we add the good relationship between the USA and Romania, has generated the possibility of close relations between our country and China and the development of cultural, economic, social, military and foreign policy issues. Ceaușescu's visit to China in 1971, although politically it may be part of the system of international relations and foreign policy, will negatively influence the history of our country for a long time⁴⁵.

Ceaușescu, through his diplomatic skills and well-organized activities within the framework of friendship relationships, distinguished himself from other communist leaders, rejecting the Soviet interpretation of socialist internationalism and refusing to “follow in the footsteps of Moscow during the 1967 crisis in the Near East, Romania being the only country in the Warsaw Pact that has maintained diplomatic relations with the state of Israel”⁴⁶. Concerning the relations with the East, we also remember the relationship with North Korea started in 1971, when the first talks took place between the two states. Unfortunately, the general secretary of the Romanian Communist Party managed to impose on the Romanian society the Chinese and North Korean model, gradually restricting, starting with 1971 and later drastically, the economic and cultural freedoms partially decongested between 1964–1971⁴⁷.

After the second global conflagration, there was the problem in Europe of organizing a conference on the security of the continent. Wanted more by the Communist states, as it would have led to their legitimating, the Conference was held in the summer of 1975, in Helsinki⁴⁸, and covered three main themes – security

⁴⁴ For more details, see Lilea Grosul, *România în timpul regimului Ceaușescu*, available at https://www.academia.edu/12469208/Romania_in_timpul_regimului_Ceausescu.

⁴⁵ Andreea Dita, *Relațiile externe cu Orientul în timpul lui Nicolae Ceaușescu*, in “Historia”, available at <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/relatiile-externe-cu-orientul-in-timpul-lui-nicolae-ceausescu>.

⁴⁶ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Reinventarea politicului. Europa Răsăriteană de la Stalin la Havel*, Iași, Polirom Publishing, 1997, p. 198.

⁴⁷ Ana-Maria Cătănuș (ed.), *Sfârșitul perioadei liberale a regimului Ceaușescu: minirevoluția culturală din 1971*, Bucharest, Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005.

⁴⁸ The Conference was attended by: Vatican, Liechtenstein, Malta, Luxembourg, Belgium, Sweden, Austria, Great Britain, Norway, Holland, Monaco, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, France, Switzerland, Italy, German Federal Republic,

in Europe, cooperation in the fields of economics, science and technology, environment and the human rights issue. The last theme was a blow to the communists, but they did not notice the danger at the moment⁴⁹.

At this point, Ceaușescu was at the peak of his reign, and his domestic policy was in a completely different direction from the third theme proposed by the Helsinki Conference. During the debates, he had his own interests and hoped to adopt principles that would have kept our country from Soviet hegemony, prevent outside intervention and modernize the economy through cooperation with Western states. Moreover, each party had its own interests – the East hoped for economic cooperation, and the West was interested in the issue of human rights, and in the migration subsidiary, especially the Jewish one. Ceaușescu had high expectations from this conference, as he stated in an interview given in 1975 – “the dissolution of military blocks, the abolition of foreign military bases, the withdrawal of troops from foreign territories, nuclear disarmament”. Practically, by these statements he was hitting the world super powers of the moment, the US and USSR, and was positioning himself in the camp of the misaligned leaders⁵⁰.

The Helsinki conference was a first step towards the exit from the Cold War. For Moscow it meant a guarantee that the inclusion of some of the European countries in the communist bloc will no longer be challenged, and for the West the guarantee that at least some of the civil and social rights of the citizens of the communist bloc will be respected. The agreements were presented by the communists as a real success for Soviet diplomacy. However, the Helsinki agreements led to the emergence of the phenomenon of dissidence which required practically observance of the provisions of the document on human rights. Unfortunately, another negative side effect was that dictators like Ceaușescu felt that they could do whatever they wanted in their country, because one of the points of the agreements was “the non-interference in internal affairs”⁵¹.

In the second half of the 1970's the image of the Romanian Communist leader is gradually deteriorating as a result, in particular, of the internal politics – the intensification of the political repression, the takeover of all the levers in the state, the amplification of the personality cult, the precarious material state of the population. Failure to respect human rights and freedoms has worsened its image. The Helsinki Accords of 1975 considerably limited the levers of foreign policy for

Turkey, United States of America, Canada, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, German Democratic Republic, Yugoslavia, Hungary and USSR.

⁴⁹ The third theme proposed respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief. These aspects were not actually promoted by the Communists, more than that, all forms of demonstration against the leadership were suppressed; *Nicolae Ceaușescu și Actul final de la Helsinki (1975): chestiunea drepturilor omului*, available at <https://www.istorie-romaneasca.ro/nicolae-ceausescu-si-actul-final-de-la-helsinki-1975-chestiunea-drepturilor-omului/>.

⁵⁰ For more details, see https://www.facebook.com/nicolae.ceausescu89/posts/1230476206964_564:0.

⁵¹ Dan Alexe, *Acordurile de la Helsinki și OSCE*, available at <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/2238365.html>.

the Ceaușescu's regime and contributed to the deterioration of Romania's international image. "For the RSR (Socialist Republic of Romania – author's note), the Helsinki Agreements, which coincided with the receipt of the most favored nation clause from the United States, resulted in its conditionality on liberalizing emigration, especially the Jewish one, to America. Gradually, the liberalization of emigration turned into respect for human rights, which further disturbed the regime in Bucharest, while eroding its international capital obtained with so much effort. It is certain that in 1988, Ceaușescu decided to abandon the clause, on the grounds that, through it, the United States Congress became arbitrarily involved in the internal politics of the Socialist Republic of Romania"⁵².

In these conditions, Romania remained totally isolated on the international stage, both in relation to the West, but also to the socialist bloc, culminating in an isolated internationalism, accentuated towards the end of the regime.

⁵² Emanuel Copilaș, *Imposibila independență: aspecte ale politicii externe românești în perioada comunistă*, in "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «George Barițiu» din Cluj-Napoca", LII, Supplement, 2013, p. 273.