LEGACIES OF 1968:

AUTONOMY AND REPRESSION IN CEAUŞESCU'S ROMANIA, 1965-1989

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Abstract

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LEGACIES OF 1968: AUTONOMY AND REPRESSION IN CEAUŞESCU'S ROMANIA, 1965-1989 (224 pp.)

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This thesis examines the relationship between foreign policy autonomy and domestic repression in Romania from 1965 to 1989. This time period coincides with the rule of Romanian communist leader Nicolae Ceauşescu. The thesis argues that Czechoslovakia's 1968 Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact invasion that spelled its end had a significant impact not only on Romanian foreign policy, but also on Romanian domestic policy, until the December 1989 Revolution. The legacy of the Prague Spring shaped the prism through which Romania's communist government evaluated threats domestic and foreign; in fact, it led the leadership to conflate the two, to the point where foreign interference was a necessary condition for domestic opposition in the official conception.

Approaching the study of Romanian communism within this autonomy/repression dialectical framework, the thesis examines the relationship between ideological fanaticism and public policy in the Ceauşescu regime. It discusses the ways in which the regime used tactics of manipulation, persuasion, and repression to cope with threats it saw as simultaneously domestic and foreign. The theory behind this approach, therefore, could be applied to other cases of repressive, autarchic dictatorship.

The thesis offers new perspectives, arguments, and evidence, as it includes substantial original archival research as well as discussion of recent Romanian language literature. It is divided into four chapters. Chapter I reviews the literature on Romania's autonomous foreign policy as well as the literature discussing the relationship between the autonomy policy and Romania's domestic affairs. Chapter II discusses Romania's political "thaw" in the 1960s, Romanian interpretations of the Czechoslovak Prague Spring, as well as Romanian evaluations of the Soviet threat it faced, or did not face, in the late 1960s and beyond. Chapter III discusses the "re-Stalinization" of Romanian politics and society in the years following the Prague Spring and relates the atmosphere of domestic repression to the perception of foreign threat. Chapter IV examines the effects of the autonomous course on the development of Romanian dissidence, opposition, and resistance in the 1980s.

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List of Abbreviations and Foreign Terms

ACNJ: *Arhiva Comandamentului Național al Jandarmeriei* [Arhchive of the National Command of the Gendarmerie]
ANR: *Arhivele Naționale ale României* [National Archives of Romania]
ASRI: *Arhivele Serviciului Român de Informații* [Archives of the Romanian Information Service]
CC: *Comitetul Central* [Central Committee]
CMEA, COMECON: Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
DDR: *Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, official full name of the German Democratic Republic
DSS: *Departamentul Securității Statului*, official full name of the Romanian *Securitate* [Department of State Security]
FSN: *Frontul Salvării Naționale* [National Salvation Front]
KGB: *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* [Committee for State Security], Soviet Security Agency
KSČ: *Komunistcka strana Československa* [Czechoslovak Communist Party]
MAE: *Ministerul Afacerelor Externe* [Ministry of Foreign Affairs]
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PCE: *Partido Comunista de España* [Spanish Communist Party]
PCF: *Parti Communiste Français* [French Communist Party]
PCI: *Partito Comunista d'Italia* [Italian Communist Party]
PCR: *Partidul Comunist Român* [Romanian Communist Party]
PMR: *Partidul Muncitoresc Român* [Romanian Workers Party]
RPR: *Republica Populară Română* [Romanian Popular Republic]
RSR: *Republica Socialistă România* [Romanian Socialist Republic]
SC: *Secția Cancelarie* [Chancellary Section]
SSR: Soviet Socialist Republic
SLOMR: *Sindicatul Liberal al Oamenilor Muncii din România* [Free Trade Union of Romanian Workers]
USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO: Warsaw Treaty Organization, or Warsaw Pact

Chapter 1: An Introduction to the Literature on Romanian Autonomy

The Cold War designation "Eastern Europe" with a capital "E" refers to a geographico-political area including the six Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) signatories to the west of the Soviet Union. Albania, Yugoslavia, and Greece, of course, also lie within a geographic eastern Europe. But the first two countries, while governed by communists, managed to formally reject the supranational institutions of the Soviet empire; although it suffered a civil war, Greece escaped the Soviet orbit entirely. These three countries were therefore apart from "Eastern Europe" as a political and economic bloc. Yet communist states that remained affiliated with the institutions designed to assure Soviet control of the communist world were not always supportive of Moscow's policies. Indeed, some allies feared and resented the imperial overlord and sought to subvert the masters that installed them into power on the heels of the Red Army. In Romania, the imperative of maintaining maximum sovereignty within the international socialist community shaped foreign policy and informed domestic policy as well.

The Romanian Socialist Republic[1] emerged as Moscow's premier "dissident ally" in Eastern Europe in the early to mid-1960s.[2] At that time, Bucharest appeared to be formulating a more liberal form of one-party socialism, one that favored national autonomy, national development, national defense, and a cultural and political thaw to

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[1] Until 1965 known as the Romanian Popular Republic. Ceauşescu changed the name to Romanian Socialist Republic shortly after coming to power in order to indicate Romania's supposed ideological progression towards socialism. See Dennis Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), pp. 71-72.

[2] David Floyd, *Rumania: Russia's Dissident Ally* (New York: Praeger, 1965).

celebrate an end to the rigors of National Stalinism. These measures conferred some popular legitimacy to the ruling Romanian Communist Party (PCR).[3] Two decades later, Nicolae Ceauşescu was still at the helm—at this point described in propaganda not only as the *Conducător* (leader), but also as the "Genius of the Carpathians," the "Danube of Thought," the "Morning Star," the "Navigator," the "Nimbus of Victory," and the "Visionary."[4] By the 1980s, the Balkan regime that the West had considered the most promising offspring of the Red Army's imperial project in Europe had evolved into an international pariah, growing more similar by the day to the autarchic and xenophobic Albanian regime of Enver Hoxha.[5] The Romanian communists bit the Russian hand that fed them, but they did not grow more liberal through their defiance of Moscow. In fact, they grew less so.

The process by which Romanian authorities *re*-Stalinized the state apparatus and the cultural landscape, defying the hopes and expectations of the West—and of their own people—during the Cold War, is the subject that will be treated in the following pages. The analysis focuses on the influence of international affairs in the Romanian party-state's choices. Historian Dennis Deletant has observed that communist Romania

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[3] In 1948, the Romanian Communist Party infiltrated and then merged with the Romanian Social Democratic Party to form the Romanian Workers Party. The party name would revert back to Romanian Communist Party in 1965 as part of an effort to forge a continuity with prewar traditions. See Dennis Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule* (Portland, OR: Center for Romanian Studies, 1999), p. 111; and Martyn Rady, *Romania in Turmoil: A Contemporary History* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1992), p. 48.

[4] See "An A to Z of the Personality Cult in Romania," *Radio Free Europe SR/1* (2 February 1989), pp. 9-14. The list of titles the propagandists and court intellectuals gave Ceauşescu is excerpted in Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 204; and Rady, pp. 49-50.

[5] Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe From Stalin to Havel* (New York: Free Press, 2002), p. 230.

possessed two distinguishing features: an autonomous foreign policy and a notoriously severe regime of domestic repression.[6] These issues have received substantial treatment in the scholarly literature, although they are usually portrayed as a "paradox" of recent history.[7] The approach here treats these issues as intertwined and mutually reinforcing phenomena, as two components of a dialectic that throws some light on Romania's international behavior, its domestic climate, and the possibilities for and impediments to dissidence and opposition.

More specifically, this work argues that the WTO's military response to the Prague Spring constituted a watershed moment in Romanian *domestic* affairs. While the Romanian leadership's own liberal project never permitted quasi-autonomous civic life, it deemed even the limited liberalization of the mid to late 1960s too dangerous in the wake of 1968. Unity of the party, the state, and the people became indispensable to regime security as a means to prevent Soviet influence in Romanian affairs. Far from being a prerequisite for Moscow's granting Bucharest autonomy, repression was understood in Romanian party circles as a defense mechanism against Moscow's influence. Finally, the identification of independence from Moscow with the PCR inhibited dissent, as Romanian officialdom used its foreign policy success as a tool to preempt and neutralize domestic challenges.

These questions can now be addressed with the support of Romanian documentary materials that were unavailable to researchers when the study of Romanian

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[6] See Dennis Deletant and Mihail Ionescu, *Romania in the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1989*, Cold War International History Project, Working Paper nr. 43 (April 2004), p. 28.
[7] Ibid., p. 29.

communism involved current world affairs and not "pure" history. Nonetheless, a closer examination of Romania's Cold War experience can inform new approaches to the evolving discipline of Cold War International History. Moreover, the questions Romania's recent history raises and the larger themes it involves—the relationship between autonomy in international affairs, dissidence, and repression; the nature of autarchic dictatorship; the ways isolated regimes relate to the international community; and the role of totalizing ideology in informing such a regime's *Weltanschauung*—shed light on contemporary concerns and can offer a skeletal framework for examining states and societies in comparable situations today.

From Soviet Stalinism to National Stalinism

From the imposition of the Stalinist system in the aftermath of the Second World War until the early 1960s, the Romania Popular Republic (RPR)[8] remained a mostly loyal satellite of Moscow's, as Stalinist in its domestic system as it was obedient in its conduct of foreign affairs. Immediately after the Second World War, Soviet deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs Andrei Vyshinskii was posted in Bucharest to supervise the formation of the new Romanian government, to be led by the crypto-communist Ploughmen's Front founder Petru Groza.[9] In the 1950s, Vojitech Mastny writes, Romania was "the most thoroughly penetrated and subjugated country" of Eastern Europe.[10] Moscow even

[8] See note 1.
[9] Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948-1965* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999), p. 74.
[10] Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 141.

trusted Romanian leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (henceforth Dej) enough to withdraw all Red Army troops from Romania in 1958. In 1964, Dej would convince the Soviet Union to withdraw all Soviet counselors. These moves were as much Romanian attempts to gain popular support for the party as they were tactics to put distance between the Romanian Communists and their masters in Moscow. Recent research suggests that Dej feared he was in danger not because he represented a tide of reform, but because he remained an arch-Stalinist in an era in which such inclinations had become unfashionable in Moscow.[11]

The Bucharest regime's public posture changed dramatically, however, with Dej's famous 1964 "April Declaration." In this publicly elaborated doctrine, officially called the "Statement on the Stand of the Romanian Workers Party Concerning the Problems of the World Communist and Working Class Movements," Dej announced Romania's pursuit of a separate path to economic development, one at odds with Soviet policy.[12] Soviet behavior—starting with Soviet General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev's notions about de-Stalinization articulated in his not so "Secret Speech"—had already instilled some fear into East European ruling parties that national Stalinism would no longer be looked on favorably from Moscow.[13] Asserting the Romanian national interest served to protect the leadership by distancing it from Moscow while gaining for the Romanian

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[11] Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, pp. 273-275, 285-287.
[12] Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule*, pp. 100-103. For a history of the Soviet Romanian dispute see George Haupt, "La Genèse du Conflit Soviéto-Roumain," in *Revue Française de Science Politique* 18:4 (1968), pp. 669-684; and John Montias, "Background and Origins of the Rumanian Dispute with Comecon," in *Soviet Studies* 16:2 (1964), pp. 125-152.
[13] John Lampe, *Balkans into Southeastern Europe: A Century of War and Transition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 208.

communists a measure of legitimacy and even popularity as nationalists and patriots. The timing of the "self assertion" against a weakened Khrushchev was significant; Romanian communists had capitalized on the chaos and instability in the ranks of the Soviet leadership.[14]

The "Romanian self-assertion," surprised and intrigued observers on the other side of the Cold War divide. Bucharest stated that each socialist state should be free to determine its own economic development model. Romania thus disputed Moscow's self-appointment as the "guiding center" of world communism. Romania resented its assigned role as the "gas station and breadbasket" of communist Europe, and became what Horia Socianu has called a "permanent observer," rather than an actual member, of COMECON.[15] As Michael Shafir has remarked, the arch Stalinist convictions of Romanian party leader Dej that favored heavy industrialization ironically led him to a policy at odds with the Soviet Union.[16]

Though the autonomy declaration's immediate cause was Moscow's assigning Romania a disadvantageous role in the "international division of labor," its deep-seated sources were many. They involved a complex interplay of the Romanian Communists' insecurities vis-à-vis the Romanian people (their party claimed no more than one thousand members when it entered the government thanks to the occupying Red Army);

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[14] Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, pp. 285-287.
[15] Ronald H. Linden, "Socialist Patrimonialism and the Global Economy: The Case of Romania," *International Organization* 40:2 (1986), p. 356; and Horia Socianu, "The Foreign Policy of Romania in the Sixties," in *The Foreign Policies of Eastern Europe: Domestic and International Determinants*, ed. James A. Kuhlman (Leyden: Sijthoff, 1978), p. 180.
[16] Michael Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society. Political Stagnation and Simulated Change* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985), p. 48.

partiality to the Stalinist development model emphasizing heavy industrialization; traditional Romanian nationalism; and deep-seated anti-Russian prejudices.[17]

For all its peculiarities, Romania's independent course remained part of a larger phenomenon of de-Stalinization and fragmentation in communist Europe, and it should therefore be interpreted in this context.[18] According to Anton and Chiper, tentative national "emancipation movements" existed all throughout the region, but until the late 1980s they only succeeded in Albania, Romania, and Yugoslavia.[19] These were, not incidentally, the three countries in which the communist regime actually led the "emancipation" project. Romania, therefore, stood out inasmuch as its continued membership in the WTO distinguished it from Albania and Yugoslavia. Romania also, of course, stood out among these three states as the only one sharing a border with the Soviet Union—a geographic fact that undoubtedly constrained Bucharest's room for manoeuvre. But Romania's short history of loyalty to the Soviet Union might hold the key to understanding its success. Only Dej's years of dedication to Moscow's foreign policy and the Soviet domestic development model accorded the Romanian Workers Party the room for manoeuvre it eventually used against its trusting master.[20]

Nicolae Ceauşescu, who succeeded Dej as First Secretary of the Romanian Workers Party in 1965, continued and then expanded the "independent course" his predecessor

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[17] See Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism For All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 189-191.
[18] See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 433.
[19] Mioara Anton and Ioan Chiper, *Instaurarea Regimului Ceauşescu. Continuitate şi Ruptura în Relaţiile Româno-Sovietice* (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), pp. 11-12.
[20] Lampe, p. 210.

had pioneered. Ceauşescu offered an alternative conception of interparty relations that emphasized voluntary collaboration, looser ties within the bloc, and national sovereignty. He insisted that a party's having matured over the years should confer unto it a large measure of independence within the bloc to craft its own political line.[21]

Under Ceauşescu, Romania's economic policy remained at odds with COMECON. The leader's constant references to Romania's "multilaterally developed socialist society" (*societatea socialistă multilateral dezvoltată*)[22] signified more than Romanian communism's notorious attachment to "wooden language" (*limba de lemn)* in official rhetoric. According to the Final Report of the 2006 Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Romanian Communist Dictatorship, "The 'multilaterally developed socialist society' was, in fact, the name of a frozen political and economic system, dominated by a pharaonic leader and his immediate entourage."[23] But the term signified even more than centralized dictatorship. Each repetition of the phrase "multilaterally developed" amounted to a reaffirmation of Romanian autonomy in the bloc, as it implied a rejection of supranational planning for common ends and the international division of

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[21] See Kenneth Jowitt, "The Romanian Communist Party and the World Socialist System: A Redefinition of Unity," *World Politics* 23:1 (1970), p. 44.

[22] For English language collections of Ceauşescu's speeches addressing this theme, see Romanian Communist Party, *Programme of the Romanian Communist Party For the Building of the Multilaterally Developed Socialist Society and Romania's Advance Toward Communism* (Bucharest : Romanian News Agency, 1974); and Nicolae Ceauşescu, *Romania on the Way of Building up the Multilaterally Developed Socialist Society: Reports, Speeches, Interviews, Articles April–August 1978* (Bucharest: Meridiane Publishing House, 1980).

[23] Comisia Prezidențială Pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, *Raport Final*, Bucharest, 2006, p. 628, available online at http://www.presidency.ro/?_RID=htm&id=83. This and all other translations quoted from foreign language sources, with the exception of documents from the online collections of the Cold War International History Project and the Parallel History Project, are mine.

labor among communist states. Romania would produce its own goods and make its own decisions, having developed a multilateral infrastructure to permit such autonomy and self-reliance. Scholarly propaganda discussed the relationship between autonomous economic development and national defense.[24]

By 1968, Romania would earn an international reputation as a maverick, Western-friendly, liberalizing state in the heart of communist Europe. Aside from the symbolic import of international visibility, Romania's friendliness with the West brought the country modernizing technology, loans, favorable treatment from foreign corporations, and access to Western markets.[25] Ceauşescu's clever and outspoken diplomacy accorded the country a worldwide visibility and influence far greater than its size and actual power would suggest. A key event in the development of this international prestige was Ceauşescu's condemnation of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Though officially a full member of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO), Romania would remain the alliance's most reticent and obstreperous partner until the last days of the Cold War. Bucharest's denunciation of Soviet aggression and its assertion of socialist "polycentrism" were not merely strategies for gaining Western attention,

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[24] See, for example, Simion Pitea, *Economia şi Apărarea Naţională* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1976); and Victor Stănculescu and Gheorghe Anghel, *Factorul Economic şi Rolul Său în Întărirea Capacităţii de Apărare a Patriei* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1984).

[25] Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule*, p. 102. See also Joseph F. Harrington and Bruce J. Courtney, *Tweaking the Nose of the Russians: Fifty Years of U.S.-Romanian Relations* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1991), pp. 381-407.

although such attention was forthcoming.[26]

The Romanian leadership had more immediate concerns, for it feared the country might be next in line for a WTO invasion. Indeed, alliance members held meetings without inviting Romanian delegates and held military manoeuvres near Romanian territory. The Romanians protested that issues affecting all WTO signatories were being debated outside of the presence of delegates from Bucharest.[27] Members of the Romanian party-state leadership and intelligence community feared that an attack on Romania was imminent.[28] In his famous speech on 25 August 1968, Ceauşescu announced the mobilization of "patriotic guards," and in no uncertain terms called upon the population to wage a guerilla resistance in the event of a violation of Romania's territory.[29]

The autonomous course demanded that all troops in Romania be under Romanian control without exception. All orders were to be issued by Romanian commanders and never by other Warsaw Pact personnel. After 1963, Romania was a WTO member in name only, as it did not allow any maneuvers on its soil for fear that they might constitute preparatory moves for a military operation. Romania described its representatives present at maneuvers elsewhere as mere "observers."[30] Romania regularly reaffirmed its solidarity with the Warsaw Pact, but in the same breath stressed that the organization's

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[26] See Adam Bromke, "Polycentrism in Eastern Europe," in *The Communist States in Disarray: 1965-1971*, eds. Adam Bromke and Teresa Rakowska-Harmonstone (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), pp. 3-20.
[27] Mihai Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring: Romanian Foreign Policy and the Crisis in Czechoslovakia, 1968* (Portland, OR: Center for Romanian Studies, 2000), pp. 88-90.
[28] Ibid., pp. 192-193.
[29] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 84.
[30] Retegan, pp. 75-76.

purpose was to resist an imperialist attack and that military blocs, beginning with NATO, should be dissolved.[31]

This public flouting of Moscow's will caught the attention of Western European states and the United States. The myth of Ceauşescu as the courageous national hero was born as the PCR appeared to defy the Soviets time and again. Moscow's dissident ally recognized the Federal Republic of Germany, remained neutral in the Sino-Soviet split, refused to fault Israel for the Middle East wars in 1967 and 1973, joined the International Monetary fund and the World Bank, denounced the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, obtained Most-Favored-Nation status from the United States, and participated in the WTO boycotted 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.[32]

Romania's foreign policy was dynamic, and currying favor with the West was but one element of Bucharest's strategy. The Romanians aimed to maintain good relations with all states so they could serve as middlemen and brokers, thereby highlighting Romania's international visibility as a diplomatic powerhouse. For example, Bucharest was one of the few capitals in the world to maintain good relations with both Israel and all the other Middle Eastern states.[33] While taking an independent course on the diplomatic front, internal policies followed a different path. One choice the Romanian authorities would not make was to call for or allow a democratization of political life. In

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[31] Deletant and Ionescu, p. 98.
[32] Ibid., p. 70.
[33] See Jeffrey Simon, *Cohesion and Dissention in Eastern Europe: Six Crises* (New York: Praeger, 1983), pp. 171-172.

fact, even the liberalizations of the mid 1960s they deemed too risky in light of the Prague Spring.[34]

Interpretations of Romanian Foreign Policy in the Cold War

From the 1964 inauguration of the "independent course" until the late 1980s, scholars and government officials from Romania as well as from abroad have disagreed about how to understand Romanian foreign policy. The controversy has arisen around not only the motives behind Romania's dissenting positions, although the discerning of motives constituted a major point of inquiry. Some have questioned the reality of autonomy itself. In a polemic published in 2006, Ungureanu calls "the myth of independence inside the pan-Soviet system" a notion "drempt up by communist propaganda."[35] Even in his biography of Ceauşescu published in 2002, Pavel Câmpeanu contends that "historians of this epoch still do not agree whether Ceauşescu carried out a policy of authentic independence or whether he only simulated it."[36] At the time of this writing, eighteen years have passed since the fall of Ceauşescu regime. Sufficient evidence is now available to say that the desire for independence, if not the reality of Câmpeanu's "authentic independence," was indeed a foundational element of Romanian foreign policy.

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[34] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, pp. 168-169.
[35] Traian Ungureanu, *Despre Securitate: România, Ţara 'Ca şi Cum'* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006), p. 94.
[36] Pavel Câmpeanu, *Ceauşescu: Anii Numărătorii Inverse* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2002), p. 258.

A dissenting school of thought had several variations, all of which held that Bucharest's apparent autonomy represented little more than a spectacle to impress Western governments and gain their support. The theories of those suspicious of Romanian autonomy's reality resemble the reactions of some Western analysts to news of the Tito-Stalin split in 1948. Then, Western diplomats and leaders wondered whether the apparent disagreement between Stalin and the man who had been his most devoted disciple in Eastern Europe was a manufactured hoax, a scheme to gain Western aid for the Soviet Union via a fictitiously independent Yugoslavia.[37]

Meanwhile, the conventional position accepting that the Romanian party-state desired, and had been successful in securing, a degree of autonomy from the Soviet Union held different interpretations of foreign policy's relationship to domestic policy. However, autonomy's relationship to growing repression after 1968—the crux of the argument presented here—has received insufficient attention.

Historian Dennis Deletant considers that Romanian communists genuinely desired to pursue their socialist vision independent of Moscow. Dej, and not Ceauşescu, pioneered the course toward autonomy, as it was he who sought to extract Romania from the Soviet-controlled economic system. The confusion and uncertainty surrounding Khrushchev's removal from power permitted a redefinition of relations among socialist states.[38] Similarly, the cleavages of the Sino-Soviet rift allowed Dej to capitalize on the communist world's instability by arranging the removal of Soviet advisors and KGB

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[37] Lampe, p. 201.
[38] See also Constantin Moraru "Viaţa Este Viaţa, Fără Lipsuri Nu Se Poate: Dialog N. Ceauşescu—I.K. Jegalin (Decembrie 1965)," *Dosarele Istoriei* 9:10 (109), p. 35.

trainers.[39] While later analyses discounting autonomy focus on the Ceauşescu period, Deletant shows that Ceauşescu only inherited a regime already gaining legitimacy on account of Dej's national communism. The policy of "non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other states" was a real one, well entrenched in party culture by the time Ceauşescu had consolidated his power. The August 1968 Prague Spring, Deletant contends, turned the independent course into one of hostility towards, instead of mere separateness from, the Soviet Union.[40]

William Crowther examines Romania's foreign relations and global trade policies to conclude that their goal had indeed been to maximize autonomy. "Maintaining its hard won if partial independence from the Soviet Union has been a fundamental foreign policy goal of Romania for at least the past two decades," Crowther finds. Trade diversification represented an effort to avoid reliance upon the Soviet Union. This semi-isolation from the bloc helped Ceauşescu to consolidate a national communist regime, avoid reforms undertaken elsewhere, and maintain a vast centralized bureaucracy. [41]

Political Scientist Ronald Linden also accepts autonomy as a Romanian objective deeply intertwined with domestic development priorities. Linden sees a pattern in Balkan states' relations with Moscow: less developed countries deviated from Soviet wishes more often than more developed ones because local communists wanted their societies to evolve into industrial ones while Moscow sought to rely upon them for agricultural

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[39] See Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule*, pp. 100-102.
[40] Ibid, pp. 112-114. See also Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, pp., 269-288.
[41] William E. Crowther, *The Political Economy of Romanian Socialism* (New York: Praeger, 1988), p. 145.

production.[42] The Balkan deviation illustrates the conflict between Bolshevik/Stalinist ideological principles and practical considerations—the need for raw materials and agricultural production—involved in managing an empire. For Linden, Romania's "rejection of the supranationalization of COMECON is based upon, and indeed tied up inextricably with, the assertion of state sovereignty."[43] The impetus behind Romanian foreign policy choices, therefore, rests in the drive for national economic development.[44] In this context, propagandists situated Romanian independence in a tradition of clever diplomacy stretching back well before the declaration of the RPR. This approach represented a sharp break from the 1950s propaganda that emphasized a revolutionary rupture with the past.[45]

The Sino-Soviet rift, Linden observes, cannot be forgotten when evaluating Romanian behavior in the 1960s. The PCR proved astute at manipulating this schism in international communism to maximize autonomy.[46] Meanwhile, Romania was careful to pair foreign policy announcements to which the Soviet Union would object with affirmations of friendship with, or token concessions to, Moscow.[47]

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[42] Ronald H. Linden, *Bear and Foxes: The International Relations of East European States, 1965-1969* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1979), p. 179.
[43] Ibid., p. 187.
[44] Ibid., p. 193.
[45] Ibid., pp. 193-194. For examples of this kind of treatise, see Dan Berindei, *Din Începuturile Diplomaţiei Româneşti Moderne* (Bucharest: Editura Politica, 1965); and Virgil Candea, *Pagini din Trecutul Diplomaţiei Române* (Bucharest: Editura Politica, 1966).
[46] Linden, *Bear and Foxes*, pp. 199-201.
[47] See William C. Potter, "External Demands and East Europe's *Westpolitik*," in *The Foreign Policies of East Europe: New Approaches*, ed. Ronald H. Linden (New York: Praeger, 1980), p. 110. Braun makes the same point in Aurel Brown, *Romanian Foreign*

Among the standard interpretations accepting that Romania's image of autonomy corresponded to some reality and was not a carefully doctored image, Aurel Braun's 1978 study *Romania Foreign Policy Since 1965* grew influential and has therefore been widely cited in relevant discussions. According to Braun's analysis, Bucharest understood that the Soviet Union did not intervene randomly and it therefore took calculated steps to maximize its autonomy within a clearly understood framework of intra-bloc relations. Like Linden, he notes that the Romanians took subtle and calculated steps to avoid irritating the Soviets whenever espousing a dissenting view. Also like Linden, Braun sees the Sino-Soviet split as a useful, albeit potentially dangerous, tool to insure Soviet toleration of Romanian autonomy.[48] Romanian officials and scholars of international relations rarely criticized Soviet positions in public speeches or in print. Instead, they used Western imperialism as a stand-in to critique imperial behavior in international relations. The true subject of critique was obvious, although never stated as such.[49] For

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Policy Since 1965: The Political and Military Limits of Autonomy (New York: Praeger, 1978), pp. 21-23.

[48] Braun, pp. 37-40.

[49] See Ibid., p. 70. Scholarly works, for example, refer to obscure treaties from the fourteenth century to object to coercion and interference in others' internal affairs. See Edwin Glaser, *Dreptul Statelor de a Participa la Viaţa Internaţională* (Bucharest: Editura Politica, 1982); and Edwin Glaser, *Statele Mici şi Mijlocii în Relaţiile Internaţionale* (Bucharest: Editura Politica, 1971). This trend of indirect critique represents a subtle and fascinating instance of objection to oppressive rule writ large. Just as Romanians had to formulate indirect methods involving double entendre to criticize unwelcome authority from Bucharest, so the Romanian state had to do the same when resisting Moscow. This trend helped the state identify with the people in a form of psychopathology perhaps unique to Romanian communism.

Braun, military exercises on Romania's borders were a mere warning sign, not a serious threat to invade or a sign of imminent occupation.[50]

Rather, Romania had developed a sophisticated understanding of the "text" of its relationship with the Soviets, and knew which confluence of signs would suggest danger. Bucharest was devoted to careful research and analysis of the international situation to make these determinations. Romanian leaders felt they "had to understand and gauge correctly the nuances of power and influence in the Soviet Union." To do this, Romania invested considerably in monitoring its neighbors' foreign policies.[51] Since a preponderance of warning signs had not accumulated in August 1968 or after, Braun argues, the Romanians did not really consider an invasion imminent at these moments.[52]

Robert Farlow coined the term "partial alignment" to describe Romania's foreign policy strategy of using structures both within and outside of the bloc to restrain Moscow's hegemonic policies. Farlow observes that Ceauşescu continued Dej's policies, but added an element of personal diplomacy to raise the visibility of Romanian deviance and thereby capture the attention of the West.[53] Contrary to Braun and Linden, however, he argues that the lessons of 1968 are found not in Romania's subtle cleverness but in Moscow's tolerance and reticence:

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[50] Braun, pp. 91, 133-134.
[51] Ibid., p. 87.
[52] Ibid., pp. 43, 128. Larabee makes the same argument, observing that Romania avoided upsetting the Soviet Union to the point of risking its autonomy by developing " a keen sense of the limits of permissible deviation." See Stephen F. Larrabee, "The Rumanian Challenge to Soviet Hegemony," in *Orbis* 19 (1973), p. 227.
[53] Robert L. Farlow, "Romanian Foreign Policy: A Case of Partial Alignment," in *Problems of Communism* 20 (November-December 1971), p. 55.

> The failure of the Soviet Union to put a forcible stop to the Romanian challenge tended to indicate that the policy of partial alignment would be permitted to endure.…The RCP now seems to believe that only the most flagrant acts of deviancy would prompt military intervention.[54]

Farlow concludes that Romania adhered to bloc policies when it was convenient to do so and abstained when bloc policies conflicted with the economic, ideological, and nationalist motives for autonomy. Cal Clark also develops a theory of partial alignment. For him, "its ideal form seems to be a balance of power approach in which power centers both inside and outside the bloc are used to counterbalance the Soviets' economic and political leverage."[55] Indeed, Romanian economic policy, as well as Romanian behavior in international institutions and regional alliances, suggests a "partial alignment" theory is accurate.

According to Vladimir Tismăneanu, autonomy, while real, was but a component of Ceauşescu's grand strategy to gain legitimacy for himself and for a Romanian communist movement bereft of legitimacy in the eyes of the Romanian people. For Tismăneanu, Ceauşescu's *a priori* objective was to remake Romania in his vision, and he knew this vision would be unpopular, at least initially. Autonomy within the bloc and pseudo-liberalization at home were tools for accumulating the power and consent necessary to carry out an unpopular program and institute autocratic rule. In these schemata, the denunciation of the 1968 Czechoslovak invasion was but a clever "masquerade" to gain public support for what the population thought was a more liberal form of socialism. But the masquerade worked, and thus "a power-mad neo-Stalinist

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[54] Ibid., p. 59.
[55] Cal Clark, "Balkan Communist Foreign Policies: A Linkage Perspective," In *Foreign Policies of East Europe*, ed. Ronald H. Linden (New York: Praeger, 1980), p. 35.

leader without the slightest democratic inclinations succeeded overnight in awakening genuine popular enthusiasm and winning unlimited credit from a population convinced that Romania would follow the line of liberalization and rapprochement with the West."[56] The 1968 balcony scene, therefore, was a defining moment not only in foreign policy, but also in regime legitimation and in Romania's autocratic future:

> It was precisely at that movement that [Ceauşescu] decided to convert his popular support for launching an autonomous course into a personal asset for the expansion of his personal power and the construction of a despotism second to none in the post-Stalin Soviet bloc.[57]

The PCR's obsession with its own (il)legitimacy and its strategies for overcoming insecurities serve as the framework for Tismăneanu's book-length study of Romanian communism's political history, *Stalinism for All Seasons*.[58]

Paul Niculescu-Mizil, an erstwhile communist propagandist, Ceauşescu protégé, and chief party ideologist, remains unequivocal in supporting the official "Ceauşescu doctrine" of foreign policy independence almost two decades after the regime's fall. According to Niculescu-Mizil, autonomy was the underlying purpose of Romanian foreign policy, and genuine Romanian patriots who looked to Moscow with suspicion and disdain guided the PCR. Ceauşescu, in this apparatchik's view, should be remembered for defending Romania's territorial integrity despite the catastrophic consequences of his domestic policies. Post-revolution assessments of Ceauşescu, Niculescu-Mizil contends, have been unfair in the extent to which they condemned

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[56] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, pp. 202-203.
[57] Tismăneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe From Stalin to Havel*, p. 224.
[58] Similarly to Tismăneanu, Rady argues that liberalizations were but a tactic to gain authority and legitimacy after 1968; it would become obvious that the promises were just hollow rhetoric. See Rady, pp. 43-46.

domestic policy without recognizing strategic successes in foreign affairs. He claims that this tendency represents an unfortunate development in Romanian historiography and popular polemic, as writers and commentators abandon all sense of proportion in their competition to produce the most fanatical post-1989 anti-Ceauşism. [59]

Yet scholars and observers had problematized conventional interpretations of Romanian autonomy well before the December 1989 Revolution. Revisionist viewpoints about the extent—even the reality—of Romanian autonomy began appearing with increasing frequency in the late 1970s and continued throughout the 1980s. Their most famous advocate was a former Director of Foreign Intelligence who defected to the United States in 1978—Ion Mihai Pacepa.

Pacepa's contentions, expressed in the 1987 volume *Red Horizons: Chronicles of a Communist Spy Chief*,[60] place researchers in an uncomfortable position. His more plausible claims cannot be ignored, but nor should they be trusted at face value. Pacepa quotes Ceauşescu and other Romanian officials at length in *Red Horizons*, but as the author himself admits, the attributed remarks are imaginative reconstructions of conversations, not to be taken as verbatim quotations.[61] The result is a sensationalized and tabloidish portrayal of Romanian officialdom. Ceauşescu is quoted as saying that the objective of a code-named "Operation Horizon" was to gain western technology and economic and political support by "letting the West believe that we're different" from

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[59] Paul Niculescu-Mizil, *O Istorie Trăită*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedia, 1997), pp. 176-177.

[60] The American edition was published by a different press and carried a different subheading. See note 61.

[61] Ion M. Pacepea, *Red Horizons: The True Story of Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu's Crimes, Lifestyle, and Corruption* (Washington DC: Regnery, 1987), p. xviii.

Moscow.[62] In reality, Pacepa contends, Ceauşescu was firmly within the communist camp and therefore was hardly "a pawn between two superpowers," as he wanted Romania to be portrayed. According to Pacepa, Ceauşescu maintained a strategic and cooperative, albeit distant and mutually suspicious, relationship with his Soviet overseers.[63] When he does discuss Bucharest's attitude toward Moscow during the Ceauşescu years, Pacepa explains the conflicts that did arise between the two states as mere expressions of personal animus between leaders.[64] In any case, autonomy for Pacepa was a strategic policy to benefit Romania, not a means of counterbalancing a Soviet threat to Romania's borders.

A former Reagan-appointed ambassador to socialist Romania, David Funderburk, contends that the Romano-Soviet relationship was far cozier than scholars and diplomats—Pacepa included—have recognized. In *Pinstripes and Reds: An American Ambassador Caught Between the State Department and the Romanian Communists*, also published in 1987, Funderburk argues that the conventional wisdom surrounding Romania's "foreign policy of independence from Moscow…is way off base." The two states maintained a "behind the scenes relationship" in which the Soviet Union would use Romania as a diplomatic middleman to deal with states it preferred not to contact directly. Ceauşescu's presence on the world stage accorded Romania a kind of international star power. Romania, in turn, obtained Western technology for the Soviet Union and facilitated its appearing permissive of autonomy within the bloc. Substantial

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[62] Ibid., p. 349.
[63] Ibid., pp. 8, 42.
[64] Ibid., pp. 26-27.

behind-the-scenes economic, intelligence, and military collaboration, Funderburk argues, reveals autonomy to be a lie.[65]

Yet with Western governments convinced by the "elaborately orchestrated scam" emphasizing Romania's separateness from its socialist neighbors, "Bucharest and Moscow are laughing all the way to the bank." Funderburk writes that official Romanian positions were "overwhelmingly in line with those of Moscow and other Warsaw Pact members."[66] As evidence, Funderburk assigns great import to the Soviet ambassador's frequent visit with Ceauşescu. The Romanian leader, Funderburk contends, considered "the Soviet Union the as the mother center of Communism," and any quarrels between Bucharest and Moscow were merely personality conflicts between officials.[67] Inexplicably, he asserts that even during the Prague Spring of 1968, Ceauşescu "towed the Soviet line."[68] This view that Ceauşescu should not be distinguished from other communist leaders grew popular in American anti-communist circles in the 1980s. By 1984-1985, the Reagan administration had abandoned Washington's policy of "differentiation" among Eastern European states on the basis of independence and openness.[69] The conceptualization of communism as both an ideological threat and a moral evil gained attention in the Reagan era. Funderburk's observations reflect this development, even if his history is simply inaccurate.

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[65] David B. Funderburk, *Pinstripes and Reds: An American Ambassador Caught Between the State Department and the Romanian Communists* (Washington, DC: Selous Foundation, 1987), pp. 41-42.
[66] Ibid., p. 53.
[67] Ibid., pp. 43-44.
[68] Ibid., p. 53.
[69] See Roger Kirk and Mircea Răceanu, *Romania Versus the United States: the Diplomacy of the Absurd, 1985-1989* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994) pp. 7-9.

Vladimir Socor, too, argues that the very concept of Romanian autonomy is based upon faulty or misleading assumptions. He urges a wholesale reevaluation of Bucharest's foreign policy based upon an examination of the standard evidence through a new lens. His treatment is more academic than Funderburk's and Pacepa's, but his conclusions are similar. Socor elects to examine "operational rather than rhetorical terms" in Romania's foreign relations.[70] He concludes that the Soviet Union, by its very nature, would never tolerate a genuine form of autonomy within the bloc. What he terms the "impersonation of independence" was actually the "result of an enlightened comprehension by each side of the advantages to be drawn from such a course."[71] Socor contends that reading Romanian autonomy into Ceauşescu's denunciation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia is a misunderstanding, as Romania might well have participated had it been called upon to do so.[72] Positions usually regarded as dissents from the Soviet line, Socor maintains, were actually adoptions of views the Soviets had taken some time earlier. Such positions cannot, therefore, be accurately understood as anti-Soviet.[73] Romania had simply given the West the impression of independence, an impression the West was all to eager to have. Unlike Funderburk and Pacepa, however, Socor does not insist on a sophisticated Romano-Soviet coordination; for him, the successful public relations initiative was Bucharest's alone.

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[70] Vladimir Socor, "The Limits of National Independence in the Soviet Bloc: Romania's Foreign Policy Reconsidered," in *Orbis* 20:3 (1976), p. 701.
[71] Ibid, pp. 728-732.
[72] Ibid, p. 714.
[73] Ibid, p. 728.

Trond Gilberg, in *Nationalism and Communism in Romania*, is suspicious of accepting autonomy at face value as an automatic benefit to Western Cold War strategists. His critical interpretation is more reasonable than those discussed immediately above, as it resists the reliance upon an elaborate conspiracy. Gilberg argues that Romanian autonomy did in fact represent "genuine concern" in Bucharest over national sovereignty. Nevertheless, the Romanian leadership managed to cultivate "a well conceived set of imagery that appears to represent more independence than actually exists." This imagery, by tickling the fancy of Moscow's Cold War rivals, served to maximize the benefits derived from extra-bloc relations.[74] Gilberg notes that Bucharest's Western friends were all too eager to view dissent from Soviet positions as inherently pro-Western. In reality, Romanian positions were equally critical of noncommunist global powers. Despite Ceau Ceauşescu's friendship with American leaders, Romanian official pronouncements were consistently critical of American policy in the developing world.[75] Romania was, however, steadfast in its support of a greater role for small and medium sized states in international affairs, and in its effort to consolidate a bloc of such states.[76]

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[74] Trond Gilberg, *Nationalism and Communism in Romania: The Rise and Fall of Ceauşescu's Personal Dictatorship* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990), p. 209.
[75] Ibid.
[76] See Edwin Glaser, *Dreptul Statelor de a Participa la Viaţa Internaţională* (Bucharest: Editura Politica, 1982); and Edwin Glaser, *Statele Mici şi Mijlocii în Relaţiile Internaţionale* (Bucharest: Editura Politica, 1971). See also Robert R. King, "Rumania: The Difficulty of Maintaining an Autonomous Foreign Policy," in *East European Perspectives on European Security and Cooperation*, eds. Robert R. King and Robert W. Dean (New York: Praeger, 1974), pp. 176-179; and Stephen F. Larrabee, "The Rumanian Challenge to Soviet Hegemony," *Orbis* 19 (1973), p. 238.

Interpretations rejecting the Romanian authorities' desire for autonomy from Moscow cannot survive the evidence contained in official documents available since 1989. Even before the Revolution, it strained credulity to imagine that Romania's dissent within the Warsaw Pact and its public positions contrary to the foundations of Moscow's foreign policy were components of an elaborate conspiracy.[77] The arguments rejecting the reality of Romania's autonomy also overlooked the country's obvious abstention from the blocwide military and economic structures.[78] The contention that Romania might have supported the invasion of Czechoslovakia had its support only been requested is not convincing, as Bucharest had made clear well in advance that it did not consider intervention into an ally's affairs a legitimate WTO function.[79] We now know that outsmarting the Soviets and resisting Moscow's will in the international arena were common themes in Executive Committee deliberations from the 1960s on. Veteran PCR activist Emil Bodnăraş, for example, in the crucial August 1968 Executive Committee meeting in the wake of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, evoked "the principled positions we have taken for years, since we have librated ourselves from the captivity of certain influences."[80] During other Committee meetings, Ceauşescu gleefully described recent

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[77] David N. Nelson, *Romanian Politics in the Ceauşescu Era* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1988), p. 207.
[78] See Retegan, pp. 104-107.
[79] Simon, p. 55.
[80] Arhivele Naţionale ale României, Secţia Cancelarie a Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român (ANR: SC a CC al PCR) [Chancellery Section of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, National Archives of Romania], Political Executive Committee Transcript, 21 August 1968, 133/1981, available online at Cold War International History Project, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&ident

talks with Moscow in which he claimed to have outsmarted Soviet leaders and diplomats, won debates against them, and by calmly resisting their best efforts, tapped into their furious irritation over Romanian recalcitrance.[81] Moreover, substantial evidence suggests that Romania was genuinely, and reasonably, concerned about Soviet espionage and infiltration into Romanian internal affairs, including its influence on members of the party-state leadership. These topics will be discussed in detail, and new evidence will be presented to bolster these claims, in the following chapters.

Rejections of Romanian autonomy appear to have been informed by the particular brand of ideological anticommunism of their advocates. Anticommunists in the Reagan administration grew less likely to make distinctions between "good" and "bad" communists than their Republican forbearers. Differentiation in Eastern Europe, they considered, only helped maintain the Soviet empire.[82] Portraying communism as a unified, conspiratorial phenomenon served the goal of those who were more eager to face down an ideology than a particular set of states. Reevaluations of autonomy grew from this conception of European communism. Anti-Ceauşist Romanian émigrés such as Eyal and Socor,[83] for whom admitting even one tactical success of the Ceauşescu regime

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[81] See, for example, Ceauşescu's report to the Executive Committee on his discussions in Moscow with a delegation from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. "Minutes of the Conversation of the Executive Committee [of the Romanian Communist Party]," 20 May 1970, 1445/1970, available online through the Parallel History Project at http://isn.ethz.ch/php/documents/collection_14/05201970.htm.

[82] See Nelson, *Romanian Politics in the Ceauşescu Era*, p. 197.

[83] See Jonathan Eyal, "Romania: Between Appearances and Realities," in *The Warsaw Pact and the Balkans: Moscow's Southern Flank*, ed. Jonathan Eyal (New York: St.

would have been too much, appear to have offered their critique of Romanian autonomy for similar reasons. Desiring above all to delegitimize the Ceauşescu regime, they seem to have viewed debunking the autonomy thesis as a means to isolate Ceauşescu. But their aims of weakening international support for the Romanian dictatorship by disproving the autonomy thesis, however admirable and legitimate the struggle against the Ceauşescu regime indeed was, in this case led to analytically unconvincing conclusions. Foreign policy autonomy could not only coexist with an atrocious regime; in Romania's case, the one reinforced the other.

Analysis during the Cold War was often too cavalier in assuming the rational capacity of the Romanian leadership for making judgments based on evidence rather than on anxiety and fear. Political Science scholarship was perhaps insufficiently appreciative of the role of ideological fanaticism in decision-making in dictatorships. Internal Romanian materials that may now be consulted shed light on the debate surrounding the image and reality of Romanian autonomy. Consequently, the case for a Soviet-Romanian conspiracy to construct an image of autonomy for joint global propaganda project is much harder to make. Evidence indicates a genuine desire for autonomous socialist development on the part of Romania's communists.

Autonomy and Repression in Ceauşescu's Romania

Upon establishing that in the historiographical debate over the existence of Romanian independence, the school arguing that the appearance of autonomy

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Martin's, 1989); and Socor, "The Limits of National Independence in the Soviet Bloc: Romania's Foreign Policy Reconsidered."

corresponds to some reality is the more convincing, we can pose an ancillary question that is far more penetrating and dynamic. How should we understand the relationship between the two key features of the Ceauşescu regime—foreign policy autonomy and domestic repression? Dennis Deletant observes that the simultaneous existence of these two phenomena constituted a puzzling aspect of the Ceauşescu regime, and one that disoriented foreign observers into ignoring the latter. In his words, the "great paradox of Ceauşescu's rule in this period is that his mismanagement of Romania's internal affairs contrasted so starkly with his conduct of foreign policy."[84] Several scholars have treated this relationship of autonomy to repression in passing, but few have subjected the issues surrounding it to the sustained and long-term analysis they deserve. The chapters that follow argue that this relationship constitutes a key framework for understanding the Ceauşescu regime's grip on Romania from 1968 to 1989.

Deletant, in the above observation, identifies the two key features of the Ceauşescu regime—a successful foreign policy and an increasingly troubling domestic situation. Autonomy constituted the foundation of Romanian foreign policy, and state repression the weapon that permitted and maintained party control over internal affairs. Nelson, too, briefly remarks that "Romanian [domestic] politics in the Ceauşescu era have been intertwined with the independent course of the regime's foreign policy."[85] The depth of this intertwining, however, has not always been appreciated.

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[84] Deletant and Ionescu, p. 34.
[85] Nelson, *Romanian Politics in the Ceauşescu Era*, p. 173.

Cal Clark has analyzed "the interactions…between external and internal factors" in the political science terms of "linkage theory."[86] He writes in *The Foreign Policies of Eastern Europe* that

> the domestic orthodoxy of Dej and Ceauşescu in Romania seems only indirectly related to foreign policy specifically, except for the possibility that foreign policy appeals to nationalism have been substituted for internal concessions as a means for maintaining political loyalty. In fact, Romanian independence from the Soviet Union in foreign policy has been accompanied by an emulation of the Soviet domestic system.[87]

Ronald Linden, too, has examined the domestic-international dynamic of policy-making. But he does not discover a tight analytical framework for evaluation Romanian domestic and foreign policy. Rather, Linden determines that "the roots of Romanian international activities merely lie in its drive for economic development."[88] Linden's singularly economic interpretation of autonomy's origins seems insufficient, as the following pages will demonstrate.

As Jeanne Laux observes, historically informed resentments of Russia over the annexation of Bessarabia (which would become the Moldavian SSR), resource exploitation, and political subservience imposed during the years of high Stalinism were instrumental in shaping the Romanian posture.[89] More importantly, however, the contention that domestic orthodoxy and foreign policy were only "indirectly related" does not take into account the party élite's reaction to the events of 1968 in

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[86] Clark, p. 19.
[87] Ibid., p. 39.
[88] Linden, *Bear and Foxes*, p. 193.
[89] See Jeanne K. Laux, "Socialism, Nationalism and Underdevelopment: Research on Romanian Foreign Policy Making," in *Foreign policy Making in Communist Countries: A Comparative Approach*, eds. Hannes Adomeit et al. (London: Saxon House, 1979), p. 55.

Czechoslovakia. Clark can hardly be faulted for overlooking this point in his study published in 1980, as only recently available documents demonstrate the extent to which domestic developments can be traced back to the lessons of 1968. But the notion that Romania "emulat[ed] the Soviet domestic system" smacks of the kind of Soviet-centric interpretation of East European states' policies that Linden warns against.[90] Moreover, the notion of a single, frozen-in-time "Soviet domestic system" can hardly be reconciled with the evolution of the USSR's domestic climate across the span of decades; the 1970s were not the 1940s.[91] The leader's personality cult, for example, had long been abandoned in the Soviet Union when it was becoming a part of daily life for Romanians.

Michael Shafir also addresses the relationship between domestic orthodoxy and foreign policy. For him, domestic and foreign policies had an elusive but consistent relationship. "Simulated change," he contends, was the mechanism by which the PCR maintains authority by creating the false impression of genuine, democratic mass participation.[92] This method of rule was linked to foreign policy:

> At first sight, the simulated change/simulated permanency might appear to contradict any linkage between internal and external policies. In reality, the opposite is the case. It is precisely because of the PCR's orthodox attachment to the principle of party domination of society that Moscow has condoned (albeit grudgingly) Romania's foreign policy postures."[93]

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[90] Ronald H. Linden, "Introduction: Foreign Policy Studies and East Europe," *The Foreign Policies of East Europe*, ed. Ronald H. Linden (New York: Praeger, 1980), p. 1.
[91] I thank David Curp for clarifying this point to me.
[92] Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society*, pp. 96-106.
[93] Michael Shafir, "Romanian Foreign Policy Under Dej and Ceauşescu," in *The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, ed. George Schöpflin, (New York: Facts On File, 1986), p. 366.

The Soviets permitted the PCR to rule, therefore, because *it*, and not some noncommunist entity, controlled a national project of dissent.

Trond Gilberg argues that while a state's foreign and domestic policies always have a "strong relationship," in Ceauşescu's Romania "the correlation is stronger than usual." For Gilberg, Ceauşescu's "nationalism, indeed chauvinism" determined both domestic and foreign policies. High profile diplomacy raised Ceauşescu's visibility as a purported global power broker, and this image served to support his rule at home. In this sense, "domestic and foreign policies are symbiotically related in the General Secretary's quest for personal power."[94] Chapter four of this thesis will build on Gilberg's suggestions, arguing that international affairs served to inhibit and preempt dissent within Romania.

Jonathan Eyal attempts to transcend the division between those who see autonomy as a "smokescreen" for cooperation and others who view Romania's autonomous policies as genuine attempts to carve out a new kind of international system. He contends that Romanian policy, specifically defense policy, "sought first and foremost to defend the leadership from any internal or external challenge." Ceauşescu's "conclusion was that the invasion [of Czechoslovakia in 1968] was aimed at the leadership; it was therefore the leadership which had to be defended."[95] The leadership thus made the conscious decision to conflate defense of the ruling élite with the protection of Romanian territory as a whole. In the regime ideologists' complex theory suggestive of a communist trinity, Ceauşescu, the Romanian Communist Party, and the

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[94] Gilberg, p. 210.
[95] Eyal, pp. 69, 72.

Romanian nation were merged into one cohesive essence—three torch flames that converged into one.[96] Romania's defense policy, therefore, was "not aimed at preventing a Soviet invasion but, rather, at precluding any challenge to Ceauşescu's regime, especially an internal challenge."[97] The regime portrayed a potential attack on the Romanian leadership as an attack on Romania's borders, its land, and its people, and not on the élite of the PCR. In this manner, Eyal claims, "the most likely aim of an invasion is officially ignored."[98] Romanian defense doctrine, in conclusion, was aimed against the Romanian people and not against the Soviet Union.[99]

Eyal's analysis is compelling in its sensitivity to the domestic utility of the foreign threat for maintaining party control. But his view that the amalgam of defense of the party and defense of the borders was just a rhetorical device, a sleight of hand in official propaganda, is too hasty a dismissal of the power and pervasiveness of national communist discourse for those whom it most benefited. The emotional appeal of nationalism to Ceauşescu and his associates was probably genuine. The ubiquity of ultranationalist discourse in pre- and post-communist Romania, moreover, suggests that we should not dismiss the unity thesis as a mere tool. Some Romanian communists, Ceauşescu especially, appear to have genuinely believed the official line.

Scholars have frequently observed that the Soviet leadership's aversion to reformism and democratizing liberalization meant that it would tolerate a satellite state's

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[96] See Ibid., pp. 69-73.
[97] Ibid., p. 99.
[98] Ibid., p. 73.
[99] Ibid., p. 107.

irritating foreign policy in return for hard-line domestic orthodoxy.[100] According to Vasile Buga, the Soviets were worried that Czechoslovak reformism might spread to East Germany and Poland, but cared little about Romania's deviation because it was not regarded as contagious.[101] Traditional interpretations of Romania's place in the bloc hold that the Soviets tolerated the Romanian deviation so long as the PCR maintained domestic "orthodoxy."[102] Florin Constantiniu and Robert Weiner even argue that the Soviet Union required the Romanians to clamp down domestically in return for autonomy.[103] In Weiner's words, "the price for continued Soviet tolerance of Romania's autonomous foreign policy…is the maintenance of a tightly-controlled neo-Stalinist regime domestically."[104] The impetus for hard-line policies, we shall see, has ample domestic roots that render this explanation dubious, although these domestic roots cannot be divorced from their international context.

A close examination of the interplay between foreign and domestic affairs suggests an alternative to these widely accepted theories. Repression was not demanded from abroad; rather, domestic repression aimed at *reducing* Soviet influence both

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[100] See, for example, Ibid., p. 69; and Retegan, p. 88.
[101] Vasile Buga, "Controverse în Jurul Poziției României Fața de Criza Cehoslovacă din 1968," in *România şi Primăvara de la Praga*, ed. Dan Cătănuş (Bucharest: Institutul Național Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), pp. 66-67. See also Shafir, "Romanian Foreign Policy Under Dej and Ceauşescu," p. 366.
[102] See, for example, Michael Radu, "Romania and the Third World: The Dilemmas of a "Free Rider," in *Eastern Europe and the Third World: East vs. South*, ed. Michael Radu (New York: Praeger, 1981), p. 236.
[103] Florin Constantiniu, "Minirevoluția Culturală din 1971—Rezultat al Tensiunilor din Relațiile Româno-Sovietice?," in *Sfârsitul Perioadei Liberale a Regimului Ceauşescu: Minirevoluția Culturală din 1971*, ed. Ana-Maria Cătănuş (Bucharest: Institutul Național Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), p. 15; and Robert Weiner, *Romanian Foreign Policy and the United Nations* (New York: Praeger, 1984), pp. 14-15.
[104] Weiner, pp. 14-15.

internally and externally. Domestic tightening—defined as the strengthening of the police state apparatus, the intensification of "politico-ideological education," and the partial return to socialist realism fused with ultranationalism[105]—functioned, as a *defensive* response *against* the Soviet Union. Repression, therefore, was not at all a "price" demanded by the Soviet Union. Rather, the decision to reinvigorate the police state was taken by the Romanians alone as a measure of defense *against* Soviet interference. Ceauşescu's PCR intertwined threats to the regime from within with foreign designs to an extent that has been overlooked.

Moreover, the notion that the Soviets would accept stable party rule even when it dissented from Moscow must contain logical limits. If Romania had withdrawn from the Warsaw Pact, even with a neo-Stalinist dictatorship at the helm, it is not certain that the Soviets would have allowed this kind of "top-down" dissent to continue. To an extent, evidence supports the literature's frequent affirmations that Ceauşescu was tolerated because he never called into question one party rule. However, the situation was more nuanced than these interpretations permit. The Romanians were not convinced that maintaining party control was a sufficient guarantor of autonomy. In May 1970, Ceauşescu reported to the Executive Committee on a recent meeting with Brezhnev. According to Ceauşescu, Brezhnev declared that

> there are issues of common interest, *that both they and we appreciate the leading role of the party*. After that he said that there are also a number of disagreements…and he began by saying that this is a consequence of the fact that

[105] See Vlad Georgescu, *Politica şi Istorie: Cazul Comuniştilor Români 1944-1977* (Munich: Verlag, 1981), pp. 47-48.

> *the position of Romania is opposed to the position of the socialist countries.* [emphasis mine].[106]

In Ceauşescu's understanding, it is hardly clear that in this juxtaposition of accord in structure/discord in substance the Soviets were assuring the Romanians that they would not invade so long as the PCR was at the helm. Ceauşescu's apparent perception that Brezhnev considered Romania not entirely within the category of "the socialist countries" should also be noted. Soviet hostility to Romanian positions was not to be taken lightly; the charge of being "opposed to the position of the socialist countries" hardly signifies that Brezhnev was tolerant of the PCR's leadership.

New evidence, as well as old evidence reinterpreted in light of the December 1989 Revolution, suggests that the Prague Spring, and the WTO response to these Czechoslovak developments, had a direct impact on Romanian authorities' approach to post-1968 domestic policy. In the aftermath of the Prague Spring, the Ceauşescu leadership devised a framework for understanding the country's, as well as the party's and the state's, security that was significantly influenced by the crisis of 1968. This framework would endure, shaping domestic policy and informing the course of Romanian dissidence until the fall of the Ceauşescus in 1989.

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[106] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 20 May 1970, 1445/1970, available online at Parallel History Project, http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=16489&navinfo=15342.

Chapter 2: Through Romanian Eyes:

Cadres, Diplomats, and the Road to the Prague Spring

The Czechoslovak crisis of 1968 had a lasting effect on Romanian politics and society. According to Mary Fischer, the Prague Spring was a "galvanizing event" for the PCR and for Ceauşescu personally.[107] "The year 1968," Vladimir Tismăneanu writes, "was perhaps crucial in determining the future of Romanian national communism and its evolution into the 'dynastic socialism' that Ceauşescuism eventually became."[108] Romania's reaction to the invasion spelled the beginning of the end of that country's half-hearted liberalization, and set the stage for party leader Nicolae Ceauşescu to consolidate his power. This regime consolidation did not take place in a vacuum; the international environment, in which "the threat of military intervention hung perpetually over Eastern Europe like the Sword of Damocles,"[109] informed the manner in which Ceauşescu and his entourage pursued consolidation, popular mobilization, and the absolute unity of the party, state, and society.

The Romanian communists' post-1968 choices suggest that they looked at the Czechoslovak party's behavior as a blueprint for what to avoid. A partial reconstruction

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[107] Mary E. Fischer, *Nicolae Ceauşescu: A Study in Political Leadership* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1989), p. 262.
[108] Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism For All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 198
[109] Matthew J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), p. 65.

of Czechoslovakia's 1968 experience through Romanian eyes, therefore, is essential in order to evaluate its long-term effects.

Romania's Liberal Project?

While Czechoslovak leader Alexander Dubček was pursuing his vision of "socialism with a human face," the Romanian party initiated a limited, but after the terror of the 1950s not insignificant, liberalization of cultural, intellectual, and political life.[110] Dej had begun the controlled liberalization in the wake of the 1964 "Declaration of Independence" from COMECON. A cultural "Romanianization" campaign inaugurated in 1964 served as a domestic counterpart to Dej's independent line against the Soviet Union. The authorities changed the names of streets that had been renamed after Soviet personalities during the days of high Stalinism back to their prewar appellations. Dej closed the Maksim Gorkii Center for Russian Studies in Bucharest, and Russian language lessons ceased to be compulsory for Romanian schoolchildren. The jamming of foreign radio transmissions ceased. Authorities released a considerable number of political detainees in the summer of 1964, and the "Romanian Gulag" would never be as crowded under Ceauşescu as it had been under Dej. These gestures signaled a de-Stalinization of Romanian culture and foreshadowed the more significant liberalizations to come under Ceauşescu.[111]

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[110] For an analysis of the terror of the Dej years, see Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948-1965* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999). See also Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, pp. 183-184.

[111] Dennis Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), p. 172; Julian Hale, *Ceauşescu's*

Dej did not oversee this domestic thaw for long; he died of lung cancer in March 1965. Locked in a succession struggle among themselves, and each possessing certain qualities or points on their résumés working against them, Dej's closest associates agreed to select Nicolae Ceauşescu, a full politburo member whom they considered a hard-working, dull, and obedient apparatchik, to succeed him as the titular head of the party. He was the first PCR party head to be appointed without consultation with Moscow.[112]

Contrary to the expectations of those responsible for his selection, Ceauşescu took little time to distinguish himself as First Secretary. At the Ninth PCR Congress in 1965 he went beyond superficial sloganeering and announced milder control over the cultural and intellectual climate; this congress became what Tismăneanu has called "one of the founding myths of Ceauşescu's cult."[113] Ceauşescu's early embrace of Romanian nationalism and his praise of peasant tradition suggested greater respect for pre-communist Romanian traditions.[114] Ceauşescu had learned his ideology from the theories in Marx's later writings as they were crudely interpreted by twentieth century Stalinists. He understood the development of communism as naturally taking place within the nation-state context; the withering away of the nation-state was a distant concept for him, one that was theoretical to the point of irrelevance. Ceauşescu, therefore, became

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Romania: A Political Documentary (London: Harrap, 1971), p. 32; and Comisia Prezidențială Pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, *Raport Final*, Bucharest, 2006, p. 161, available online at http://www.presidency.ro/?_RID=htm&id=83.

[112] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, pp. 185-186. For a detailed discussion of the process of Ceauşescu's selection as General Secretary, see Pavel Câmpeanu, *Ceauşescu: Anii Numărătorii Inverse* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2002), pp. 241-244.

[113] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p. 197.

[114] See Fischer, pp. 86-87.

comfortable in his skin as a national communist.[115] Conversely, the population became more comfortable with him as he showed his nationalist colors. As Kenneth Jowitt has found in a highly theoretical comparative study of regime-society relations in communist states, "to the extent that Leninist regimes orient themselves to the task of inclusion, they are more likely to demonstrate a positive ideological evaluation of the nation-state."[116] Embracing nationalism made it possible to foster regime legitimacy using existing structures within popular tradition and popular psychology.

Ceauşescu gave the impression that the rule of law in the form of "socialist legality" would have a newfound respect on his watch. He released some political prisoners and assigned a greater role to courts in protecting the rights of the accused.[117] William Crowther identifies the April 1968 plenary session of the Central Committee as the "apex" of the "liberal strain in Ceauşescu's behavior."[118] At this session, he blamed his predecessor for the excesses of the Stalinist years, and went so far as to denounce the abuse and political murder carried out by the Securitate.[119] He blamed the horrors of the Stalinist police state on the purged former Interior Minister Alexandru Drăghici and on Soviet influence on the creation of the Romania's state security services.[120] The move

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[115] Ibid., pp. 32-33.
[116] Kenneth Jowitt, "Inclusion and Mobilization in European Leninist Regimes," *World Politics* 28:1 (1975), p. 81.
[117] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, pp. 71-72.
[118] William E. Crowther, *The Political Economy of Romanian Socialism* (New York: Praeger, 1988), p. 75.
[119] Ibid., pp. 81-82.
[120] Ibid., pp. 71-74.

represented an effort to separate Ceauşescu from the persecution of the past, although he had in fact been complicit in the terror.[121]

The post-1965 environment improved markedly for intellectuals, writers, and the producers and consumers of élite culture. The party rehabilitated writers who had been purged from their professional positions and prohibited from publishing during the halcyon days of socialist realism. Those who had been writing for the drawer for years were permitted to publish again. Translations of previously taboo foreign works found their way to Romanian bookstores. The once banned plays of Eugene Ionescu, for example, appeared in circulation.[122]

Life in Romania, as elsewhere in Europe, improved for the general population during the 1960s. Authorities shifted investment away from heavy industry to consumer products and urban housing, leading to a rise in the standard of living. (This focus on consumer goods, of course, was later reversed as part of Romania's re-Stalinization.) Romania's factories produced automobiles, refrigerators, televisions, and washing machines. Ceauşescu appeared to be something of a Romanian Edward Gierek, touring factories, talking with the workers, listening to their complaints and asking for their assistance and solidarity.[123]

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[121] Ibid., p. 75.
[122] Deletant, Ceauşescu and the Securitate, pp. 172-173; Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p. 183; Julian A. Hale, *Ceauşescu's Romania: A Political Documentary* (London: Harrap, 1971), p. 32.
[123] See Dennis Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule* (Portland, OR: Center for Romanian Studies, 1999), p. 113; and Martyn Rady, *Romania in Turmoil: A Contemporary History* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1992), pp. 40-41.

Ceauşescu had even more success than Dej in capitalizing on Romanian nationalism, and so this nationalizing trend intensified under his rule.[124] The authorities lifted the taboos against celebrating prewar nationalist poets and writers and national heroes from the nineteenth century. The ban was lifted on publication and circulation of the works of Tudor Arghezi, Lucian Blaga, and others.[125] Arch-conservative nineteenth century poet Mihai Eminescu, rightist nationalist Nicolae Iorga, admittedly pro-fascist poet Octavian Goga, and eventually even the interwar dictator Marshal Antonescu, were rehabilitated as misunderstood heroes, their actions which at first glance seemed ideologically unacceptable being explained away by court intellectuals with the Byzantine apologetics for which intellectual life in Ceauşescu's Romania is well known. The impetus for these rehabilitations, Verdery has argued, came not from above but from below. In this view, understanding Romanian nationalism as a tool that the authorities introduced and manipulated ignores the intellectuals' pressure from below to celebrate pre-1948 national heroes.[126]

In this context, Ceauşescu sought to root the PCR in Romanian traditions, portraying it as a culmination of trends at work for centuries. He placed himself in a line of national heroes defending the sovereignty and independence of the Romanian people.

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[124] Conventional analyses have portrayed Romanian leaders as cultivating and embracing Romanian ultranationalism in cultural production. Verdery, however, suggests that the nationalist obsession, protochronism, that would take root in the 1970s and 1980s developed from below as writers and artists competed with one another for favors from the party-state. "The regime's very weakness," Verdery concludes, "forced it into the arms of the national idea." See Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceauşescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 209-214, 314.

[125] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, pp. 156-166, 183-184.

[126] See Crowther, pp. 122-124; and Verdery, p. 352.

In a 1966 speech before the Communist Party's Committee in Argeş county, Ceauşescu declared that communism was the most sophisticated step, the culmination of

> the tradition of struggle of our people. I've visited monuments that date from the time of the Basarabs, the time of Mircea…of Vlad Ţepeş, of the voivodes that installed the basis of the state in Walachia [*Ţara Românească*]. Honoring their memory, we owe it to stress once again that the struggle that they carried for the liberation of our country from under the foreign yoke created the conditions for the unitary national state later founded, the Romanian nation that formed, and for us today to construct socialism in Romania....We, communists, are the continuers of all that is good in the Romanian people. The Communist Party did not appear by chance in Romania.[127]

Ceauşescu presented himself as the carrier of the traditions of Romania's heroes, the latest in the line of brave leaders protecting the people from outsiders. The PCR is portrayed as an inevitable product of Romanian traditions.

During the liberal period of the 1960s, the embrace of Romania's national past was not always exclusive and xenophobic, as a permissive cosmopolitanism accompanied it. Cinemas screened foreign films. Pepsi-Cola, bottled in the Black Sea port of Constanța, appeared on the Romanian market.[128] The presence of Western consumer culture, scorned as decadent just years earlier, appeared to mark a substantive change in the climate and the ideological program of the postwar political regime. At a speech before an artistic and cultural conference in May 1965, just weeks after assuming the leadership of the party, Ceauşescu opined that "diversity in literary-artistic creation" was "necessary." He even suggested that international contacts would enrich cultural life at

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[127] Arhivele Naționale ale României, Secția Cancelarie a Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român (ANR: SC a CC al PCR) [Chancellery Section of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, National Archives of Romania], 71/1966.
[128] Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule*, p. 113.

home.[129] The regime permitted scholars to travel abroad to participate in international conferences.[130] Such policies, Tismăneanu writes, created "the myth that Ceauşescu was a political reformer, a reasonable man, representative of the thawing of the dogmatism and obscurantism of the Gheorghiu-Dej era."[131]

Nevertheless, as Dennis Deletant has pointed out, concessions were "granted" rather than "wrestled," and did not encourage or permit autonomous civic action, not to mention genuine pluralism.[132] The liberalizations, both intellectual and political, "resulted not from an attack on established ideological principles or from intellectual pressure but from the changes in the political relationship between Romania and the Soviet Union triggered off by the COMECON crisis."[133] No tradition of "give and take" between the party and the society, therefore, had occasion to develop.

The illusion that the domestic as well as the international priorities of the authorities and the population had converged endured throughout Ceauşescu's first few years in power. While the intellectual thaw had improved the political climate, most Romanians were more interested in land reform and foreign travel than in the availability of new copies of Arghezi's poetry. The PCR leadership, on the other hand, remained tied to the ideological fanaticism of the party's early years; they harbored revolutionary goals

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[129] See Ana Maria Cătănuş, "Consideraţii Asupra Evoluţiei Discursului Ideologic Privind Creaţia Literar-Artistică, 1965-1971," in *Sfârşitul Perioadei Liberale a Regimului Ceauşescu: Minirevoluţia Culturală din 1971*, ed. Ana-Maria Cătănuş (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), p. 28.
[130] Vlad Georgescu, *Politica şi Istorie: Cazul Comuniştilor Români 1944-1977* (Munich: Verlag, 1981), p. 42.
[131] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p. 197.
[132] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 173.
[133] Ibid.

for building the "new socialist man."[134] Liberalization, intertwined with the revival of Romanian nationalism and the independent course in foreign affairs, was but a tactic to gain legitimacy, popularity and to consolidate rule during a period of new leadership in the Soviet Union and within Romania itself.[135]

Ceauşescu maintained his predecessor's policy of autonomy in the bloc, recognizing its power to confer legitimacy upon an insecure party. [136] The 1968 crisis first appeared to affirm Ceauşescu's popularity and the continuing thaw, but hopes of further liberalization proved illusory. Because of the very insecurity of the party-state about its own position internally and geopolitically, Ceauşescu's 1968 defiance represented the beginning of the end of the thaw rather than its continuation.

Autonomy in the Bloc from Bucharest to Prague

Romania's foreign policy continued to emphasize Bucharest's independence from the Soviet line, and consequently received the attention of Western governments and opinion makers. Nothing confirmed Romania's emerging role as a Cold War maverick so visibly as its denunciation of the Warsaw Pact's suppression of the Prague Spring. Probably with Tito's Yugoslavia in mind, observers in the West viewed the decision as

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[134] Gheorghe Lupeş, "Reacţii în MAE al României la Invazia Cehoslovaciei," in *România şi Primăvara de la Praga*, ed. Dan Cătănuş (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), pp. 41-42.

[135] See Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, pp. 284-285; and Tismăneanu *Stalinism for All Seasons*, pp. 192-193. Upon assuming power, Brezhnev tried to reach out to Romania to smooth over the ties that had become frayed under his predecessor's tenure, much as Khrushchev himself had done with Tito upon succeeding Stalin. See Constantin Moraru, "Viaţa Este Viaţa, Fără Lipsuri Nu Se Poate: Dialog N. Ceauşescu—I.K. Jegalin (Decembrie 1965)," in *Dosarele Istoriei* 9:10 (109), p. 35.

[136] See Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, pp. 189-192.

evidence of another liberal breed of Balkan communism in the making.[137] Even some Western scholarship waxed enthusiastic about the progressive trend in Romanian communism.[138] The Romanian people, too, expected further liberalization and interpreted Ceauşescu's defiance of their neighbor to the east as another sign such a program was enduring, perhaps even taking deeper roots.[139]

During the liberalizing Czechoslovak reforms of 1967-1968, Bucharest was Prague's most steadfast ally and supporter among Warsaw Treaty signatories. Czechoslovakia appreciated that Romania was defending the Dubček leadership while its neighbors were attacking the ruling reformist faction of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ).[140] In February 1968, the Romanian ambassador in Berlin, after a discussion with his Czechoslovak counterpart, sent a telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest (MAE) assuring that "relations between Romanian and Czechoslovak diplomats are cordial. There exists a desire on the part of the Czechoslovak diplomats to spend more time in discussions with the diplomats at the Romanian embassy."[141] Other evidence points to an increasingly cozy bilateral relationship between Bucharest and Prague. In March 1968 a Czechoslovak literary magazine inaugurated a series about current events in socialist countries. "Considering the sympathy and interest with which

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[137] John R. Lampe, *Balkans into Southeastern Europe: A Century of War and Transition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 241.
[138] For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Crowther, pp. 81-82.
[139] Lupeş, pp. 41-42.
[140] See Mihai Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring: Romanian Foreign Policy and the Crisis in Czechoslovakia, 1968* (Portland, OR: Center for Romanian Studies, 2000), p. 119.
[141] Arhivele Diplomatic ale Ministerului Afacerelor Externe al României (MAE) [Diplomatic Archives of the Romanian Ministry], 14 February 1968, nr. 00950, 220/1968.

the Czechoslovak people, and especially the intellectuals, regard the foreign and domestic policy of Romania," the first issue was devoted to these topics.[142]

It was by chance that Romania's diplomatic analysis was handicapped during most of the year 1968. The Warsaw Pact signatories decided in early 1968 to hold an international conference of Communist and workers parties at the end of that year. Participants scheduled a series of meetings to plan and organize the conference. At the first of these, in Budapest, the Soviets launched an attack on the Chinese Communist Party, and the Romanian representative, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, responded by defending the Chinese communists. In turn, the Syrian delegate attacked the Romanian Communist Party for "anti-Sovietism." Niculescu-Mizil left the conference in protest, telling his superiors that the "lackeyism" and servility of the other participants was insupportable. Consequently, the PCR was not invited to the future organizational meetings at which the events of the Prague Spring would be incidentally discussed. The Romanians, therefore, were forced to obtain their information about what had transpired among their Warsaw Pact "allies" second-hand.[143]

As the Soviet Union and other East European states demanded a turnaround in Czechoslovakia's "socialism with a human face," Bucharest defended its ally's *de jure* sovereignty. During the April 1968 Dresden Conference, to which Romania was not invited, all other WTO states attacked Dubček, the reforms taking place on his watch, and the grassroots democratic activism reportedly witnessed in Czechoslovakia. In a private

[142] MAE, 16 March 1968, nr. 001651, 220/1968.
[143] Retegan, pp. 10-11, 65-71.

meeting with a Hungarian delegation, a Romanian diplomat reaffirmed Bucharest's support for Czechoslovakia. The meeting report sent by telegram to the MAE notes that

> our diplomat pointed out that the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia has powerful revolutionary traditions and that through the measures it has taken can strengthen its authority with the masses. The Romanian Communist Party is against any interference from abroad and is for strictly respecting the principles of independence and sovereignty in relations between parties and states. He [our diplomat] expressed his conviction that the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia will know, without a doubt, how to face its own problems without assistance.[144]

In a private meeting in Rome between the Czechoslovak and Romanian ambassadors to Italy, the Czechoslovak official, according to Romanian notes, "says that in Czechoslovakia the friendly attitude of Romania against intervention in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia, adopted right from the beginning of the events, was noted with much pleasure."[145] During a Romanian embassy officer's meeting with Czechoslovak officials in early June, the latter echoed earlier praise from Prague. According to the Romanian report, "the position adopted by Romania in the face of events in Czechoslovakia was appreciated as an extraordinary assistance to the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia."[146] "The experience of the last few years," said a Czechoslovak diplomat in Berlin

> has permitted us to know our true friends; the Czechoslovak people are convinced that the potential for democratization in its country enjoys the sympathy and support of Romania, Yugoslavia, and Hungary. Without the existence of these three countries the rapid development of events in Czechoslovakia would have inevitably attracted…a foreign intervention. The external pressure from the USSR, the DDR, and Poland which we have had to face in the last four to five months has convinced us of the courage of the Romanian Communist Party, which already for several years has promoted an independent policy,

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[144] MAE, 10 April 1968, nr. 002180, 220/1968.
[145] MAE, 24 April 1968, nr. 002433, 220/1968.
[146] MAE, 06 June 1968, nr. 003040, 220/1968.

> corresponding to its own people's interests; during this period all the countries of the WTO have not had a just position vis-à-vis Romania.[147]

Prague's comments on Romania's "unjust" treatment within the bloc suggest an identification of interests of states based not so much on shared views on liberalization, but on a common position respecting autonomy in interstate relations.

The Czechoslovak leadership used Romanian support as a counterweight to the harsh criticism to which their WTO neighbors subjected them. In late July, just days before the invasion, the Prague city committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party requested a visit by a delegation from the Bucharest city committee of the PCR. The request came immediately after the Warsaw meeting of WTO representatives at which events in Czechoslovakia were the main item on the agenda. (Romania, whose support for Prague was well known, was not invited to this Warsaw meeting. Nor, of course, was Czechoslovakia).[148] The presence of the delegation from the Romanian capital in the days after these talks, according to an MAE report,

> would constitute a precious and important show of support for the communists and the population of Prague, as well as for the entire Czechoslovak people, during these difficult moments when representatives from the Czechoslovak Communist Party and from the Soviet Communist Party will hold talks.

The Czechoslovaks insisted that the visit be publicized extensively, as "this would constitute a moral stimulant unusually important for Czechoslovak public opinion." The Romanian party accepted the invitation.[149] The Czechoslovak ambassador to Bulgaria told his Romanian counterpart that Romania's support made it "the closest brother and

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[147] MAE, (no date given), nr. 003079, 220/1968.
[148] Fischer, pp. 142-143.
[149] MAE, 27 July 1968, nr. 003785, 220/1968.

friend to Czechoslovakia."[150] Even after the invasion, Czechoslovak officials thanked Romania for its steadfast friendship during the crisis. Some Czechoslovak representatives visiting with the Romanian ambassador in Cologne expressed admiration for Romania's foreign policy and thanks for the support it always received from Bucharest.[151]

A "Danubian Coalition"? Interwar Alliances and the Defense of Autonomy

The Soviets feared the challenges implicit in a cohesive support network for autonomy in Eastern Europe, and such a support network is exactly what the "revisionist" East European states sought to develop. The objective was not a traditional military alliance, as some of those seeking autonomy as well as those resisting this trend were part of the same Cold War military bloc. Rather, the dissident states sought to pool their diplomatic "power" in expressions of mutual support and even to consolidate support outside of the region for their cause.

The prospect of an axis of dissident communist states worried the Soviet Union and its more loyal Eastern bloc subordinates. Moscow noticed that both the frequency and the quality of bilateral contacts among officials in Bucharest, Belgrade, and Prague were rising in 1967-1968. The Soviets, as well as the Bulgarians, the East Germans, and the Poles, grew concerned over the prospect of a dissident bloc of European communist states coordinating policy outside of existing supranational institutions.

The more hard-line WTO members injected speculation about a revived "Little Entente," although this time directed not against Hungary at all, but against Muscovite

[150] MAE, 13 August 1968, nr. 003984, 220/1968.
[151] MAE, 22 November 1968, nr. 005709, 221/1968.

international communism and its East European vassals.[152] A Czechoslovak official also warned Romania's ambassador to Austria that the Soviet Union feared a reestablishment of the Little Entente, "in this moment when these three countries follow their own path to sovereign and independent development." MAE director Gheorghe Marin forwarded this report to the Romanian embassy in Moscow with a hand-written note instructing officials there to "prepare a report on the idea of the Little Entente."[153] In August, Soviet diplomats continued raising the specter of this interwar arrangement. The Bulgarians did as well, questioning the Romanian ambassador in Sofia about what agreements authorities in Prague and Bucharest would sign, and about the possibility of a new Little Entente taking shape.[154] Polish leader Władysław Gomułka considered that what linked the Little Entente states was their common foreign policy ideas, their "inclination toward the West," and their "common wish to break with the Socialist camp in order to create a kind of closed special alliance."[155] When Moscow learnt of the planned visits of Tito and Ceauşescu to Prague in early August 1968, "the USSR was insistently interested…if this was about a new Little Entente or about an alliance of southern socialist countries," a Czechoslovak diplomat is quoted as saying.[156] Another Czechoslovak diplomat, sensing a split among East European states over the limits of autonomy, speculated that delegations

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[152] See Florin Constantiniu, "Surse Memorialistice cu Privire la Criza Cehoslovacia din 1968," in *România şi Primăvara de la Praga*, ed. Dan Cătănuş (Bucharest: Institutul Național Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), pp. 46-49.
[153] MAE, 05 June 1968, nr. 003035, 220/1968.
[154] MAE, 13 August 1968, nr. 003984, 220/1968.
[155] Quoted in Retegan, p. 114.
[156] MAE, 13 August 1968 nr. 003971, 220/1968.

from his country and from Bucharest were not invited to the 1968 Dresden meeting because their alternative positions might influence other delegations.[157]

The term Little Entente seems bizarrely conceived since Hungary was among the more moderate of the WTO states, cautioning against an invasion of Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovak officials even expressed their thanks to Hungary, as well as to Romania and Yugoslavia, for not beating the drums of war like the DDR and the USSR, as well as Poland and Bulgaria, albeit to a lesser extent.[158] The Romanians, however, had tended to see the Hungarians as messengers of Soviet criticism and agents of interference in Romanian affairs.[159]

What seems to have frightened the Soviets, therefore, was any kind of independent international association of socialist states and socialist movements, not a specific reconstitution of interwar diplomatic arrangements. The Soviets were correct in fearing such arrangements, as they were exactly what Romania favored. Bucharest sought to cultivate a "third way" by welcoming other parties, including ones from the capitalist world, that shared its view rejecting Moscow's self-appointment as the leader of world communism. For example, Romania called for a common declaration that no party delegation present at an international meeting of workers parties may criticize another member party.[160]

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[157] MAE, 20 May 1968, nr. 002828, 220/1968.
[158] MAE, 06 June 1968, nr. 003040, 220/1968.
[159] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 133. See also note 167.
[160] Retegan, pp. 93-94.

Along with Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, Romanian leaders saw themselves as representing an alternative model of interparty relations, exactly as Moscow feared.[161] After the Budapest conference described above, Romania felt isolated in Eastern Europe, and was eager to identify with Czechoslovakia, even if the specifics of what about Soviet designs they rejected differed.[162] Indeed, Ceauşescu looked favorably upon Czechoslovakia's foreign policy under Dubček, considering that the appearance of multiple centers of international communism and communist thought would further limit the pressure Moscow could apply throughout its empire.[163] The Romanian press drew parallels between the Romanian and Czechoslovak situations to show both states as allies in the campaign for autonomy from the Soviet Union, and as similarly threatened by Soviet designs.[164]

Critics of East European autonomy, meanwhile, used other terms besides Little Entente. Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, for example, feared that an emerging "Danubian coalition" was forming to defend and spread autonomy in the entire region. He uttered these words when, in the weeks before the 21 August invasion, both Tito and Ceauşescu visited Prague in succession.[165] In 1971, the Soviet Union expressed concern over an Albania-Romania-Yugoslavia "Balkan Triangle" alliance under the protection of China.[166] That same year, the Hungarian news agency published an article warning of a

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[161] Ibid., p. 121.
[162] Ibid., p. 115.
[163] Ibid., p. 174.
[164] Ibid., p. 118.
[165] Ibid., p. 167.
[166] Aurel Braun, *Romanian Foreign Policy Since 1965: the Political and Military Limits of Autonomy* (New York: Praeger, 1978), p. 119.

"Belgrade-Bucharest-Tirana axis" that might provoke "an extremely dangerous situation."[167] Some of the contacts among states whose projects were at odds with

[167] See Robert L. Farlow, "Romanian Foreign Policy: A Case of Partial Alignment," in *Problems of Communism* 20 (November-December 1971), p. 61. The Albanian press, while condemning the liberalizations in Prague, did not publish criticism of Romanian policy, domestic or foreign. Only it and Bulgaria were exempt from reports that blasted the policies of all other East European countries as poisoning socialism by maintaining "relations with capitalist states." Of course, Romania, too, entertained such relations, and in private meetings Albanian diplomats did criticize Romania's domestic and foreign policies. We can conclude, therefore, that the prospect of a regional alliance backed by China precluded Tirana's including Romania on its list of insufficiently doctrinaire socialist states. See MAE, 24 March 1968, nr. 001845, 220/1968; and MAE, nr. 002574 04 April 1968, 220/1968. Hungary also presents a difficult case. Its position on Czechoslovakia and within the bloc in general, can appear contradictory, but upon closer inspection retains a kind of consistency. Budapest did not desire a confrontation with Prague, and was among the doves of the WTO states. Still, when the Soviets took the decision to invade, the Hungarians could hardly refuse to comply because of the legacies of 1956. Moreover, evidence exists of some competition in the search for an East European "third way" between Hungary and Romania. While Hungary supported a more conciliatory, post-Stalinist form of bureaucratic socialism with market mechanisms, it denounced a supposed bloc in league with China in the form of the Belgrade-Bucharest-Tirana alliance. Perhaps the Soviets simply used the Hungarian press as their surrogate for attacking the Romanians. But the Hungarians were hardly without designs of their own on Eastern Europe. How seriously this was contemplated we cannot know. Documents from the MAE suggest that some Hungarian officials envisioned their own Danubian economic union under Hungary's guidance. According to a report based upon conversations between the Romanian ambassador to Sofia and a Bulgarian official, the Hungarians have pretensions to pursue their own "third way." Director George Marin marked this report for special consideration, noting the following in his forwarding message to the ambassador in Prague: "Having in view the theory forwarded by Hungarian historians according to which the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian empire was a mistake from an economic point of view and that the creation of a new economic union in the territories of the former empire should be considered, and even the ideas about a confederation of Danubian countries supported even by some Czechoslovak personalities, we ask that these problems be followed with special attention and that the MAE be informed." Hints of Hungarian irredentism were clearly of concern to Marin. The note mentioned some remarks attributed to Hungary's ambassador to Bulgaria, in which the latter reportedly said, "if the Slovaks don't get along with the Czechs, they are welcomed with open arms in a federation with Hungary. We lived together well for one thousand years, perhaps now we would get along even better." MAE, 28 July 1968, nr. 003524, 220/1968.

Moscow's surely recalled Tito's initiatives toward a Balkan Federation challenging Moscow's role as the center of world communism.[168]

Indeed, Tito's Yugoslavia also defended and supported Dubček's reforms. In May 1968 the Yugoslav leadership expressed a desire to strengthen its relationship with Prague as a sign of support for the Czechoslovak leadership's new course.[169] Yugoslavia's ambassador in Prague told his Romanian counterpart that Belgrade was reluctant to provoke the USSR by supporting Czechoslovak reforms, but felt obligated to declare its solidarity with reformers in Prague once Czechoslovakia's neighbors grew so hostile. The report then attributes surprisingly candid remarks to the Yugoslav ambassador:

> Czechoslovakia's desire, [he] said, to amply develop its relations with former partners of the 'Little Entente' and in general with the Danubian countries, as a counterbalance to the exaggerated influence of the USSR, East Germany, and Poland, a subject which until now has not been officially broached, but which is being suggested by the orientation of the press and other organs of Czechoslovakia, is regarded with sympathy and much understanding by the Yugoslav leadership, which will accord it necessary support.[170]

Yugoslavia, not sharing any borders with the Soviet Union and long recognized as a nonaligned state, could afford to be more blunt than its friends who effectively had no choice but to remain in the WTO.

While China might be expected to have supported Czechoslovakia as a counterweight to Soviet power, Beijing, in the midst of the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," chose not to for fear of Dubček's ideological shortcomings. According to

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[168] See Lampe, p. 187.
[169] MAE, 24 May 1968, nr. 002702, 220/1968.
[170] MAE, 28 May 1968, nr. 002931, 220/1968.

Romania's ambassador to Beijing, China's official press did not report extensively on the situation in Czechoslovakia. A report of Chinese coverage of the Prague Spring states that "in materials published with a low circulation it is appreciated that a process of deepening of the revisionist phenomenon is underway."[171] In private, however, Sino-Czechoslovak relations grew cold in mid-1968, with Beijing accusing Prague of creating conditions for a "capitalist restoration" in Czechoslovakia.[172] An MAE report from the embassy in Beijing notes that in late July, a Czechoslovak diplomat received a phone call from a Chinese Foreign Ministry official who warned that "the new Czechoslovak leadership represents Krushchevite ideas which put the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic on the road towards capitalism."[173]

The Romanians were interested in how the Chinese interpreted events in Czechoslovakia. MAE Director Gheorghe Marin sent a directive to the Prague embassy instructing it the pay attention to "the position of Chinese diplomats in Prague regarding the situation in Czechoslovakia and regarding Czechoslovak-Chinese relations in general and inform the Ministry."[174] Romania, one of China's closer friends in Eastern Europe, was apparently interested in the strains in Sino-Czechoslovak relations.

Theories that Moscow never considered Romania's potential influence on the rest of Eastern Europe to be significant are difficult to reconcile with the documentary

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[171] MAE, 04 June 1969, nr. 003015, 220/1968.
[172] MAE, 05 June 1968, nr. 003036, 220/1968.
[173] The report states that during this telephone call, the Chinese official declined the Czechoslovaks' invitation to send a Chinese delegation to the upcoming Party Congress in Prague, labeling the invitation a "provocation." MAE, 30 July 1968, nr. 003818, 220/1968.
[174] MAE, 07 June 1968, nr. 003015, 220/1968.

evidence in which Romania is considered part of a dissident coalition influencing other bloc members.[175] While the liberalizations underway in Czechoslovakia provoked more concern in Moscow and the hard-line East European capitals, Romania was considered a similar, albeit secondary, problem. Bucharest's foreign policy provoked concern in Moscow. Available material suggests that the Soviets had some reason to fear the establishments of new networks of legitimacy representing an implicit challenge to Moscow's line.

Czechoslovakia and Romania Compared

Bucharest's response to the Prague Spring did not confirm liberalization, but instead sounded its death knell. Observers at the time saw the outburst of genuine popularity for Ceauşescu in August 1968 as affirming not only the doctrine of autonomy, but also the Romanian third way between high Stalinism and Hungarian "independence." When examined in light of later social and economic developments in Ceauşescu's Romania, however, 1968 marked a building block in the amalgam of internal repression and foreign policy openness—overshadowed by an obscene personality cult—for which Romanian communism would eventually grow notorious.

While the Ceauşescu leadership supported Czechoslovakia throughout the crisis, it defended the Prague leadership on a larger principle of noninterference in others' affairs without endorsing the specific aims and values of Dubček's "socialism with a

[175] Cviic, for example, assures that "from Moscow's point of view, an independent Romanian foreign policy was actually never considered a serious threat." See Christopher Cviic, *Remaking the Balkans* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995), p. 33.

human face."[176] Any effort in the region to wrest concessions from Moscow that carried both a likelihood of success and a minimal risk of retaliation, the Romanians determined, deserved Bucharest's support. In turn, other states' efforts to gain autonomy supported the Romanian principle, thereby according Bucharest precious international prestige while providing a precedent that could be cited in bilateral negotiations with Moscow.

Romanian communists did not favor Czechoslovak style reforms themselves, but only defended Czechoslovakia's right as a sovereign state to implement them. Meanwhile, the Romanian press ignored the more controversial and extensive liberalizations under way in Prague, such as the lifting of media censorship. Romanians had little way of knowing how different Dubček's reforms were from Ceauşescu's.[177] The Romanian leader, too, was apparently unaware of the nature of the domestic situation in Czechoslovakia. He seemed oblivious of the fact that genuine grassroots popular mobilization was pushing the Prague regime in new directions.[178] It seems that he did not really understand the extent to which the Prague Spring went in challenging the authority of the party. Nor did he capture the significance of some Czechoslovak communists' willingness to cede portions of their authority. Either ignoring or dismissing all the information the MAE was producing, Ceauşescu refused to characterize the Prague

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[176] See Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule*, pp. 112-113; and Hale, p. 42.
[177] See Vasile Buga, "Controverse în Jurul Poziției României Față de Criza Cehoslovacă din 1968," *România şi Primăvara de la Praga*, ed. Dan Cătănuş (Bucharest: Institutul Național Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), p. 64; and Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p. 201.
[178] Retegan, pp. 177-178.

Spring as "counterrevolutionary."[179] Meanwhile, Ceauşescu was assertively criticizing the Soviet Union while Czechoslovakia was assuring its neighbor of its fidelity. As Retegan has remarked, "while Ceauşescu's policy was spectacular, Dubček's was much more profound."[180]

Ceauşescu's foreign policy, however, was actually more resistant to the Soviet Union than was Czechoslovakia's. While Dubček was reaffirming his country's permanent and indestructible ties to the Soviet Union, Ceauşescu was calling for the abolition of military blocs.[181] The Romanian leadership itself rejected political liberalization if understood as a loosening of party control over political life. While the party would tolerate some pluralism in cultural and intellectual life inasmuch as liberalization conferred legitimacy, the international tension over Czechoslovak reforms rendered the relaxation in Romania too dangerous, as letting Romanians think their regime was a reformist one risked inviting calls for actual democratization.[182]

WTO forces invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968, letting the world know that Moscow would not permit any and every reform within its sphere of influence. The Soviets' doctrine of "limited sovereignty" inevitably led to speculation over the future of Romanian autonomy. The PCR was deeply shaken and considered its position under immediate threat. Romania followed the international situation closely throughout the

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[179] See Vojitech Mastny, "Was 1968 A Strategic Watershed of the Cold War?," *Diplomatic History* 29:1 (2005), pp. 163-164.
[180] Retegan, p. 155.
[181] Ibid., p. 154.
[182] Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe From Stalin to Havel* (New York: Free Press, 2002), p. 224.

crisis, concerned about its own security. Consensus on the imminence of invasion, however, does not appear to have spread from outside of the party's inner circles.

The Specter of "Socialism With a Human Face"

While recent evidence suggests that an invasion of Romania was unlikely—and was understood to be unlikely in Romanian diplomatic circles—the party leadership was far more suspicious of the Soviet Union than were the diplomatic analysts. Correspondence between Romanian embassies and the MAE indicate great concern and preoccupation among Soviet and Eastern bloc officials that the internal situation in Czechoslovakia might encourage popular movements in neighboring states. How these neighboring states would conceive of Romania's "partial alignment" in light of Czechoslovakia's fate was a source of serious concern.

Correspondence among Eastern bloc diplomats gives some picture of the climate of intrabloc relations and the perceived threat of Czechoslovak liberalizations. According to a conversation note sent to the MAE in April 1968, the Soviet ambassador to Sofia told Romania's ambassador to Bulgaria that "the current situation in the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia and the unusually critical discussions addressed at leadership cadres of the Party and the government of Czechoslovakia create great worry in the USSR." The Soviet diplomat expressed concern that in Prague a repeat of the Hungarian revolt of 1956 might be in the making.[183]

[183] MAE, 05 April 1968, nr. 002067, 220/1968.

Other Eastern bloc officials expressed the same concerns. In mid-March, East German party chief Walter Ulbricht sent a letter to Czechoslovak colleagues warning that instability in Czechoslovakia "would encourage oppositionist elements in the DDR."[184] According to an MAE report of a conversation between Czechoslovak and Romanian ambassadors, Ulbricht was "most uneasy about the evolution of the internal situation in Czechoslovakia and its repercussions in other countries."[185] A Polish diplomatic official in the Netherlands told his Romanian counterpart that the Polish United Workers Party was worried about the dangerous evolution of events in Czechoslovakia, fearing that the non-Marxist parties there would be empowered. He mentioned the prospect of a Czechoslovak withdrawal from the WTO and the "weakening of anti-imperialist forces" that might follow from this turn of events.[186] The Prague Spring's repercussions in the Ukraine, too, were a major preoccupation of the Soviets themselves. Ukranian republic level officials as well as Soviet leaders in Moscow feared that the liberalizations in Czechoslovakia could spread across the border into the Ukraine, where they risked inciting a nationalist self-assertion.[187]

Another Romanian diplomat's report to the MAE discusses the disquiet among Polish and Bulgarian colleagues that the Czechoslovak situation had aroused. According to the Romanian official's report, the Polish diplomat noted that Czechoslovakia's student movements in particular were influencing a "large part of the Polish population."

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[184] MAE, 03 February 1968, nr. 00753, 220/1968.
[185] MAE, 30 March 1968, nr. 001923, 220/1968.
[186] MAE, 29 March 1968, nr. 001936, 220/1968.
[187] Yaacov Y. Vertzberger, *Risk Taking and Decisionmaking: Foreign Military Intervention Decisions* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 224.

The Bulgarian remarked that it was unfortunate and worrisome that the Prague leadership decided to find solutions to its problems "in the street," thereby unleashing a movement that could slip out of its control.[188] In mid-May, Romania's ambassador to Sofia noted in a report sent to the MAE that Tola Drajoiceva, a member of the Bulgarian Politburo, declared that Czechoslovak print and broadcast media were "in the hands of counterrevolutionaries." Boris Popov, Director of Section I of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, remarked that if Dubček failed to "take necessary measures" to "curb the antisocialist course," Czechoslovakia would see a repeat of the Hungarian revolt of 1956.[189]

At the Dresden meeting of WTO party leaders in April 1968, Hungarian party chief János Kádár warned that the situation in 1956 in his own country resembled events in Czechoslovakia twelve years later.[190] Hungary, although its troops did participate in the 1968 invasion after the Kádár government was threatened with economic sanctions,[191] appeared to be among Czechoslovakia's defenders only weeks before the Prague Spring was quashed.[192] A letter from the Warsaw meeting of WTO states informed the Czechoslovak leadership of these concerns which had long been articulated in private:

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[188] MAE, 13 March 1968, nr. 001564, 220/1968.
[189] The report also notes that "Bulgarian intellectuals manifest sympathy and approval of the events in Czechoslovakia." MAE, 16 May 1968, nr. 002761, 220/1968.
[190] MAE, 10 April 1968, nr. 002180, 220/1968.
[191] Vertzberger, p. 241.
[192] According to a Romanian Foreign Ministry report, the adjunct director of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs told Romania's ambassador to Prague that the Hungarians "regard developments in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic positively, and support the process of rebirth that is underway and have presented some aspects of their experience in 1956 in relation to the pressure from the left, the right, and the antisocialists

> We cannot support a situation in which enemy forces battle your country, drive it off the path of socialism, and threaten to rip Czechoslovakia away from the socialist community. This is not only an issue of concern to you. This is a common issue of all communist and workers parties and states united in alliance, collaboration, and friendship.[193]

In this letter, the WTO explicitly explained how provocative domestic policy in the bloc was never a domestic affair alone; by its nature domestic unrest carried international implications.

Diplomats speculated at length about the likelihood that the WTO would orchestrate an intervention to reverse the course of events in Prague. In May, a Czechoslovak embassy secretary stationed in Athens told his Romanian counterparts that the situation in his country was delicate and similar to Hungary's in 1956. According to the MAE report, "he expressed his fear that things could lead to a military intervention on the part of the USSR.[194] J. Kuba, a Czechoslovak official at the International Atomic Energy Association, expressed his view to Romania's ambassador to Austria that the "western imperialists," who he considered quite similar to Moscow's imperialists, were correct in recognizing that the Soviets wanted to introduce troops into Czechoslovakia.[195]

The Soviets and Czechoslovaks held a meeting in May to diffuse the tension between Prague and its WTO allies. Prague appears to have used the opportunity to suggest that if an invasion was being considered, then the Czechoslovak people might resist. An MAE report notes that during Soviet Defense Minister Andrei Grechko's visit

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who created difficulties for them and prevented them from resolving the multitude of problems that existed." MAE, 21 June 1968, nr. 3242, 220/1968.

[193] MAE, Anexa III, 220/1968.

[194] MAE, 20 May 1968, nr. 002828, 220/1968.

[195] MAE, 05 June 1968, nr. 003035, 220/1968.

to Czechoslovakia, his hosts spent time showing off the Czechoslovak arsenal of weapons it would presumably employ in the event of an invasion.[196] Dubček and the Soviet representatives, however, appeared to have reached a compromise at their May meeting. Some Romanian diplomats, too, considered the Soviets genuine in their decision to let Prague handle its own affairs. On 29 May Romania's ambassador to Vienna sent a telegram to the MAE stating that the visit went well and resolved much tension. "The USSR," he concludes, "is not thinking, as has been written in the press, of introducing troops into Czechoslovakia."[197]

The Czechoslovaks had a different impression. R. Smolík, First Secretary of Prague's Berlin embassy, told his Romanian counterpart in early June that Hungary's, Romania's, and Yugoslavia's protection were securing Czechoslovakia's existence. "Otherwise," he is quoted as saying, "we would all have to sing in Russian."[198] In late June the Romanian embassy in Berlin sent a telegram to Bucharest, reporting on East Germany's eagerness for military action to suppress the Prague Spring. It reads as follows:

> The Embassy of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in Berlin is in possession of material of an internal character elaborated by the Central Committee of the German Socialist Unity Party…in which it is deemed necessary that the USSR, Poland, and the German Democratic Republic penetrate Czechoslovakia with armed forces to fight antisocialist elements.[199]

On the topic of Czechoslovakia, East Germany emerged as the first and the most insistent member among Eastern Europe's WTO states in supporting military action, likely

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[196] Ibid.
[197] MAE, 28 May 1968, nr. 002950, 220/1968.
[198] MAE, 06 June 1968, nr. 3040, 220/1968.
[199] MAE, 24 June 1968, nr. 003278, 220/1968.

because of its leadership's own convictions as well as on instructions from Moscow. The memory of wartime German occupation of Czechoslovakia, however, precluded its military participation in the invasion, although it was only decided at the eleventh hour that the DDR would sit the operation out.[200]

After the July meeting at Čierna nad Tisou between the Soviets and the Prague leadership, it appeared that the tensions had been calmed. The Czechoslovaks felt they had emerged victorious, and even feared that the Soviets had been humiliated. Moscow's representatives were either hiding their true intensions to invade, as Retegan claims, or they were genuine in their demands and only decided to proceed with the full-scale military operation once it became clear that the Prague leadership was incapable of remedying the situation, as Mastny argues.[201]

The Romanian MAE paid attention to Western appreciations of the tension within the communist bloc over the Prague Spring. Romania's ambassador to Sofia wrote in a report to the MAE that the French, Italian, and Swiss ambassadors told him that the USSR and other states would invite "moral prejudice and a loss of prestige" if they invaded Czechoslovakia. "The diplomats," the report continues, "discussing the possibility of a direct Soviet intervention in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia, see the possibility of new conditions unfolding which might put into question the very existence of the Warsaw Treaty."[202] An MAE report dated 13 August noted that "western diplomats openly display an intense interest in a visit [that of Ceauşescu to Czechoslovakia] which

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[200] See Mastny, "Was 1968 A Strategic Watershed of the Cold War?," p. 168.
[201] Retegan, p. 164; and Mastny, "Was 1968 A Strategic Watershed of the Cold War?," p. 163.
[202] MAE, (no date), nr. 003449, 220/1968.

they appreciate as an important moment not only in Czechoslovak-Romanian relations, but in the ensemble of relations among socialist countries." The report observes that "[i]t is known the extent to which our country promotes its foreign policy principles."[203] The Romanian regime would profit from the prestige of its foreign policy over the next two decades.

An Occupied Romania? The Diplomatic Establishment vs. The Party Ideologues

While the diplomatic establishment in Romania and abroad did not consider an invasion of Romania a possibility, the party-state leadership reached the opposite conclusion. For the Central Committee, the invasion of Czechoslovakia meant that Romania, too, was in serious danger.

For all the speculation about an intervention in Czechoslovakia, the rare mentions of a WTO intervention in Romania refer only to its extreme unlikelihood. In one of the few instances of such discussion to be found, an Egyptian diplomat assures the Romanian ambassador to Japan that "the 'limited sovereignty' thesis constituted a justification of the Czechoslovak invasion, but cannot be considered a doctrine or a direct threat to Romania or Yugoslavia."[204]

The diplomats who discussed the possibility considered intervention in Romania so unlikely that they held up Romania's strategy as an example of how the Czechoslovak leadership should have carried out controlled liberalization without endangering its own

[203] MAE, 13 Aug 1968, nr. 003984, 220/1968.
[204] MAE, (no date), nr. 01/00728, 220/1969.

security. A report submitted to the MAE by Romania's ambassador in Berlin discusses a meeting he attended with fellow East German diplomats:

> In discussions with the embassy's diplomats, several German cadres expressed their view that things in Czechoslovakia were unleashed too brusquely, that more time was necessary to broach such subjects. They made comparisons to Romania, showing that in our country some changes were made with a more realistic sense of measures.[205]

According to another MAE report, a Moroccan diplomat in Havana told his Romanian counterpart that

> the position of the Romanian Communist Party vis-à-vis the situation in Czechoslovakia is very correct. Romania again displays a great power of understanding in important international problems, holding at the same time a position of great courage, of self-control, independence, and real sovereignty./ The Moroccan diplomat appreciated that '*it would be well if the Czechoslovak Communist Party followed Romania's example and did not go too far with liberalization*.'[206] [emphasis mine]

According to a November 1968 report from the Cologne embassy to the MAE, some Czechoslovak representatives who visited with the Romanian ambassador there remarked that Dubček erred with such an ambitious liberalization program. According to the report, one Czechoslovak official notes that "if [Dubček] had conducted a more prudent and balanced policy, as does Romania's leadership, perhaps we would not be in the current situation." The Czechoslovak officials considered that Dubček's real mistake was to allow the press to publish articles calling for the country's withdrawal from the Warsaw Treaty and from COMECON.[207]

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[205] MAE, 17 May 1968, nr. 002796, 220/1968.
[206] MAE, 02 August 1968, nr. 003879, 220/1968.
[207] MAE, 22 November 1968, nr. 005709, 221/1968; MAE, 22 November 1968, nr. 11/002952, 212/1968.

While Romania was supporting Czechoslovak sovereignty and neighboring states were decrying the "anti-socialist" activities being permitted and encouraged out of Prague, the MAE was following Czechoslovak developments closely. The head of the MAE's Fourth Directorate, Vasile Şandru, showed a special interest in the reaction to Czechoslovak developments among WTO member states, especially the Soviet Union. In February 1968 he instructed the Romanian ambassador in Moscow to "inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with special attention about commentaries made in the USSR related to the events in Czechoslovakia."[208] In April, Şandru instructed Romania's ambassador in East Germany to "follow with attention all the aspects, both positive and negative, of Czechoslovak-East German relations, and keep the MAE informed."[209] The Romanian diplomatic establishment, therefore, paid close attention to the international situation and found no criticism toward itself of the kind directed toward Czechoslovakia. Few signs of fear of a violation of Romania's sovereignty are to be found in discussions among communist diplomats in 1968.

The Romanian party's Executive Committee, however, was far less confident in the security of its country and its leadership position. At the first meeting of the Executive Committee in the hours after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Ceauşescu and other members announced that Romania was at greater risk of invasion now that a

[208] MAE, 07 February 1968, nr. 01/00719, 220/1968.
[209] MAE, 23 April 1968, nr. 002257, 220/1968.

precedent had been set. In spite of the assessments of the Romanian diplomatic establishment, Ceauşescu and his inner circle sensed a threat to their position.[210]

One can only speculate about what specific information caused the leadership to feel threatened. Executive Committee members might have been influenced by a military intelligence report rumored to suggest that an invasion of Romania was being planned in Moscow. It is possible that Soviet criticisms of Czechoslovak foreign policy—a policy increasingly similar to Romania's—struck a sensitive nerve in the Romanian authorities and convinced them that Romania might be in danger simply because of its autonomous foreign policy. The Czechoslovaks, after all, had told the Romanians that Bucharest's policy served as a model for their own. Dubček described his own country's philosophy in words that could have come from Ceauşescu's mouth. He reiterated Czechoslovakia's support for "peaceful relations in Europe and the development of collaboration among countries of different social systems," based upon "principles of equality in rights, reciprocal advantage, noninterference in internal affairs, and international solidarity."[211] A conversation report from a meeting between a Romanian ambassador and Czechoslovakia's ambassador to Berlin notes that

> the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia will continue to pursue a policy of friendship with the Soviet Union and with the other socialist countries on the basis of noninterference in internal affairs and reciprocal advantage. He

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[210] See ANR: SC a CC al PCR, Political Executive Committee Transcript, 21 August 1968, 133/1981, available online at Cold War International History Project, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034F2AB-96B6-175C-9B41C0EAF01750E7&sort=Collection&item=Romania%20in%20the%20Cold%20War.

[211] MAE, Anexa III, 220/1968.

> mentioned that what Romania has done for many years already, Czechoslovakia undertakes, convinced that it will not be easy.[212]

According to a report sent to the MAE, The First Secretary of the Czechoslovak embassy in Sofia told the Romanian ambassador to Bulgaria that Romania's defense of its right to develop relations with non-socialist states served as a precedent for Czechoslovakia's doing so.[213] In the letter participants in the 1968 Warsaw WTO meeting sent to the Czechoslovak leadership, regional party leaders interrogate Czechoslovakia's new course in foreign policy with words that could also have been directed at Romanian policy:

> We hear voices calling for the revision of our mutual policy and our common policy towards the Federal Republic of Germany, even while the West German government incontestably promotes an enemy line towards the security interests of our countries.…The bourgeois press, under apparent elegies of 'democratization' and 'liberalization' in the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia, undertakes a campaign against its fraternal socialist countries…Is it possible…that you limit yourselves merely to declarations and assurances of fidelity vis-à-vis the cause of socialism and obligations to the alliance?[214]

The Soviets had objected to Prague's position that both German states should be recognized—a position identical to Romania's. Moscow insisted to the Czechoslovaks that foreign policy must be crafted by individual states in consultation with the larger socialist community to form a unified policy towards the capitalist world.[215] Romania, of course, wanted no such consultation in forming its foreign policy.

The Romanians, therefore, saw part of the Czechoslovak new course as similar to their own in foreign affairs, even if its domestic component proved more unsettling to the hard-line WTO members. While the Soviets did not consider Ceauşescu's domestic

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[212] MAE, 19 March 1968, nr. 001072, 220/1968.
[213] MAE, (no date), nr. 003449, 220/1968.
[214] MAE, 28 June 1968, (no document nr.), 220/1968.
[215] See MAE, (no date), nr. 003036, 220/1968.

policy threatening to political stability of their East European empire, they were troubled by his foreign policy.[216] Exactly how this trouble would be handled seemed much less certain at the time than it does in retrospect.

Two major differences between Czechoslovakia and Romania in foreign policy, however, should not escape notice. First, officials in Prague favored a quasi-democratization of the process of foreign policy formulation. The Czechoslovaks announced in March 1968 that foreign policy would henceforth be debated and formulated in the National Assembly. Non-communists were also allowed to take part in official state capacities, as the new rules untangled state positions from the party apparatus.[217] Within this framework, the authorities announced that Czechoslovakia would reevaluate its policy toward industrialized Western countries, towards socialist neighbors, towards the Soviet Union in particular, and towards the West European Common Market.[218] Second, Dubček publicly stressed socialist Czechoslovakia's "permanent," "living," "organic," and "incontestable" alliance with the Soviet Union, crediting Moscow with bequeathing to the Czechoslovaks "the very logic of socialist development."[219] A Romanian official would never utter such affirmations during this period, nor would the PCR partially democratize the foreign policy making process. Moreover, during the Ceauşescu period, Romania' alliance with the Soviet Union was never distinguished from alliances with other countries in the socialist community. Romanian official pronouncements spoke of the country as the USSR's equal, and

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[216] Retegan, p. 120.
[217] MAE, Anexa III , 220/1968.
[218] MAE, 24 March 1968, nr. 11/001520, 212/1968.
[219] MAE, Anexa III, 220/1968.

Bucharest insisted that equality was the foundation on which the two countries' relations must be based.[220]

Critics of liberalization, fearful of any sign of a threat to their position, could ignore these nuances that separated the policies and stress the features that Czechoslovak and Romanian approaches shared. The official letter of explanation to the PCR from the Central Committees of aggressor states offering what was euphemistically termed "fraternal assistance" contained a paragraph decrying Prague's foreign policy:

> The reactionary forces in Czechoslovakia try to give a new orientation to foreign policy, to determine the withdrawal of the Czechoslovak S.R. [Socialist Republic] from the Warsaw Treaty organization.…They unfold a broad campaign of discrediting the Warsaw Treaty and the members of this Treaty and apply measures aiming at preparing the reorientation of Czechoslovakia towards the West.[221]

Again, these criticisms could have applied to the Romanians as well. In any case, the Romanian security services drew up—and consistently revised and updated—sophisticated plans to hide and protect Ceauşescu in the event of an invasion or coup attempt. However unlikely a foreign-directed plot to oust the leadership may have been, it was considered possible enough to warrant a secret evacuation protocol for Ceauşescu.[222]

But the Executive Committee's concerns—concerns at odds with the MAE's estimate—were formed in a certain kind of political atmosphere. Party members based their understanding of world affairs not on diplomatic correspondence, but on fear and resentment of what they considered an inherently aggressive Soviet imperialism. The 21

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[220] See Moraru, pp. 35-39.
[221] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 21 August 1968, 133/1968.
[222] Cristian Troncotă, *Duplicitării: O Istorie a Serviciilor de Informaţii şi Securitate ale Regimului Comunist din România, 1965-1989* (Bucharest: Editura Elion, 2004), p. 136; see also Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, pp. 84-88.

August operation supported these worries. The creeping fear of foreign interference in Romanian affairs made Romania's communists less measured and reserved in their analysis of international affairs. As Vladimir Tismăneanu has remarked, the Romanian communists "had a strong sense of fanaticism characteristic of tiny conspiratorial sects."[223] The fact that their own unlikely conspiracy actually succeeded with foreign backing only reinforced the warped framework through which they viewed all world events.[224]

According to Kenneth Jowitt, socialist Romania's élite political culture emerged out of a "conspiratorial-prison experience," and the background this élite shared in its formative years affect its decision making and its approach to global politics.[225] PCR devotees based their understandings of the world upon their own national communist convictions, their anti-Russian prejudices, and their fear of their own security. In this context, their standard of evaluating threats favored dubious but provocative pieces of intelligence over measured interpretations of the preponderance of evidence. As anthropologist Steven Sampson has observed, rumors were ubiquitous in socialist Romania, and by passing them along everyone from peasants to the highly educated participated in a kind of "socialist folklore" unique to state socialism. Tales of imminent intervention from abroad and palace coup attempts at home circulated routinely. The fact

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[223] Tismăneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe From Stalin to Havel*, p. 225.
[224] I thank David Curp for clarifying this point to me.
[225] See Kenneth Jowitt, "An Organizational Approach to the Study of Political Culture in Marxist-Leninist Systems," *The American Political Science Review* 68:3 (1974), pp. 1173, 1185-1186.

that rumors sometimes proved to be correct only lent some plausibility to all.[226] Doubtless this atmosphere of constant rumor affected the Romanian authorities' approach to state and party security. Related to the pervasiveness of rumors in Romanian society is the habit of communicating in innuendo and suggestive, rather than direct, reference so as to avoid impermissibly harsh critique.[227] The atmosphere of constant censorship and self-censorship also must have altered the framework within which Romanian authorities evaluated the threats they faced.[228]

In looking back on August 1968 decades later, our own knowledge that is based upon the wealth of information that the partial opening of archives has permitted must not be read into Romanian authorities' perceptions. After all, Stalin failed miserably in 1941 when he ignored signs that an invasion was being mounted. Barbarossa proved that state leaders are well served to be overly cautious in guarding their borders and taking threats seriously. They should not be too hasty to read mere provocation into unexpected troop movements.[229] Decision makers evaluate pieces of intelligence in their domestic and geopolitical contexts, and the Romanian party élite was no exception. Consequently, the Romanian Communists' conspiratorial pedigree left them prone to believing exaggerated claims about potential threats from abroad.

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[226] See Steven L. Sampson, "Rumours in Socialist Romania," *Survey* 28:4 (1984), pp. 152-158.
[227] See, for example, note 49.
[228] In the Albanian case, to take another example, it is difficult to dismiss the 600,000 one-man bunkers built under Hoxha's dictatorship as inspired *only* by fear of an internal revolt.
[229] For a look at Stalin's failure to heed warnings in 1941, see David Murphy, *What Stalin Knew: The Enigma of Barbarossa* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

The Romanians did, however, have some immediate reasons for being cautious about Soviet designs on their country. The military exercises on the border of Czechoslovakia in the lead up to the invasion were similar to those that were being undertaken near the Soviet border with Romania. Warsaw Pact manoeuvres had been underway in the Ukraine near the Czechoslovak border a months before the 21 August invasion. A report sent on 24 May to Bucharest from the Romanian ambassador in Berlin states that "from verified information obtained by the Romanian embassy, about five Soviet divisions are stationed on the border of the Czechoslovak socialist republic."[230] Meanwhile, the WTO was undertaking similar manoeuvres in the Ukraine near the Romanian border, where the Red Army was also strengthening its presence. A Securitate intelligence document reports that the Soviets had shown particular interest in Romanian military potential in the days leading up to the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and had amassed large troop and arms concentrations along the northern border.[231] The Securitate intelligence services also determined that embassy officers of other socialist states were covertly doubling as Soviet agents, funneling information abroad about the internal situation in Romania.[232] Combined with the intelligence information they would receive, officials in Bucharest felt they did not need to know exactly what Moscow was planning in order to be weary.

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[230] MAE, 24 May 1968, nr. 002882, 220/1968.
[231] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 06 August 1968, nr. 2411/6, published in Liviu-Daniel Grigorescu and Constantin Moraru, "Trupe în Apropierea Frontierei şi Turişti în Interior," *Magazin Istoric* 32:7 (1998), p. 29. See also Retegan, pp. 192-193.
[232] Ibid.

Unfortunately, reconstructing the intelligence information the party leadership received in August 1968 is impossible. So few documents are available for consultation, and former officials who speak about the matter have their own agendas—most obviously to protect themselves from shame and embarrassment—and therefore cannot be taken at their word. Meanwhile, some erstwhile intelligence officers, many of whom have allied with ultranationalist authoritarian circles in post-1989 Romania, have an interest in magnifying the threat the Soviet Union posed to Romanian security. Promoting themselves as defenders of the nation against foreigners—which they do in unabashedly chauvinistic treatises—buttresses their nationalist credentials today.

One such book that seeks to strengthen the PCR's nationalist legacy by overstating the danger the Soviet Union posed to Romania in the wake of the invasion of Czechoslovakia is the clumsily titled *În Anul 1968 A Fost Programată şi Invadarea României: Informaţii Inedite din Interiorul Serviciilor Speciale ale României* (In the Year 1968 The Invasion of Romania Was Also Planned: Unedited Information From Inside the Romanian Special Services). Neagu Cosma and Ion Stănescu argue that the USSR had plans to invade Romania two weeks after invading Czechoslovakia. If these two operations went well, forces would continue eastward to topple the Yugoslav regime and then on to occupy Austria. In their narrative, the Romanian General Secretary, however, thwarted the expansionist plan with his "firm" policy promising guerilla resistance. Ceauşescu's boldness, combined with some "favorable external factors," prevented the attack on the "black sheep" of the WTO.[233] Cosma and Stănescu claim that a Polish

[233] Neagu Cosma and Ion Stănescu, *În Anul 1968, A Fost Programată şi Invadarea*

national working at the WTO command headquarters, who also served as an informant to Romanian intelligence, was present when Brezhnev and Andropov took the decision to launch the multiple invasions.[234] The erstwhile intelligence officers reproduce several documents in the annex of this polemic, but few are documents being revealed for the first time in their publication, and none constitute actual evidence of plans to aggressively expand Soviet influence in Europe through war.

Under a more likely scenario in which the Polish informant's report has some basis in fact, Brezhnev and associates were overheard venting about trouble in Eastern Europe and pondering in jest an invasion not only of Czechoslovakia, but also of Romania, Yugoslavia, and even Austria. As Siani-Davies has remarked in another context, there is "a fine line between serious planning…and disgruntled scheming."[235] A frustrated aside is something different from a military order to invade. But Cosma and Stănescu have an interest in ignoring this very real possibility that the Soviet officials were merely entertaining an imperialist fantasy. The writers' immediate objective, which becomes clear in the final section of their book, is to defend the Ceauşescu regime's legacy on nationalist-patriotic grounds. Ceauşescu "was not a coward, but a patriot, worthy of all admiration" for his defense of the country in 1968 and after.[236] His "pure, patriotic sentiments" meant that Romania was a "vigorous, prosperous" land until his

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României: Informații Inedite din Interiorul Serviciilor Speciale ale României (Bucharest: Editura Paco, 2000), p. 8.
[234] Ibid., p. 13.
[235] Peter Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 173.
[236] Cosma and Stănescu, p. 86.

fall.[237] Cosma and Stănescu insist that the oral histories from insiders that they refer to have been missing from other accounts of 1968, and for this reason much has been missed about the immediacy of the threat to Romania from its neighbors. Yet oral histories, especially fantastic ones from compromised former officials with an obvious agenda, cannot simply be believed when they provide no substantiating evidence. Moreover, other researchers have no way to verify these oral histories, as Cosma and Stănescu reveal no documentation in their annex. Given the fantastic claims the authors make in their conclusion, it might seem fitting to exclude consideration of this polemic from a serious historical study. However, since these conclusions have circulated widely and, as we shall see, been partially corroborated by other intelligence services, it must be included.

It strains credulity to imagine that the Soviet Union would seriously contemplate—let alone undertake—a sequential invasion of three "fraternal" socialist countries. An invasion of Austria, a neutral country but one definitely outside of the Soviets' own postwar definition of their sphere of influence in Europe, would have been all but unthinkable.[238] The suggestion seems doubly absurd if we believe the testimony of a Soviet officer among the invading troops in August 1968 who claims to have been instructed to hold as much of eastern Czechoslovakia as he could rather than advance

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[237] Ibid., pp.105-107.
[238] See Wolfgang Mueller, "Stalin and Austria: New Evidence on Soviet Policy in a Secondary Theatre of the Cold War, 1938–53/55," *Cold War History* 6:1 (2006), p. 66.

against NATO troops had they moved into Czechoslovakia; the Soviets would thus have preferred to partition the country rather than fight NATO.[239]

Cosma and Stănescu contend that Ceauşescu also found the intelligence report about a Soviet move into Austria dubious. According to them, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, however, convinced him that perhaps the intelligence was correct, meaning that Romania was the next target.[240] More Romanian archival information, if any exists at all, has yet to be revealed that could shed a brighter light on these questions.

However, Czechoslovakia received many warnings from states individually, and in the form of a common letter from the Warsaw meeting participants, that if the Czechoslovak ruling party failed to reverse course its sovereignty would be rescinded. The Soviets and their hard-line satellites in Eastern Europe gave the Czechoslovak leadership a detailed list of policies and trends that needed to be reversed for the security of the entire bloc. The letter of appeal urged the Prague leadership to take a "decisive and courageous" offensive against "antisocialist" forces; to mobilize a defense of the socialist state; to halt the activities of "antisocialist organizations;" to reinstitute party control of the media; and to revert to Leninist "democratic centralism" in decision making.[241] Romania never received such written warnings from its WTO allies that it was in imminent danger. (Nor, of course, did Yugoslavia, since it was not even an alliance member). Moreover, Romania was not an offender on any of the counts listed in this ultimatum.

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[239] See Mastny, "Was 1968 A Strategic Watershed of the Cold War?," p. 168.
[240] See Cosma and Stănescu, pp. 55-57. See also Troncotă, p. 131.
[241] MAE, Anexa III, nr. 28, 220/1968.

Other evidence, however, suggests that Cosma's and Stănescu's story might contain a kernel of truth. Evidence from the British Public Record Office revealed after the publication of *În Anul 1968*... corroborates Cosma's and Stănescu's claims with information about British and Dutch intelligence services' discoveries of Soviet plans to invade Romania. In early September, British intelligence alerted Bucharest to information that the Soviets had decided to enter Romania in the early morning of 22 November. According to the alleged plan, Soviet, Hungarian, and Polish troops would take part in the operation.[242] This evidence must be viewed in light of three possible scenarios. First, the Soviets may indeed have been manufacturing false intelligence as a diversion and a warning to Romania. Second, the British and Dutch may simply have stumbled upon contingency plans to invade their neighbors, the maintenance of which was perfunctory for the Red Army, and somehow came to incorrectly believe a specific date was attached to the Romania plan.[243] A third possibility, of course, remains that the Soviet had planned an occupation of Romania but that it was called off. Harold Wilson's biographer, Ben Pimlott, accepting this view, considers the Soviet decision to call off the invasion of Romania—the reason for which remains a mystery—the "slippery slope towards the end of the Cold War."[244] If the Romanians did have evidence of an invasion being planned, their ambassador to the United States, Corneliu Bogdan, was either uninformed or he kept it a secret from Washington. During a meeting with Senate Majority Leader Mike

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[242] See Troncotă, p. 137; and Martin Bright, "Revealed: Britain on brink of war with Soviet Union in 1968; Brezhnev's action in Czechoslovakia was condemned by Ceauşescu and Moscow had to teach him a lesson," *The Observer*, 09 January 2000 p. 12.
[243] Mastny maintains that this report was frivolous and Ceauşescu must have recognized this. See Mastny, "Was 1968 A Strategic Watershed in the Cold War?," p. 172.
[244] See Bright, p. 12.

Mansfield, Bogdan was asked if he had specific information that Romania would be invaded. The ambassador said he did not.[245]

Some other pieces of evidence attest to the possibility that the Soviets were considering invading more than just Czechoslovakia. Weeks before the operation of 21 August, Grechko had announced at a Politburo meeting that Romania was considering withdrawing from the WTO and that the organization could not withstand the loss.[246] Some Romanian communists, in fact, did support Romania's withdrawal from the WTO, although the official line maintained that Romania was happy to remain a WTO member so long as NATO existed.[247]

According to Dennis Deletant, another former intelligence officer named Paul Şarpe claimed knowledge of a plan similar, but not identical, to the one Cosma and Stănescu describe. According to this former General, at a July meeting among Warsaw Pact heads of state in the Crimea it was decided that Romania, as well as Czechoslovakia, would be invaded on 22 August.[248] This allegation contrasts with Cosma's and Stănescu's claim that the invasions were to be carried out in two-week intervals. Again,

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[245] Retegan, p. 196.
[246] Ouimet, p. 17.
[247] Ianoş Fazekaş, for example, argued that Romania should leave the treaty. Ceauşescu, however, appears to have considered this too provocative a position, one that the Soviets might not tolerate. ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 21 August 1968, 133/1968.
[248] Paul Şarpe, "Consideraţii cu Privire la Evoluţia Organului Militar Român de Informaţii de-a Lungul Vremii. Direcţia Cercetare-Locul şi Rolul Său în Structura Actuală a Armatei Române," *133 Ani de Existenţa a Serviciului Militar Român de Informaţii 1859-1992*, (Bucharest, 1992), p. 9. According to Dennis Deletant, who cites this work, Şarpe's paper was given at an in-house symposium in Bucharest but never published. Dennis Deletant, letter to author, 31 May 2007. The paper is discussed in Dennis Deletant and Mihail Ionescu, *Romania in the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1989*, Cold War International History Project, Working Paper nr. 43 (April 2004), p. 27.

no documents substantiating Şarpe's claim have been published or otherwise been made publicly available.

Another circumstantial claim supports the idea that the Soviets were at least considering action against Romania. During the post-invasion Moscow talks between the Soviets and the Czechoslovak leadership, a member of the latter delegation claims that Brezhnev said he asked the President of the United States about his attitude towards the Yalta and Potsdam treaties before the August operation. Brezhnev stated that he specifically asked where Czechoslovakia *and Romania* fit into the American understanding of Europe's postwar order.[249] The United States intelligence services had detected what Mastny calls "ominous movements of Soviet troops" near the Soviet border, and determined that preparations for an invasion of Romania might be in the making.[250]

At the early morning meeting of the PCR's Political Executive Committee, members expressed their fear that Romania might be next now that one East European "dissident ally" had been invaded. Their remarks were presumably informed by some of the intelligence reports discussed above. However, Executive Committee deliberations, for which minutes were always taken, were not the venue of the most sensitive debates. Much of what went on in these deliberations was but a perfunctory, formal version of

[249] See Buga, pp. 67-68.
[250] Mastny, "Was 1968 A Strategic Watershed of the Cold War?," p. 171.

topics discussed and decisions taken during private one-on-one meetings or at Permanent Presidium deliberations, of which no records were kept.[251]

Yet in the documented meetings, Executive Committee members did ponder the possibility of Romania's being invaded. The possibility that the intervention in Czechoslovakia was but the beginning of a renewed Soviet effort to tighten the screws in Eastern Europe informed the participants' remarks. Ceauşescu, in proposing a draft statement to the party on the situation in Czechoslovakia, spoke of "the need to take all possible measures to ensure Romania's security." To prevent an attack on Romania, Ceauşescu continued,

> the Central Committee and the Government [must] call the entire people to defend Romania's territorial integrity…if a military clash is going to happen, force may eventually take the upper hand, but it is out of the question to accept and participate in the country's subjugation."[252]

Deputy Prime Minister Ilie Verdeț observed that Soviet methods had changed, rendering the threat Moscow posed to Romania more significant than ever since Dej's 1964 declaration of autonomy:

> Interference in our domestic affairs has not been impossible, but now, when in Czechoslovakia methods from the czarist arsenal were used, a possible interference in our country's domestic affairs cannot be excluded.

Minister of Labor Petre Blajovici supported this line of thought, observing that the Romanians "have no guarantee whatsoever that what has happened to Czechoslovakia

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[251] Paul Niculescu-Mizil, "Poziția Conducerii PCR şi 'Primăvara de la Praga'," in *România şi Primăvara de la Praga*, ed. Dan Cătănuş (Bucharest: Institutul Național Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), p. 33.
[252] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 21 August 1968, 133/1968.

last night might not strike Romania on another night."[253] Alternate Executive Committee member Vasile Patilineț stated that "we can expect some brutality to be perpetrated against our country as well."[254]

Dismissing these fears of invasion as an elaborate charade seems too hasty and retrospectively informed. Even if Soviet documents support the argument that the WTO intervened in Czechoslovakia to prevent the spread of a successful challenge to Leninist institutions,[255] on 21 August 1968, the Romanian leadership did not feel so confident in its security. Of course, not only the Romanians, but also foreign intelligence in NATO countries, expressed concern that Romania might be a target of invasion.[256] It became clear years later that Moscow was willing to reluctantly tolerate some diversity so long as orthodox institutions were maintained, but this was not clear immediately after August 1968.[257]

The Executive Committee members used the 21 August meeting as an occasion to indict the Soviets not only on patriotic-nationalist grounds, but on socialist ideological ones as well. For Verdeț, the Soviet Union had reverted to pre-Bolshevik methods of coercion and domination, and therefore represented a disguised form of traditional Russian imperialism reincarnate. Executive Committee member Manea Mănescu supported this argument portraying the Soviet Union as the continuation of Russian imperialism, noting that Romania "must take into account the teachings of history and

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[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid.
[255] See Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, pp. 200-201.
[256] See note 242.
[257] See Ouimet, pp. 70-71.

primarily our neighbors, and I make special reference to Russia, which more than once encroached upon our people's freedom."[258] Dumitru Popa contended that the Soviets, "by intervening in Czechoslovakia, [have] displayed their true colors. They proved to be alien to Marxist-Leninist ideology."[259] In this view, Romanian communists remained true to anti-imperialism while the Soviets embraced the methods of coercion and domination socialism was meant to conquer.

Yet the objective was not only one of defending Romania itself against Moscow, but of defending an alternative system of international socialism at risk of being consumed by Soviet "socialism." According to economist and alternate Executive Committee member Alexandru Bârlădeanu, the socialist world was essentially in the midst of a civil war. The invasion of Czechoslovakia

> unmasked a series of pretensions aimed at emasculating the socialist countries.…[Our actions] are a frontline defense of our Party and the people's interests...We try to defend not only our own interests, but also the interests of the idea of socialism all over the world. The events in Czechoslovakia throw socialism twenty years backwards, discredit…the ideas of socialism.[260]

Romanian propagandist, Education Minister, and Executive Committee member Leonte Răutu concurred with Bârdăleanu's assessment, observing that Romania's resistance to outside pressure "shall serve not only the interests of the working class, of our own people, but also the interests of the international working class, the interests of socialism."[261] These statements demonstrate how early it was that Romanian communists considered the moral authority they could accrue from articulating an alternative to

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[258] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 21 August 1968, 133/1968.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid.

Moscow-directed international communism in the wake of the Prague Spring. They were defending not only Romania, but also what they considered to be "genuine" socialism unadulterated by Russia's deeply rooted imperial ambitions.

The Sino-Soviet split, of course, shook international communism and aided the Romanian autonomy project. But China's geographic distance meant it could offer Romania little security protection. The Chinese premier informed the Romanians that "we shall extend as much support…as we can…[but] as we are far away from Europe and, as you know, one of our popular proverbs says: 'Distant water cannot quench local fire'."[262] Yet Romania continued to promote independent socialist initiatives worldwide, convinced that Moscow could hardly afford to stop it for its dedication to advancing international socialism.

In light of the Romanians' uncertainty over the extent of permissible deviation, the dissonance between the PCR's assessments of global politics and any known reality of Soviet decisions seems much more understandable. The most common assessment has been retrospectively created after sufficient time had passed to prove it correct. Contemporaries could not be absolutely certain the Czechoslovak deviations would not be permitted while Romanian ones always would be. The Soviets had demonstrated a wavering and double talk in their negotiations with Prague. The fact that Romanian diplomatic documents reflect a perception that an invasion of Romania was unlikely is less a testament to their analytical abilities than a reflection of the different methods of evaluating global politics of career diplomats and career revolutionaries. Ideologues who

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[262] See Robert R. King, "Rumania and the Sino-Soviet Conflict," *Studies in Comparative Communism* 5:4 (1972), p. 392.

began their political careers in an illegal, underground party were extremely sensitive to intelligence suggesting possible threats to their positions.

Had the WTO intervention into Czechoslovakia gone more smoothly for the Soviets, they might very well have grown less permissive of deviation elsewhere in the bloc. Instead, "normalization" got off to a shaky start even in the country in which a massive number of Soviet troops had been stationed and a communication network had been established well before the August operation.[263] Although Czechoslovak forces did not resist the invasion and the population did not put up armed resistance *en masse*, the Czechoslovak population was hostile to the invaders even though their leadership had asked the people to cooperate.[264] Czechoslovakia's people quietly and deviously protested, moving road signs to confuse the soldiers and refusing the occupying troops directions.[265] While WTO troops controlled the physical space of the country, Moscow had trouble forming a new government, and so for a time Czechoslovakia was "in a state of political chaos."[266]

Months after the 21 August invasion, the Soviets remained dissatisfied with the diligence of the new Czechoslovak party leadership in resisting "antiparty forces." A Romanian MAE report on the meetings between Soviet and Czechoslovak authorities attests to Moscow's dissatisfaction with Czechoslovakia's post-invasion "normalization." The Soviets criticized the Czechoslovak communists for lack of initiative; for failure to

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[263] Vertzberger, p. 229.
[264] Ibid, p. 222.
[265] Mastny, "Was 1968 A Strategic Watershed of the Cold War?," p. 168; Jeffrey Simon, *Cohesion and Dissention in Eastern Europe: Six Crises* (New York: Praeger, 1983), p. 46.
[266] Ouimet, pp. 43-44.

take firm measures against those who agitated for the "counterrevolutionary" Prague Spring; for continued toleration of ideas "fundamentally harmful to socialism" in its ideological activity; and for insufficient efforts at collaboration with other socialist countries since August. Czechoslovak communists harboring "anti-Soviet sentiments," Moscow charged, remained in official positions, and the Social Democratic Party continued to operate underground. Meanwhile, some Prague Spring activists had fled and, the Soviets thought, were organizing "enemy activity" from abroad. The Soviets berated the Czechoslovak Communists for their failure to take measures against these threats.[267]

Never Again? The Prague Spring and Socialist Romania's Insecurity

The cost of suppressing the Prague Spring to the Soviet Union in diplomatic circles and in world opinion proved high, and this memory of 1968 would suppress Moscow's future impulses to intervene abroad. In the late 1970s, for example, Moscow was much more reticent to invade Afghanistan than it had been to intervene in Czechoslovakia in 1968.[268] The memory of trouble in Eastern Europe haunted the Soviets. Aside from the costs in world opinion, the very hostility of the Czechoslovak people to the act served as a warning. Even once diplomatic relations between

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[267] MAE, 19 December 1968, nr. 005973, 220/1968. The new Czechoslovak ambassador to Bucharest appointed after the August invasion offered the same criticism of events in his own country to Romanian hosts in late October. An MAE report notes his discussion of "the birth of many different groups" within the party, which could hinder "the unity of the party, which constitutes the most powerful arm it can wield." MAE, 31 October 1968, nr. 01/1614, 220/1968.

[268] See Ouimet, pp. 88-98.

Czechoslovakia and its neighbors had been normalized, the Czechoslovak population refused *en masse* to travel to countries whose rulers had participated in the invasion and refused to engage in contact with representatives of the participating states. The Romanian ambassador in Prague wrote to his superiors of the population's "total dissatisfaction, and this dissatisfaction manifests itself."[269]

Invading Romania, which had promised to resist with guerilla tactics, would have been an even more daunting undertaking if the Soviets ever seriously considered such an operation. In any event, regime change in Romania would have been far less necessary from a geostrategic point of view, as Romania was geographically marginal to Soviet security.[270] Romanian diplomatic reports take note of Soviet reminders to Czechoslovakia's leadership that "while talking about the necessity of promoting its own foreign policy, Czechoslovak comrades must take into account [Czechoslovakia's] geographic placement."[271] Nevertheless, had the Soviets been more successful in subjugating Czechoslovakia, their policy towards Bucharest might well have grown harsher, as their ability to threaten a similarly swift operation would have held more credibility. Instead, Romania continued its careful balancing act, irritating Moscow to the point of exasperation but not to military action.

Romania remained interested in finding allies and international structures to use as tools against Soviet domination. Once it became clear that the Soviets were not planning a succession of military operations to redouble their influence in Europe, the

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[269] MAE, (no date), nr. 01/0238, 220/1969; MAE, (no date), nr. 01/03500, 220/1969.
[270] Braun, pp. 104-105.
[271] MAE, 16 May 1968, nr. 002786, 220/1968.

Romanian leadership understood that their independent course would not necessarily invite Soviet intervention. Even Bulgaria, often considered the Soviet Union's *meillure élève* in the Balkans, promised Romania that it would not participate in any attack on that country and observed that an invasion was highly unlikely anyway.[272] A vague sense of danger remained among the population as well as the leaders, but the fear that an invasion at any moment was imminent subsided.

More importantly, the August invasion had cost the Soviets much prestige and respect. MAE reports indicate that other parties in Eastern Europe—even ones that had participated in the August operation—grew disillusioned over the grim normalization process and the cost to their own international prestige. Romania's ambassador to New York reported that diplomats from other socialist countries were dissatisfied with the international situation that the Prague Spring created. The Bulgarians, the report notes, complained of Soviet behavior towards the satellite states. Bulgaria's diplomat to the United States is quoted as saying that the Brezhnev was "despotic" and "totally discredited."[273] It is no surprise that the MAE's final report on Romanian-Soviet relations in 1968 declares that the main event of the year was the August invasion of Czechoslovakia. It finds that what followed, however, was a development far more favorable to the Romanian party-state's interests: a "growth of resistance in socialist countries towards Soviet methods and practices of diktat, interference in internal affairs and subordination of socialist countries to Soviet political interests."[274]

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[272] MAE, 25 January 1969, nr. 01/0367, 220/1969.
[273] MAE 25 January 1969, nr. 01/0367, 220/1969.
[274] MAE, 01 April 1969, nr. 01/01384, 220/1969.

There seems to have been real panic in Romania immediately after the invasion, but it dissipated in public, if not in private, after a few days. Ceauşescu sounded quite combative on 21 August, but a few days after the invasion he moderated his tone. This change does not necessarily signify that he felt the threat to Romania had lessened, as has been suggested. Retegan, for example, claims that after a few days "the danger had disappeared, the crisis had diminished."[275] If, however, Ceauşescu believed the intelligence that the invasion of Romania was planned for two weeks after the Czechoslovak one, this scenario in which the feeling of threat diminished quickly seems unlikely. Supposing Ceauşescu thought the intelligence might be accurate, it is more plausible that he concluded any decisions antagonizing the Soviets were too dangerous to take.

The Executive Committee proceedings of 25 August suggest this was indeed the case. At this meeting, Ceauşescu clearly wanted the Romanian press to criticize Soviet behavior in Czechoslovakia and to translate and print publications from the Soviet press attacking the Romanian position. Ceauşescu, however, resisted the urge. "Normally we should publish it," he told the committee. "But," he continued,

> the question arises: will this serve the interests of the Romanian-Soviet friendship?...in spite of the fact that our opinions about a series of issues—including the Czechoslovak issue—were different, we tried to lay special emphasis just on the friendly relations with the Soviet Union, and to underscore this fact in both my speeches and those of Comrade Maurer, as well as in the documents of the Grand National Assembly. We did this precisely in order to avoid giving our people, even for a moment, the impression that we had different opinions about a number of issues…and that the friendship between the

[275] Retegan, p. 202.

> Romanian Communist Party and the Communist Part of the Soviet Union…was therefore being called into question.[276]

In his talk with the Soviet ambassador to Romania A.V. Basov, Ceauşescu pursued a conciliatory tone, speaking of the need for unity in the communist movement and cooperation on the normalization of Czechoslovakia. In the context of discussions and statements before and after, however, these statements reflect not a genuine desire to cooperate and to minimize differences with the Soviet Union, but to appear to be doing so in order to avoid a fate similar to Czechoslovakia's. Concluding his report on talks with Basov, Ceauşescu remarked that "I did not directly refer to the fact that there were so many rumors about a possible intervention in Romania, but I think he understood [the hint] from what I had told him."[277] Ceauşescu was attempting to talk the Soviets out of any plans they might have.

Executive Committee members agreed that a conciliatory approach was required immediately. A Soviet letter of explanation to the PCR, the Executive Committee members agreed, was "revolting." However, Chivu Stoica added, Ceauşescu "replied very calmly…which is something very good." This calm was to be maintained in the short term, but "in our future discussions with [the Soviets] we will have to raise this issue [of intervention] more firmly, that we are against this thing." Romania, Stoica continued, must

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[276] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 25 August 1968, 135/1968, available at the Cold War International History Project, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034BA16-96B6-175C-9DCED5E489B52F33&sort=Collection&item=Romania%20in%20the%20Cold%20War.

[277] Ibid.

> see whether the fact is confirmed that the troops are heading for our borders…taking into consideration the practice, the perfidy, the lie, the surprise [of the 21 August operation]…we must see, very attentively, whether troops are heading toward our frontiers.[278]

Gheorghe Apostal concurred with Stoica, remarking that "this issue which preoccupies Comrade Stoica and all of us, namely the presence of foreign troops at our frontiers, is an issue to which we must pay attention." Ceauşescu, perhaps possessing special information, seemed less alarmist about troop movements than his colleagues. He noted that a troop presence in areas near Romania's borders was normal, but that the movements they were undertaking were suggestive. Ceauşescu declared that

> it is difficult to say: 'Hey mister, why are you moving your troops?' He may reply: 'Can I not do what I want with my troops?'....But surely, something is clear. These movements have at least an administrative character, and we will have to keep track of them, to pay attention.[279]

The country remained on high alert. Basov had conceded to Ceauşescu that the internal situation in Romania was not comparable to Czechoslovakia. But, as Stoica noted, bellicose rhetoric was not necessarily to be expected from the Soviets as they prepared an operation.

Instead of continuing to offer warlike and provocative promises of resistance to the Soviets, Ceauşescu elected to consolidate his rule internally.[280] Indeed, in the weeks after the invasion Ceauşescu took tours through Transylvania consolidating his support in this region which he always saw as the most threatening to his power both because of its

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[278] Ibid.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Retegan, pp. 200-202.

Hungarian population and its less submissive intellectual tradition.[281] Romania's domestic climate would not be the same after August 1968. The authorities held up the prospect of a threat from abroad as the reason for a host of changes that would be implemented over the next few years. The nature of those changes, as well as their interpenetration with international affairs, will be explored in the following chapter.

[281] See Rady, p. 59.

Chapter 3: After 1968: The Drive for Unity

Ceauşescu's public denunciation of the Warsaw Pact's invasion of Czechoslovakia brought him, as well as the Romanian Communist Party, a brief interlude of genuine popularity. On 21 August, from the balcony of Central Committee headquarters in Bucharest, the Romanian General Secretary declared that

> the penetration of the troops of the five socialist countries into Czechoslovakia constitutes a great mistake and a grave peril for peace in Europe.…It is inconceivable that in today's world, when peoples rise up in the struggle for the defense of their national independence, for equality in rights, that a socialist state, that socialist states violate the liberty and independence of another state. There exists no justification…for the military intervention in the affairs of another fraternal socialist state.[282]

Ceauşescu declared that having seen the situation in Czechoslovakia only a few days before, he knew that the Czechoslovak people "support the party and the state leadership in the effort to correct the negative state of things inherited from the past." Ceauşescu identified his own regime with Prague's, announcing that since

> it has been said that in Czechoslovakia exists a threat of counterrevolution…perhaps tomorrow some will say that here, in this assembly, counterrevolutionary tendencies are manifest. We all respond: the entire Romanian people will not permit anyone to violate the territory of our fatherland.[283]

A declaration so hostile to the Soviet position was unexpected and appreciated in Romania and abroad.

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[282] Nicolae Ceauşescu, "Speech to the Popular Assembly in the Capital in the Palace Republic Plaza, 21 August 1968," reproduced in Paul Niculescu-Mizil, *O Istorie Traită*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedia, 1997), pp. 332-333.
[283] Ibid.

The Romanian leader's spectacular balcony performance on 21 August, and the euphoria that followed it, is routinely cited as the foundation of the personality cult that would emerge as a component of Ceauşescu's rule in the 1970s. According to Deletant, the "seeds of the cult" can be traced back to this moment. "From that date," he argues, "there can be detected a growing identification of Romania with a single figure in the editorials in the Party press and in the statements of officials."[284] Mary Fischer concludes that Ceauşescu was the overwhelming beneficiary of the 1968 crisis, thanks unwittingly to the Soviets. Romania's rejection of the August invasion allowed Ceauşescu to manipulate the anguish over a possible Soviet invasion to legitimize his rule as a national hero and, in turn, to enhance his personal power.[285] Rady writes that the cult "logically developed out of the events of the late 1960s when the new ruler had basked in popular acclaim."[286] For Tismăneanu, the balcony scene was but a "masquerade" with the aim of transforming popular support for autonomy into "a personal asset for the expansion of [the leader's] personal power."[287] From the 1968 defiance of the Soviet Union emerged a "national Stalinist 'contract' between the party leaders and national intelligentsia" to forge a common "anti-Soviet, anti-hegemonic line."[288]

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[284] Dennis Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), pp. 203-204.
[285] See Mary E. Fischer, *Nicolae Ceauşescu: A Study in Political Leadership* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1989), pp. 141-145, 259-262.
[286] Martyn Rady, *Romania in Turmoil: A Contemporary History* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1992), p. 50.
[287] Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe From Stalin to Havel* (New York: Free Press, 2002), p. 224.
[288] Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism For All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 13.

The cult of the leader was certainly a ubiquitous feature of life in Romania for most of Ceauşescu's rule. But it was only one part of a larger phenomenon—the post-1968 tightening of the screws on the party-state apparatus and on Romanian society at large. The cult receives so much attention because it is a visibly identifiable feature of neo-Stalinism, a captivating and engaging phenomenon that invites deconstruction and semiotic analysis. Yet the cult represents but one symptom of the larger phenomenon of increased repression throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The quest for popularity does not explain the cult, for Ceauşescu already enjoyed wide popularity by late 1968. And repression would not be so necessary in a society whose rulers were so genuinely popular. Of course, this popularity was based upon the Romanians' beliefs that Ceauşescu represented something he did not. Nevertheless, one might argue that elements of the cult sprung up from below in 1968, and only later evolved into a spectacle designed and directed by the authorities.

For these reasons, the argument that the post-1968 repressions were aimed first and foremost at the Romanian people against whom the regime had grandiose plans seems insufficient and wrenched out of context. Leadership consolidation was part of the post-1968 phenomena, but it is not a Rosetta stone that explains everything about the development of Romania's repressive apparatus. Absolute unity was imperative for the authorities not because of a static understanding of the regime's needs at home, but because of the regime's needs at home in the context of the perceived threats from abroad.

Late 1967 and early 1968 constituted a period of what Fischer calls "increasing turmoil" in Romania. Romania's relations with foreign communist parties and within the bloc were tense, as Romania and most other WTO members maintained different conceptions of what an alliance of communist states should be. The international tension fostered an atmosphere of resentment and anxiety over the state of the country. Meanwhile, Ceauşescu was pushing through an administrative shake-up, a redrawing of internal territorial boundaries, and a reformulation of economic allocations. This climate, as Fischer puts it, "strengthened the perception of most Romanians that political unity and popular quiescence were necessary to keep Soviet troops out of their country."[289]

Ceauşescu's Wall: The Threat of War and the Call for Unity

The quest for monolithic unity preceded the August 1968 invasion, but the military operation breathed new life into this unity project. Tismăneanu argues that already in 1965, Ceauşescu had defined as the program of the party-state the "monolithic unity of the party and the people."[290] The possibilities and the openness of the brief liberal period, however, had fostered a controlled pluralism rather than a total adherence to the party line. Only the August 1968 invasion transformed the Soviet Union from an object of distant fear into an immediate menace; it was in this setting that the PCR leadership intensified the project of building monolithic unity.

The deliberations of the Political Executive Committee immediately after the August invasion emphasize the need for unity as the principal component of national

[289] Fischer, pp. 120-128.
[290] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism For All Seasons*, p. 197.

defense. Ceauşescu proposed a public statement expressing the "need to take all possible measures to ensure Romania's security," and to "call the entire people to defend Romania's territorial integrity."[291] All committee members, in turn, denounced the Soviet decision in the same language, calling it an act of imperialism outside of the spirit of socialism.[292] To protect socialist Romania against Soviet aggression, committee members insisted on strengthening the central leadership. Manea Mănescu, concurring with Ceauşescu's proposal to establish a citizens' militia, elucidated the timely new motive for centralization:

> I agree with Comrade Nicolae Ceauşescu's opinion that this people, our Party can be represented only by the leadership of our Party, that we have to close up even more our ranks around the Central Committee, the whole people, the General Secretary, Comrade Ceauşescu. In these moments, our unity…the unity of the whole people must be unshakable.…we have to raise a wall around the Central Committee, around you, Comrade Ceauşescu, to be able to defend our sacred motherland.[293]

Another Executive Committee member concurred that "we must raise an impenetrable wall within the Central Committee, between the Party and the people." Member Maxim Berghianu envisions the new unity at a popular level:

> The suggested measures concerning the strengthening of our armed forces, the organization of guards in towns and at the countryside, impose a firm discipline, a monolithic unity around the Party, around the Central Committee, around

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[291] Secția Cancelarie a Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român, Arhivele Naționale ale României (Central Historical National Archives Fund, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, Chancellery Section) [ANR: SC a CC al PCR]), 21 August, 1968, 133/1968, available online at http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034F2AB-96B6 175C9B41C0EAF01750E7&sort=Collection&item=Romania%20in%20the%20Cold%20War.

[292] Ibid.

[293] Ibid

> Comrade Nicolae Ceauşescu…to enable us to be an impenetrable fortress, without any split or cleave.…we must be as strong as a wall to defend our sovereignty and independence.[294]

Unity, therefore, was not conceived of as merely an élite project. The imperatives of unity extended to every individual in the country, and all dissenters would by definition constitute a threat this unity. Iosif Banc explained:

> Our people will respond to all the Party's actions, because it places justified confidence in the Party leadership. *Anyway, wavering persons will appear*. Therefore, we have to take measures to strengthen the unity of the Party, of our people around the Central Committee, around Comrade Ceauşescu, who has credibly won huge prestige in the eyes of the entire people.[295] [Emphasis mine]

Banc was suggesting that the atmosphere of unity was more needed than ever, and that it was also more attainable in the post-invasion environment. Nevertheless, some "wavering persons" might get in the way of monolithic unity, and therefore extra pressure was to be placed upon them to comply.

The leadership had little to worry about from its own people in the summer of 1968, as it recognized that Ceauşescu had won political capital as a defender of Romania's territorial integrity. One Executive Committee member opined before fellow comrades that "there are signs that today, more than ever before, our people are closely bound to the Party, to its Central Committee and is going to answer as one man to the Party's call."[296] Another member noted that Romania's policy during the Czechoslovak crisis increased the leadership's legitimacy: "this stand by our Party increased its prestige

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[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Ibid.

in front of the whole Party and public opinion."[297] A third member remarked that "there is a…communist spirit like never before, and this makes possible the mobilization of the entire working people in defense of socialism in this country."[298]

To consolidate this unity, and apparently to gauge attitudes in the different parts of the country, Ceauşescu called for a mass tour of the entire country, with much effort focused on the traditionally more rebellious region of Transylvania. At the 26 August Political Executive Committee meeting Ceauşescu announced his plan for dispatching Executive Committee delegations around the country in the wake of the invasion of Czechoslovakia and during a time of perceived threat to Romania:

> We have thought that it is well to go throughout the country, that there are still problems to resolve and [so] we should participate in meetings with party activists, with working people, and not just stay here [in Bucharest]. Sure, there are enough problems here, but we need to get out into the country….each comrade can go into a county or two…[to] stay for a couple of days.…problems must be discussed in a constructive spirit, without condemnation…in these conditions in the first place we must militate to strengthen unity, to develop and to strengthen the unity of all working people.[299]

Ceauşescu's comments reveal an effort to rally the population but also a careful approach that presumed a continuing Soviet threat.

The crisis of 1968 offered the possibility to push through a kind of neo-Stalinist model of unity that they had postulated for years, but for which conditions were unpropitious until that moment. Ceauşescu used the threat of invasion to "conjure up the prospect of a new period of foreign servitude" to give him more popularity as a defender

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[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid.
[299] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 26 August 1968, 138/1968.

of the nation in the wake of 1968.[300] He capitalized on this popularity as leverage within the party structure as well as within Romania as a whole.

Ceauşescu Consolidates Power

The timeline of Ceauşescu's consolidation of power spanned from 1965, when he assumed leadership of the party, to 1974, when he took the title of President of the Romanian Socialist Republic. By this time he was unchallenged and his cult firmly entrenched. The ensemble of literature on the topic suggests that Ceauşescu had a plan for eliminating rivals and rising to the top that could not be fully implemented but for the international crisis of 1968. At that point he emerged supreme among both the party and the population, having earned wide latitude as a defender of Romania from foreign threats.

After Dej's death and Ceauşescu's appointment as First Secretary of the Party, Ceauşescu shared power with Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer and Head of State Chivu Stoica. At this point his powers were far more limited than they would soon become. Maurer was a seasoned communist and much more than a Ceauşescu minion, while Ceauşescu was but *primus inter pares*, or first among equals.[301] But already at the famous Ninth Congress in 1965, Ceauşescu was working to consolidate his power. He reconfigured the party hierarchy to the advantage of his closest allies, using personal grudges and manipulating information from the party's secret archives to place power in

[300] Rady, p. 42.
[301] Ibid., p. 39. For more on Maurer's biography, see Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, pp. 262-263.

the hands of those who owed him unquestioning loyalty.[302] As Mary Fischer has noted, as early as 1967 Ceauşescu's published speeches revealed a "sudden shift in emphasis to Party unity and discipline." Democratic centralism took on new importance—while difference of opinion within the party was acceptable in intra-party debates, a unified position had to be presented publicly.[303] It was at the December 1967 Party Conference when Ceauşescu's portfolio grew with his appointment as head of the Council of State. His assumption of these duties gave him an official position in both the party and the state. At the same time, he expanded the duties of the Council of State at the expense of the Council of Ministers.[304] The April 1968 Plenum, during which Ceauşescu condemned his predecessor's crimes, represented a milestone in Ceauşescu's leadership consolidation. As discussed in the last chapter, he eliminated two rivals from the Dej era, and posthumously rehabilitated high-level communists who had been executed during the same period.[305]

The 1968 crisis in Czechoslovakia and the possible threat to Romanian territory, of course, were instrumental in facilitating Ceauşescu's consolidation of power. But the immediate significance of these events themselves was emotive rather than institutional. It took some time for the institutions to reflect the new balance of power. The Tenth Party Congress in 1969 ended the *de jure* collective leadership in place since Dej's death, even if Ceauşescu's *de facto* primacy had been evident for two years. Veteran party members Gheorghe Apostol and Chivu Stoica were not reelected to the Central Committee.

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[302] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p. 197.
[303] Fischer, pp. 99-100.
[304] Ibid., p. 159.
[305] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p. 199.

Finally, Ceauşescu's appointees rose to dominate the inner circles of the party; only two members (other than Ceauşescu himself) survived from the Dej years,[306] and one of them, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, had been instrumental in selecting Ceauşescu as Dej's successor.[307] The Politburo itself was disbanded, replaced by a Standing Committee and a Presidium. The changes facilitated the appointment of Ceauşescu loyalists.[308]

At the Tenth Party Conference, the inklings of the personality cult were on display. In line with the decisions expressed at the 21 August Executive Committee meeting cited above, Ceauşescu was personally held up as the guardian of Romania's success. Speakers referred to his achievements repeatedly, apparently compelled to praise him as much as possible in their remarks.[309] The re-politicization of artistic and cultural production begun around this time and enhanced in 1971 will be discussed below. These developments fostered the cult that would grow to farcical proportions by the mid 1970s.

The prospect of foreign threat that had been feared throughout most of 1967 and seemed frighteningly close in 1968 fueled this consolidation of power and the development of the cult. As far as the institutional character of the party-state is concerned, the imperative to build a "wall" around Ceauşescu and to ensure monolithic unity of the party and the people harmed the prospects of genuine intra-party deliberation. Ironically, this centralization of authority was happening precisely when the 1969 Congress had adopted measures for internal democratization of the party. Of course,

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[306] Fischer, pp. 156-157.
[307] See note 112.
[308] See Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p. 196.
[309] Fischer, p. 157.

these measures represented only inconsequential rhetoric.[310] Those whose opinions dissented from the majority were automatically suspect, as Banc's August 1968 warning against "wavering persons" had presaged. Eccentric views on any sensitive topic could be construed as "dubious relations with Moscow."[311] A race among comrades to appear most loyal to the party and to Ceauşescu took shape, and isolated cases of dissent were invariably equated with latent loyalties to one of Romania's historic enemies.[312] By the 1980s, the quality of deliberation in party meeting had plummeted and any semblance of variety of viewpoints had disappeared.

A sampling of Executive Committee deliberations from 1968, 1974, and 1988 can more concretely illustrate the changes in the character of the Romanian leadership during the various periods of Ceauşescu's rule. In 1968 views other than Ceauşescu's were routinely discussed at meetings of the Central Committee's executive body. Colleagues disagreed with the party leader. For example, Constantin Pîrvulescu, a veteran Romanian communist, openly challenged Ceauşescu over the approach to the international communist movement that would emerge as an essential part of his rule. At the height of Sino-Romanian friendship, a friendship that rifts in the international communist movement had created, Pîrvulescu complained that "China has seriously deviated from the revolutionary movement, adopting a rather nationalistic tendency." Ceauşescu stopped Pîrvulescu short, affirming that he would "rather not have this discussion here." Pîrvulescu retorted: "Look, Comrade Ceauşescu, I dare say…", but was cut off again.

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[310] Ibid., pp. 153-155.
[311] Cristian Troncotă, *Duplicitării: O Istorie a Serviciilor de Informaţii şi Securitate ale Regimului Comunist din România, 1965-1989* (Bucharest: Editura Elion, 2004), p. 143.
[312] See Ibid., pp. 140-141, and Fischer, p. 240.

Their exchange continued, with Pîrvulescu expressing frustration that his opinion was not welcome at the meeting.[313] Although Ceauşescu was asserting the supreme authority over the party that would be officially recognized in 1969, he was clearly not beyond challenge. There are no indications that Pîrvulescu was disciplined for his alternative point of view at this point, although he became a virtual non-person after once again criticizing Ceauşescu at the Twelfth Party Congress ten years later.[314]

The atmosphere of deliberation would change noticeably by the 1970s. At an August 1974 Executive Committee discussion that is representative of the period, other comrades gave long reports, but issues were not substantially debated, with one exception. Members argued with Ceauşescu over whether he was to be given the title of Hero of the Socialist Republic of Romania in an upcoming awards ceremony. The General Secretary claimed that his receiving the award was unnecessary because he had already taken it once, but the other members assured him that he deserved to be included among the awardees once again.[315] This incident, in which all comrades were unwilling to accept Ceauşescu's rejection of the award, represented the only kind of disagreement with the ruling family that could be accepted. By the 1980s, Executive Committee meetings had grown much shorter. Ceauşescu had become impatient with the length of party documents and the duration of Executive Committee meetings. At a February 1975

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[313] See ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 08 February 1968, 21/1968, printed in Mihai Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring: Romanian Foreign Policy and the Crisis in Czechoslovakia, 1968* (Portland, OR: Center for Romanian Studies, 2000), pp. 62-63.
[314] For a succinct biography of Pîrvulescu, one of the few idealistic "true believers" in the history of Romanian communism, see Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p. 266.
[315] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, no date, 96/1974.

meeting, he declared that "we need to take measures to synthesize things, to eliminate the poetry." "Novels," he concluded, "are to be done in one's free time."[316]

By the mid-1970s the leader's tenor at committee conferences had changed. Minutes indicate that the tone in which he addressed other members had grown paternalistic and patronizing. For example, at a 1975 meeting he exhibits a habit of addressing other members as "dear" (*draga*), which is condescending in the context.[317] The Executive Committee membership of his wife Elena, which dated from June 1973, and her constant interjections in support of her husband's pronouncements at committee meetings, probably influenced his comportment. At a February 1988 meeting, Nicolae and Elena dominated; other members either reported on various topics at Ceauşescu's beck and call, or merely interjected a few words affirming the *Conducător*, such as "very well," "you are right," and "that is very good."[318] The evolution of debate in the Executive Committee suggests a progressive degeneration of all semblance of intra-party deliberative process.

The Roots of Repression: 1968 vs. 1971

Artists, intellectuals, poets, writers, many of whom had endorsed Ceauşescu after he denounced the Soviet Union's foreign policy, were also subject to the party's post-invasion emphasis on thorough unity.[319] Many who had been unaffiliated with the regime joined the party or otherwise expressed their support for the leadership in the aftermath of

[316] ANR: SC a CC al PCR 08 February 1975, 13/1975.
[317] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 06 February 1975, 13/1975.
[318] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 8/1988; ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 27 June 1987, 42/1987.
[319] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p. 13.

Ceauşescu's balcony speech as a gesture of solidarity with the people and the party. Among those who did the latter was Dumitru Ţepeneag, a young writer who had called for Czechoslovak-style reforms in Romania during the height of the Prague Spring. He and several colleagues signed a declaration expressing "complete agreement with the position of the Party and of the Romanian government, as defined by Comrade Ceauşescu," and pledged to do "all in our power to defend our fundamental values, our country and the peaceful construction of socialism in our country." Party propagandists recorded and broadcast the comments of intellectuals and artists who had hitherto chosen to withhold direct support.[320] The WTO invasion, and the threat to Romania's own autonomy, convinced these young reformers to support a national autonomous leadership even if further reforms were not undertaken. Indeed, the party held up to these intellectuals the stark example of Czechoslovakia as their rationale for not implementing the changes for which the likes of Ţepeneag had been agitating.[321]

Of course, the Czechoslovak invasion was useful for Romania's regime consolidation, but the party's cautioning should not be dismissed as pure cynical manipulation of the international events. According to standard analyses in the scholarship, the notion that permitting Czechoslovak-style reforms would further risk Romania's autonomy was correct. Despite the absence of any Prague-inspired reforms, support for Ceauşescu among writers who had hitherto kept their distance from the regime was genuine during this period. As Deletant has observed, it would be hasty to

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[320] Paul Niculescu-Mizil, "Poziţia Conducerii PCR şi 'Primăvara de la Praga'," in *România şi Primăvara de la Praga*, ed. Dan Cătănuş (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), pp., 79-80.
[321] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*., pp. 179-180.

dismiss their words of support as opportunistic or purely self-interested.[322] Soon, however, the regime would begin tightening the belt even more on intellectual life and cultural production. The timing of this turnaround, however, is disputed.

Conventional interpretations assign great importance to Ceauşescu's 1971 visits to communist states in Asia. Without doubt, these visits made an impression on the Romanian leader. The relationship between Ceauşescu's approval of Chinese and North Korean policies and the renewed drive for ideological discipline and mass mobilization, however, is more complicated. According to the traditional view, the discipline, the ideological engagement, the cult of personality, and the techniques of mobilization Ceauşescu witnessed in China and North Korea provoked him to articulate the "July Theses" issued shortly after his return to Bucharest.[323] According to Deletant, the visits "fired Ceauşescu's imagination and he demanded the same upon his return to Romania."[324] Tismăneanu, too, assigns great importance to the 1971 visits:

> He [Ceauşescu] appears to have considered the possibility of importing the methods of indoctrination used during Mao's cultural revolution to Romania. This was not just a matter of personal preference: Ceauşescu was trying to contain the liberalization movement in Romania, curb intellectual unrest, and deter students from emulating their rebellious peers in other communist states. He was also trying to consolidate his personal power and get rid of those in the apparatus who might be dreaming of 'socialism with a human face'."[325]

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[322] Dennis Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule* (Portland, OR: Center for Romanian Studies, 1999), p. 114.
[323] See Adam Tolnay, *Ceauşescu's Journey to the East*, Georgetown University Conference Paper. February 2002, pp. 4-9, available at http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/kokkalis/GSW4/TolnayPAPER.PDF; and Fischer, pp. 160-189.
[324] Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule*, p. 119.
[325] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p. 206.

The proposals known in shorthand as the "July Theses" formed part of Ceauşescu's presentation before the Party's Executive Committee on 6 July 1971 entitled "Proposed Measures for the Improvement of Political-Ideological Activity, of the Marxist-Leninist Education of Party Members, and of All Working People." These proposals served as the framework for a renewed emphasis on socialist realism and ideological mobilization that would become known as Ceauşescu's "Mini Cultural Revolution."[326] Beginning in the summer of 1971, regime ideologists emphasized the guidance of all thought into the service of the party. The "workers spirit" was to prevail over the "intellectual spirit" on all occasions.[327]

While the claim that the visit to Asia inspired an abrupt turnaround is difficult to reconcile with the substantial evidence pointing to increasing pressures for orthodoxy since 1968, the shows that communist regimes in China and North Korea put on for the Ceauşescus no doubt made an impression. In his remarks about the trip to the Executive Committee upon his return, it is evident that Ceauşescu was impressed with the "organized manner" of the mass welcoming demonstrations the regimes in Beijing and Pyongyang had orchestrated. "I think we have to learn something from this," he told the committee, "since everything was in good order."[328] After reporting on his talks with

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[326] Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule*, pp. 119-120.
[327] Vlad Georgescu, *Politica şi Istorie: Cazul Comuniştilor Români, 1944-1977* (Munich: Verlag, 1981), p. 17.
[328] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 25 June 1971, 72/1971, available at Cold War International History Project, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034BA93-96B6-175C-92C56CCFF7161F25&sort=Collection&item=Romania%20in%20the%20Cold%20War.

Mao Zedong on international politics and foreign affairs, Ceauşescu conveyed his impressions of the internal situation in China:

> [W]hat impresses one from the beginning is the fact that the population is well dressed—of course, in a modest manner…There is an overall mobilization of the people: from children to old people, all are mobilized, and tasks are assigned to them—to learn, to work; no one idles…..There is discipline and people are hard-working everywhere.

Ceauşescu was impressed with the fruits of the Cultural Revolution, and looked at it with an eye towards applying its philosophy and tactics to Romania:

> In my opinion, they [the Chinese leadership] took a revolutionary turn and we can really speak of a cultural revolution. They put aside—maybe too suddenly—but in my view they did the right thing—all these petty bourgeois mentalities and started again from the very beginning. All of their cultural activity (ballet, theater) was set on revolutionary bases. They said so: we do not want any bourgeois concept to get here.…In general, the mentality of imperialism is faced with the new relationships, *something we do not do*. Our cinematography is crammed with adventure films, and the theater—with western plays.…We do likewise in television, where we discuss a lot, but do not do anything. Before leaving I had a Secretariat meeting and there we decided to prepare a material for the plenary session to the effect that our propaganda was not satisfactory, that it did not correspond to the tasks of educating the youth and the people in general. *I said this before going to China*. *What I have seen in China and Korea, however, is living proof that the conclusion we have reached is just*. [emphasis mine] [329]

It seems clear that the trips to Asia made such an impression on Ceauşescu *precisely because* the issue of ideological mobilization was already on his mind.

The "July Theses" announced shortly after his return from the tour placed considerable constraints on cultural life. Dissidents were excluded from the community of writers, and those who remained were obligated to transform themselves into part-time sycophants, writing pieces praising the regime in order to keep permission to publish works of a more literary nature. Willful collaboration was the price for professional

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[329] Ibid.

advancement.[330] According to Katherine Verdery, who has studied the political economy of cultural discourse in the Ceauşescu era, the shortage of resources for writers (access to publishing houses, etc) provided an incentive for outdoing colleagues to ingratiate themselves with higher-ups. It was in this political economy of resource shortage and competition to outmanoeuvre others that the ideology of protochronism developed.[331] It became official policy for the Securitate to "permanently keep in sight the obtainment of data on…creators who systematically refuse to tackle in their works the themes related to the past struggles of our party and our people, to the construction of socialism in Romania, and [who refuse to] give homage to political moments and personalities."[332]

It is commonplace in the historiography of Romania's communist period for any one scholar to trace a certain development back further than his colleagues and predecessors.[333] The re-Stalinization of Romanian culture and politics[334] of the mature Ceauşescu period, if we may call it that, is no exception. Though generally associated

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[330] Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule*, p. 123.

[331] Protochronism denied foreign influences on Romanian culture and sought to present Romania as having always been on the cutting edge of the advancements of modernity without compromising a nationalist view of the Romanian past. See Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, pp. 186-187; and Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceauşescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 167-214.

[332] ASRI, Fond "D", nr. 120, vol. 1, reproduced in Carmen Chivu and Mihai Albu, *Noi şi Securitatea: Viaţa Privată şi Publică în Perioada Comunistă Aşa Cum Reiese din Tehnica Operativă* (Piteşti: Odiseu Paralela, 2006), pp. 175-176.

[333] See John M. Montias, "Background and Origins of the Rumanian Dispute with Comecon," *Soviet Studies* 16:2 (1964), pp. 125-151.

[334] The economic sphere, one could argue, was partially de-Stalinized in the early Ceauşescu period, when some funds were allocated away from industrial production and towards consumer goods. This attention to consumerism was, however, an ephemeral phenomenon. See Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule*, p. 113; and Rady, pp. 40-41.

with the "mini-Cultural Revolution" inaugurated after Ceauşescu's trip to Asia, according to recent Romanian scholarship the party's emphasis on carefully managed and politically useful cultural production can be traced back to the immediate post-Prague Spring drive for unity.[335] At a November 1968 meeting of the writers' union, for example, Ceauşescu announced that literary content must be carefully chosen in light of the international situation. Discourse had to be managed, he said, in order to avoid giving hostile powers a pretext for invading. In early 1971, before the Romanian leader's famous trip to Asia, Ceauşescu addressed an audience of artists and writers with words indicating that the "July Theses" hardly represented a rupture from past approaches. At this meeting, Ceauşescu called for ideological purity and pleaded that only communist thought could be the basis for artistic production. This speech is remarkably similar to one he gave in July 1971 upon his return from Asia.[336]

In December 1968 an unexpected student demonstration shook the Romanian leadership, convincing Ceauşescu that more intense efforts at coercion and party domination were required for the PCR to maintain its authority. On 24 December 1968, a group of students marched through central Bucharest carrying signs and chanting their grievances. According to reports from the Polish and Soviet embassies, slogans included: "We want liberty and democracy for students!"; "We want Christmas"; "We need Tito";

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[335] See Ana-Maria Cătănuş, "Consideraţii Asupra Evoluţiei Discursului Ideologic Privind Creaţia Literar-Artistică," in *Sfârşitul Perioadei Liberale a Regimului Ceauşescu: Minirevoluţia Culturală din 1971*, ed. Ana-Maria Cătănuş (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), pp. 25-31.

[336] Ibid, pp. 29-31. See also Ana-Maria Cătănuş, "Tensiuni în Relaţiile Româno-Sovietice," *Arhivele Totalitarismului* 50-51: 1-2 (2006), p. 231.

and even "Down with Ceauşescu!"[337] Transcribed Executive Committee conversations reveal the Romanian leader's deep concern over this popular manifestation. The timing is of enormous significance: the demonstration had occurred just four months after the Czechoslovak invasion. Similar popular activity in Czechoslovakia had led the hard-line WTO states to invade that country. Moreover, Ceauşescu's denunciation of the invasion had led to significant popular enthusiasm for the party and for the leader personally. A public demonstration suggesting that the approval and euphoria were not universal proved deeply troubling. Ceauşescu denounced the student march as an "act of hooliganism" and ordered the arrest of participants.[338] He ordered the intensification of "political-ideological education," stricter ideological control of higher education, and stricter ideological standards for published work. The demonstrating students had resorted to such activity, Ceauşescu stated, because "mysticism and superstition" had not been sufficiently combated in recent years. Propaganda, he continued, must be aimed at "instilling a combative spirit in the face of idealistic and mystical conceptions."[339]

Already in late 1968, Ceauşescu was terrified at the possibility of grassroots demands like those that had developed in Czechoslovakia. His response to them was a tightening of the screws on education and publishing and a stepping up of ideological propaganda of the kind often associated with the 1971 "mini-cultural revolution." The thesis that July 1971 represents an "abrupt final" to a period of liberalization, therefore, is

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[337] Adam Burakowski, "Un Eveniment Important Aproape Necunoscut: Demonstrația Studenților din Bucureşti, 24 Decembrie 1968" *Arhivele Totalitarismului* 14: 50-51 (2006), p. 241.
[338] Quoted in Ibid., p. 239.
[339] Quoted in Ibid., p. 245.

too simplistic to account for the simultaneous tendencies towards liberalization and limitation in the early Ceauşescu period.[340]

Ceauşescu's preoccupation with the dangers of liberalization and lax party discipline were rooted in the late 1960s, and the Asian example only gave some structure as to how a more thoroughly revolutionary society might look.[341] Valeriu Râpeanu also notes that Ceauşescu's relationship with artists and writers had deteriorated since late 1968, and more modest measures foreshadowing the "July Theses" had been adopted in the years prior to 1971.[342] "Seeing the July plenum only in its immediate causality," Râpeanu argues, "we do not see the fact that this was part of a process that was manifest earlier."[343] Former Ceauşescu protégé Paul Niculescu-Mizil affirms that the 1971 visit was not the unique inspiration for the "July Theses." Well before the trip, the erstwhile apparatchik claims, Ceauşescu had been "dissatisfied with the ideological activity of the party" and feared the PCR was losing ground "in the face of bourgeois ideology."[344]

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[340] Cătănuş, "Consideraţii Asupra Evoluţiei Discursului Ideologic Privind Creaţia Literar-Artistică," pp. 26-27.
[341] Vasile Buga, "Controverse în Jurul Poziţiei României Faţă de Criza Cehoslovacă din 1968," in *Sfârşitul Perioadei Liberale a Regimului Ceauşescu: Minirevoluţia Culturală din 1971*, ed. Ana-Maria Cătănuş (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), p. 23.
[342] Valeriu Râpeanu, "Schimburile Ideologice din 1971 din Perspectiva Radioteleviziunii Române," in *Sfârşitul Perioadei Liberale a Regimului Ceauşescu: Minirevoluţia Culturală din 1971*, ed. Ana-Maria Cătănuş (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), pp. 64-80.
[343] Ibid., p. 68.
[344] Paul Niculescu-Mizil, "Conducerea P.C.R. şi Noua Orientare Ideologică," in *Sfârşitul Perioadei Liberale a Regimului Ceauşescu: Minirevoluţia Culturală din 1971*, ed. Ana-Maria Cătănuş (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), p. 45.

Other evidence suggests that the "July Theses" could hardly have been a "bolt from the blue."[345] The regime had for years been pursuing various puritanical campaigns aimed at rooting out supposed indecent and bourgeois manifestations. In his first few years in power Ceauşescu oversaw the enactment of policies not only against abortion, birth control and divorce,[346] but also ones against smoking, miniskirts, and facial hair.[347] To what extent this was a product of ideological purity rather than Ceauşescu's own peasant conservatism is debatable.

Ceauşescu's trip to Asia and the "July Theses" promulgated upon his return might well have influenced the development of Romanian socialism. However, the Asian visits did not represent a moment of rupture or departure, as they influenced the style and manner of a consolidation of power, a pursuit of monolithic unity, and a puritanical impulse that had already been articulated for some time. The Asian regimes interested Ceauşescu precisely because he found in them a sophisticated development of what he had already envisioned, albeit more crudely, for himself and his party.

Czechoslovakia as the Anti-Example

Like the Romanian party, the Czechoslovak party under Dubček had considered as its objective the "unification of our entire people," as documents the MAE translated into Romanian for its three hundred page internal reader on Czechoslovakia's

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[345] For another view, see Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 184.
[346] For an excellent study of the Ceauşescu regime's reproductive policies, see Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceauşescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
[347] Fischer, p. 90. The Romanian national dress code under Ceauşescu shared much with the one Hoxha declared in Albania.

liberalization repeatedly show.[348] In speeches that the MAE considered important enough to translate and circulate, Dubček seemed aware of the danger he had unleashed, as he called for "a united, organized, and sustained offensive for the next step" from within the party's ranks.[349] "Anticommunists," Dubček repeated, represented "the greatest threat to the development of the democratization process."[350] In public speeches he reiterated the necessity of reinvigorating public appreciation for the party and strengthening its leading role:

> Workers of the party must show convincingly that our process does not lead to the diminution of the leading role of the party…Anticommunists, which undoubtedly exist and who might feel masters of the current situation as they are happy about our self-criticism, are not going to exercise direct or indirect influence over our process…of the continued development of socialism.[351]

But at the same time, Dubček offered a penetrating critique of the very institutional structure of the party-state as such, insisting that

> one of the principal problems with the political system in our society is the reciprocal link between party and state. We must put an end to the practice of party organs replacing state organs, economic organs, and social organizations. Consequently, we must abandon the premise that the line of the party is obligatory for all communists within these organs, as the activity, the representatives, and the responsibility of these organs are independent.[352]

Meanwhile, the Antonín Novotný faction was articulating an alternative vision for Czechoslovakia's socialist project, one that recognized that Dubček's liberalizations necessarily weakened the leading role of the party. Novotný warned that the party was "not holding a sufficient measure of the leadership of the ideological and political process

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[348] MAE, Anexa III, 220/1968.
[349] Ibid.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Ibid.
[352] Ibid.

in its hands."[353] A Czechoslovak Communist Party plenary session resolved to "mobilize all the forces of our people and our socialist state" to reject "anticommunist elements [who] would try to orient the development of our people on a different path [other than that of socialism]." While Dubček's allies supported the participation of non-communists in political life, they "reject…the creation of an organized political opposition outside of the National Front."[354]

The Romanian leadership's decisions about its own security reveal a preoccupation with Soviet strategy during the 1968 intervention in Czechoslovakia. In a December note, the MAE Director, remarking that Czechoslovakia's bilateral relations had been at a standstill since the August invasion, instructed the Romanian embassy in Prague to pay special attention to Czechoslovakia's foreign relations as they developed and to report regularly on Prague's diplomatic activity to MAE headquarters.[355] The Romanian MAE clearly sought to analyze Czechoslovakia's relations for clues that could inform Romania's own decision-making.

The Romanian leadership had noted that the Soviet Union manipulated the factions in foreign parties to limit deviant policies.[356] No internal factions, however, developed in Romania, and this was not by accident. In Czechoslovakia, Moscow first occupied the country and forced Dubček to reverse course on his reforms. Then, it "gradually started to chip away at the composition of the leadership." At this point,

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[353] Ibid.
[354] Ibid.
[355] MAE, 20 December 1968, nr. 005876, 220/1968.
[356] Ronald H. Linden, *Bear and Foxes: The International Relations of East European States, 1965-1969* (Boulder, CO: East European Quarterly, 1979), pp. 198-199.

Gustáv Husák "was now able to reach the top on the sinking Dubček's shoulders."[357] In 1969, the post-invasion leadership staged a purge of the party's higher echelons in an effort to root out the remaining reformist tendencies.[358] This course of events loomed large over Bucharest. For the Romanian communists, the only alternative to unity was imminent factionalism, which, they quite correctly determined, facilitated foreign intervention.[359] This conceptualization of unity, in turn, informed the structuring of Romania's party and state institutions.

The lessons of Czechoslovakia continued to manifest themselves in the 1969 party congress. As discussed above, the party formally ended collective leadership—in place since the end of the Dej years—in which Ceauşescu was first among equals. Agencies previously under the authority of the Council of Ministers were directly subordinated to the Council of State.[360] Ceauşescu gradually retired all politburo members whose political careers had begun under Dej, replacing them with comrades who owed him absolute loyalty.[361] The congress approved new party procedures by which the General Secretary was to be elected by the entire party congress, instead of by the Central Committee alone. According to former protégé Ion Stoian, Ceauşescu structured the institutions deliberately to prevent the development of Czechoslovak-style leadership factions. Ceauşescu, he contends, considered it a mistake that some other

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[357] Vladimir V. Kusin, "The Legacy of the Prague Spring," in *The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, ed. George Schöpflin, (New York: Facts On File, 1986), pp. 333-334.
[358] Ibid.
[359] Cristina Petrescu and Dragoş Petrescu, "The Nomenklatura Talks: Former Romanian Party Dignitaries on Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceauşescu," *East European Politics and Societies* 16:3 (2003), p. 968.
[360] Fischer, pp. 75, 156.
[361] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p. 204.

ruling parties allowed the Plenary Session and not the Congress to choose the General Secretary. The Romanian leader, according to Stoian, always feared being replaced as leader and so he structured party institutions to impede a leadership change.[362] Another Ceauşescu ally, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, confirms this point. According to him, Czechoslovakia's 1967 separation of the party and the state, and the stipulation that the office holders of the Presidency of the State Council and of the General Secretariat of the Party were to be separate, were responsible for the Czechoslovak authorities' weakness in the face of threat. The division, Ceauşescu considered, inhibited party unity and invited division.[363] The interwar PCR, after all, had been fraught with factions, and its memory must not be forgotten when evaluating later party policy.[364]

Czechoslovak factionalism, the Romanian communists determined, prevented cohesive resistance in the face of Soviet designs. The Romanian party noted that in Czechoslovakia a formal request for intervention from a faction within leadership circles was a condition of WTO intervention. The hard-line Slovak communist and Dubček opponent Vasil Bil'ak had promised the Soviets that a "second center" in Czechoslovakia would sweep into Prague to support them if the WTO quashed the Dubček faction through military intervention.[365] The Soviet news agency TASS cited the faction's "request" in the first sentence of its public declaration of intervention into

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[362] Ion Stoian, "Alocuțiuni, Comunicări, Dezbateri" in *Sfârşitul Perioadei Liberale a Regimului Ceauşescu*, p. 91.
[363] Paul Niculescu-Mizil, *O Istorie Traită*, v. 2 (Bucharest: Editua Enciclopedia, 1997), p.74; and Niculescu-Mizil, "Conducerea P.C.R. şi Noua Orientare Ideologică," pp. 51-52.
[364] See Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons,* p. 65.
[365] Matthew J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), p. 22.

Czechoslovakia, claiming that "party militants and statesmen of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic have asked the Soviet Union and the other allied socialist states to accord the Czechoslovak brothers urgent help in the form of armed forces."[366] To preemptively invalidate any such request from any secret faction within Romania, the Grand National Assembly approved a measure stipulating that "only elected Party and State bodies, and not unspecified groups therein, are entitled to ask for…military assistance from other countries."[367]

Dubček's wavering and nonchalant response to Soviet threats to intervene baffled the Romanian communists. When the WTO forces penetrated Czechoslovakia's frontiers, the Party Presidium asked the population not to resist and ordered the army to stay still, even though Czechoslovakia, having perhaps the best army in Eastern Europe, could have put up resistance that would have seriously complicated Soviet designs.[368] According to Niculescu-Mizil, the Romanians had information that either Dubček or Czechoslovak President Ludvík Svoboda had stated only days before the invasion that Soviet troops, should they enter the country, would be welcomed with flowers. The Romanian leadership, on the other had, decided it would be wiser to promise to meet the Soviets with fire instead.[369]

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[366] Quoted in Pavel Câmpeanu, *Ceauşescu: Anii Numărătorii Inverse* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2002), pp. 245-246.
[367] Quoted in Ouimet, pp. 72-73.
[368] Yaacov Y. Vertzberger, *Risk Taking and Decisionmaking: Foreign Military Intervention Decisions* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 222, 228.
[369] Paul Niculescu-Mizil, "Poziția Conducerii PCR şi 'Primăvara de la Praga'," in *România şi Primăvara de la Praga*, ed. Dan Cătănuş (Bucharest: Institutul Național Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), pp. 34-35.

During the tense months preceding the August operation, Soviet forces had carried out exercises along the Czechoslovak border presumably as a warning to the Prague leadership to clamp down on grassroots activism and press freedom. But Dubček nevertheless granted the Soviets official permission to enter Czechoslovak territory for WTO manouevres. Once the exercises were completed, the troops remained in the country to participate in the 1968 suppression of reforms.[370] Once the invasion itself was under way, Dubček showed signs of fatalism and depression, and offered to resign.[371] Having observed these blunders, the Romanian leadership made a point of announcing, as a deterrent, that Romanians would resist aggression with guerilla warfare. The project to train all people in guerilla defense of the homeland was labeled "the fight of the entire people" (*lupta întregului popor*).[372]

The Soviet Union, in late 1968 and early 1969, went on a propaganda defensive of Moscow's intervention into the affairs of other socialist states. The propaganda claimed that socialist countries were obligated to provide one another reciprocal assistance whenever socialism was threatened. The Soviets articulated the concept of the "general responsibility of the USSR for the internal and external policies of the other socialist states," according to the telegrammed report sent from Romania's Moscow embassy. Soviet propaganda affirmed that proletarian internationalism and socialist patriotism were rooted in loyalty to the Soviet Union. While doctrine permitted different paths to socialism according to local conditions, "these concessions are shadowed by their [Soviet

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[370] Ouimet, pp. 20-22.
[371] Ibid., pp. 31, 40.
[372] Niculescu-Mizil, "Poziția Conducerii PCR şi 'Primăvara de la Praga'," pp. 34-35.

officials'] insistence that all countries accept the soviet conceptions in internal construction as well as in foreign policy actions."[373] An MAE report on Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko's presentation to the Supreme Soviet in July of 1969 notes that the USSR maintained its right to intervene to protect its own security and that of its friends; Gromyko, the report continues, "creates a theoretical basis for intervention in any situation it the world."[374]

Suspected Espionage and Foreign Allegiance as Threats to Autonomy

In order to understand Ceauşescu's obsession with Soviet plots against Romania, we must remember Romania's very different relationship to the Soviet Union in the years before Ceauşescu came to power. As discussed in Chapter One, Soviet agents had organized the new Romanian state in the aftermath of World War II. Soviet advisors had set up the postwar state security services on the Soviet model.[375] Along with official agents, the Soviets sent in covert agents to monitor the activities of the official envoys as well as to train recruits to assume official functions if needed. These operations were coordinated from the Soviet consulate in the Moldovan capital of Iaşi.[376]

Until at least 1953, these Soviet agents maintained contact with members of the Romanian leadership, including Gheorghe Pintilie, Mihai Gavriliuc, and Ana Pauker.[377] While Dej was the pioneer of the independent course in the last phase of his career, he

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[373] MAE, 31 January 1969, nr. 01/00311, 220/1969.
[374] MAE, 16 July 1969, nr. 001514, 220/1969.
[375] See Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, pp. 114-117.
[376] Troncotă, p. 18.
[377] Ibid.

had spent most of his politically active years as a Stalinist militantly loyal to Moscow. Nevertheless, Dej, who had spent the Second World War in Romania and never studied socialism in the USSR, was an "unknown quantity" to Moscow. In an effort to prove his loyalty, he appointed quite a few Soviet NKVD agents to his fledgling government.[378]

In the early 1960s the Soviet presence was beginning to irritate and frustrate the Romanian leadership. In 1962 Dej placed Alexandru Drăghici in charge of a covert program to identify Soviet agents working inside Romania. According to Troncotă, this program represented the first act of Romanian counterespionage against the Soviet Union.[379] Dej negotiated the withdrawal of Soviet counselors in the 1960s, and by 1964 all had supposedly left, rendering Romania the Eastern bloc state with the weakest ties to Moscow and the only one without Soviet troops or counselors on its land. Romania did not, however, cease to collaborate with the KGB, as continued cooperation was stipulated in the withdrawal agreement. [380] Counterespionage on Romanian soil was one thing, but Bucharest declined to carry out espionage on Soviet territory, always fearful of provoking its powerful neighbor. According to Troncotă, ambassadors were the only lines of information from Moscow.[381]

Along with Ceauşescu's rise to power came a shake up in the security services. The changes were initially aimed at ending some of the abusive practices Ceauşescu wanted to lay at the doorstep of his predecessor. The invasion of Czechoslovakia, however, meant that the liberalizations of the early Ceauşescu period were coming to an

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[378] See Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, pp. 147-148.
[379] Troncotă, pp. 18-24.
[380] Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, pp. 284-285.
[381] Troncotă, p. 147.

end in police work as in everything else. The quashing of the Prague Spring provoked a conceptual reorientation of espionage towards the protection of Romania against covert Soviet operations.[382] It put the regime on guard against Soviet influence. August 1968 left the PCR keen to root out any vestiges of the Soviet past in the most Soviet-inspired of the domestic institutions. Romanian intelligence agencies, therefore, were not like others in the bloc. They were not interested in bloc-on-bloc confrontation, but rather in defending themselves against infiltration by other communist powers.[383]

Bessarabia, or the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), loomed large in Ceauşescu's concerns over espionage. This piece of land, the eastern half of greater Moldova which since 1991 has been an independent state, had been under both Romanian and Russian rule in the twentieth century, and so most inhabitants learned to speak both Romanian and Russian. Moscow had long used Bessarabia as a springboard for Soviet influence into Romania.[384] In the early 1940s, while Romania was still allied to Germany, the Soviets produced false paperwork to pass off Bessarabian Soviet agents tasked with gathering information on Romanian troop movements as Romanian citizens returning home. One of these individuals, Alexandru Nicolski, would be appointed inspector-general of state security in Romania's postwar Groza government.[385] Soviet agents

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[382] Ibid., pp. 34, 92-94.
[383] Ibid.
[384] See Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), pp. 72-82.
[385] Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, pp. 121-122.

employed Bessarabian interpreters to help train Romanian recruits in the various regional units of the new communist secret police.[386]

Throughout the Ceauşescu period the Romanians and the Soviets had "low level sparring" matches over Bessarabia.[387] Beginning in the 1960s, Bucharest monitored all Soviet public commentary on Bessarabian history and culture.[388] It seems that Ceauşescu was troubled by the fact that both Brezhnev and Constantin Chernenko after him had at one point been officials in the republic-level Moldavian Communist Party. Indeed, as Charles King notes, the Moldavian SSR was "a kind of training ground for future general secretaries."[389] Ordinary citizens from this region, too, were automatically suspect. Even ethnic Romanian Bessarabians had terrible difficulty obtaining Romanian visas to visit relatives.[390]

Fear of a covert plot of Romanian conspirators in league with Soviet agents haunted Ceauşescu. Those military and intelligence officials who had studied in the USSR before the onset of the autonomous course were automatically suspect, as Soviet intelligence could easily locate and approach them. Romanian officials who had Russian spouses, too, raised suspicion.[391] According to a former military official, in 1970 Ceauşescu ordered the dismissal of army officers who were not ethnic Romanians.[392] Anyone accused of "dubious relations with Moscow" was put under the Securitate's

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[386] Ibid., p. 124.
[387] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, pp. 157-162.
[388] King, p. 104.
[389] Troncotă, p. 144; and King, p. 98.
[390] See Liviu-Daniel Grigorescu and Constantin Moraru, "Trupe în Apropierea Frontierei şi Turişti în Interior," *Magazin Istoric* 32:7 (1998), p. 32.
[391] Troncotă, p. 143; and Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 88.
[392] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 343.

microscope.[393] The most famous of these cases is the General Ion Şerb affair. Şerb is alleged to have passed sensitive documents detailing Romania's military preparation and the defenses for the city of Bucharest to the Soviet military attaché on two separate occasions in 1968 and 1971. He was sentenced to prison but released in 1976.[394]

Under Ceauşescu, more subtle behavior was also liable to raise suspicion. For example, the Securitate's grew suspicious of General Floca Arhip who, contrary to colleagues in his delegation, recommended that Romania buy some military equipment from the Soviets instead of from another supplier. The investigation into his loyalties that the remarks inspired did, in fact, find that he had "pro-Soviet views," and so he was forced into early retirement.[395]

Rumors of attempted coups involving Soviet support circulated in Romania and internationally in 1969, 1970, 1973, 1984 and again in 1986-7. The 1984 plot appears to have been especially sophisticated, and was centered on a group of conspirators in the army.[396] Several former Romanian officials have testified that after 1968 Ceauşescu had in fact become preoccupied with Soviet influence in the army command and the security services. In the 1984 affair, Soviet connections were alleged, as the supposed plotters had studied in the Soviet Union and one was married to a Russian. These officers allegedly

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[393] Troncotă, p. 143.
[394] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, pp. 88-89; and Troncotă, pp. 139-141.
[395] Troncotă, pp. 140-141.
[396] It is likely that Romania's armed forces were so niggardly funded and supplied because Ceauşescu feared a robust military would be a threat to his power. The institution did not receive the funding, support and respect army leaders felt it deserved. By the 1980s there were "serious levels of dissatisfaction" in the military. See Peter Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), pp. 39-40.

contacted and conspired with an Executive Committee member who was receptive to the idea, Ianoş Fazekaş. (Fazekaş's incidental Hungarian ethnicity made it easier for regime loyalists to view the attempt as a putsch staged managed from Budapest and Moscow, Romania's two historic enemies.) The operation was called off when an army unit charged with arresting Ceauşescu was sent off to harvest maize, perhaps as part of a strategy by Ceauşescu partisans to prevent the coup, or perhaps a mere coincidence that also indicates the demoralizing de-professionalization that the army suffered under Ceauşescu.[397]

Not only international crises, but also the choices of some Romanian officials to defy Ceauşescu, had a serious effect on the domestic climate. After the 1968 crisis over Czechoslovakia, the other watershed event in Romanian intelligence was the 1978 defection of former military intelligence chief Ion M. Pacepa, whose book about the Ceauşescu regime was discussed in Chapter One. According to Troncotă, Ceauşescu "de-professionalized" the Securitate in the wake of Pacepa's defection. (The designation "professional" for such a service is, of course, dubious.) He filled positions with party activists and loyalists who knew little about the procedures of domestic and foreign intelligence gathering.[398] Another case of inner circle disloyalty only one year later shook Ceauşescu as well. At the Twelfth PCR Congress in 1979, veteran Romanian communist Constantin Pîrvulescu stood at the podium and launched an attack on Ceauşescu's stewardship of the party and the country, announcing that he would not vote for the

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[397] The use of the military for such tasks was not unique to Romania, but was common to other parts of communist Europe, most notably the USSR. See Troncotă, pp. 141-153; and Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, pp. 343-351.
[398] See Troncotă, pp. 94-95.

General Secretary's reelection. The Congress immediately removed Pîrvulescu's party credentials and Ceauşescu's unanimous reelection was thereby ensured. Ceauşescu derided Pîrvulescu as an "alien to the country…longing for the time when the fate of the party and of the people were not decided here but elsewhere." Pîrvulescu had spent the war in the Soviet Union, and it was this connection that Ceauşescu was alluding to in his *ad hominem* attack.[399] These traumata involving Pacepa and Pîrvulescu sustained Ceauşescu's fears of foreign conspiracies.

As Ceauşescu's autarchic tendencies grew, so did the utility of foreign conspiracies for explaining the regime's own failures. Ceauşescu blamed problems in the country's development on foreigners' schemes to destabilize Romania and retard its progress.[400] In the 1980s, accusations that traitors were operating inside Romania in league with a foreign power became a staple of Ceauşescu's rhetoric.[401]

It is, however, clear that the rumors over coup plotting and shadow alternative leadership cliques were not all fantasy. As Siani-Davies has discusses, the organization and quick coalescence of the National Salvation Front (FSN) suggests that the plans had been outlined long in advance and executed in when conditions became propitious in December 1989.[402] The actual existence of secret opposition groupings and loyalties explains why Ceauşescu was so keen on finding and expelling dissenters within the party.

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[399] Michael Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society. Political Stagnation and Simulated Change* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985), pp. 82-83.
[400] Fischer, pp. 249-250.
[401] Ibid., p. 240.
[402] Siani-Davies, pp. 167-173.

The monolithic unity within the party that had been pursued with renewed vigor in the wake of 1968 was, in part, an effort to eliminate such alternative groups.[403]

Related to Bucharest's fear of espionage was its concern over military exercises near Romania's borders. As noted above, rumors of foreign-backed coups attempts circulated every few years. The Romanians were concerned that such an attempt would be coordinated with an advance of troops into the country, most likely from the north or from the east. In 1974 Bucharest and Moscow negotiated a plan for notification of military exercises. The Soviet party maintained that Bucharest should only be notified when exercises were held within five hundred kilometers of Romania's borders. Romanian Committee members speculated, of course, that Moscow did not want to announce movements at all.[404] It seems that the PCR leadership was more concerned over the occasional troop movements than Braun's argument permits.[405]

Unity in Perspective

The long-term significance of Romania's response to 1968 lies in the drive for centralization and monolithic unity. The Czechoslovak crisis of that year, and Ceauşescu's response to it, gave the Romanian leader an inordinate amount of authority, power, and prestige that would prove detrimental in the years to come.[406] The "wall"

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[403] See Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 351.
[404] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, no date, 96/1974.
[405] See note 49.
[406] See Nicolae Breban, "Reacţii ale Mediului Cultural la Schimbarea Cursului Ideologic din 1971," in *Sfârşitul Perioadei Liberale a Regimului Ceauşescu: Minirevoluţia Culturală din 1971*, ed. Ana Maria Cătănuş (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), p. 85.

discussed at the crucial Political Executive Committee cited above—rationalized by members as a means of collective self-defense—soon created a General Secretary who was national defense incarnate. The 21 August meeting's minutes already betray an embryonic personality cult that would reach farcical proportions in the years following. Party propaganda, increasingly from 1968 on, assigned a greater role to unitary leadership in the form of one man.[407] Genuine popular support proved addictive to Ceauşescu, as well as to his closest associates; once it had evaporated, the myth demanded that an aura of national solidarity with the party and its leader be sustained in appearance. Rather than being fortified by the independent policy, the nascent cult grew directly out of the leadership's concerns over its own position and the country's border security. Autonomous foreign policy, therefore, was not exactly a cause of the cult that later developed, as Fischer has argued.[408] Rather, the two phenomena were intertwined and mutually reinforcing: the cult was understood by its engineers as a mechanism to protect both the party's authority and the state's borders.

The course of the limited liberalization began to change in the late 1960s, with the events in Czechoslovakia acting as the catalyst. The crisis breathed new life into the political project to build the "new socialist man" (*omul nou socialist*). The Romanian party-state effectively ended its distinction between intellectual and political liberalization, adopting instead the objective of absolute unity of the party, state, and society. The harsh repression for which the Ceauşescu regime grew notorious must be examined in light of 1968, in which the perceived threat from below and from outside

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[407] See Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, pp. 203-204.
[408] See Fischer, p. 161.

constituted activism from outside the auspices of the party. This threat, the party considered, was doubly dangerous for Romania, since the party-state had to defend itself not only against foreign aggression, but against domestic discontent as well. To account for such a hostile combination ideologically, Romanian propagandists married the two sources of dissatisfaction with Romanian officialdom. Any opposition to the regime *by its very nature* constituted some part of a foreign conspiracy against the Romanian people. The insistence upon total national-state unity functioned as a mechanism of defense of the party-state in the face of hostile neighbors as well as actual and potential detractors within. This linking of opposition to foreign conspiracy served as a fine deterrent.

The quest for monolithic unity was now not a bloc wide project centered on the USSR—those days were long gone—but a small-scale imperative of the Romanian party that was formulated *in opposition* to its supposed allies in the WTO. This orientation did not, however, render the Romanian communists "pro-Western." In fact, the isolation of the Ceauşescu regime two decades later is traceable to the geopolitical concepts that formed and became entrenched during this period. The Cold War changed but the Ceauşescu regime's rigid conceptualization of it did not. Patriotic nationalism gained strength while internationalist communism suffered. Yet the institutional structures of state communism that had been imposed from without remained, and Romanian leaders worked within national structures quite well.

The Repressive Apparatus in Transition

The repression that marked the Ceauşescu years involved a subtler form of control than the enforced compliance of the early communist period. As Deletant has remarked, "after 1964 Romanians were marked by fear, rather than terror, of the *Securitate*, and the Ceauşescu regime, for all its appalling abuses of human dignity and contempt for human rights, never used the tactics of mass arrests and wholesale internal deportations that were a feature of most of the Dej era." Deletant concludes that Ceauşescu did not have to resort to such tactics, for "Dej had done his work well."[409] A "generalized presumption of guilt," and a "nonselective repression," characterized the state-society relations of the Ceauşescu years, as Câmpeanu has described them. Ceauşescu, hardly a liberal, was but a "reformer of the repression." The population was constantly supervised, and intimidation usually rendered punishment unnecessary.[410]

Ceauşescu ordered tighter control over socialist Romania's institutions of coercion, domination, and indoctrination immediately after the Prague Spring. Having examined the writings and speeches of Ceauşescu and other party ideologists, most notably propaganda chief Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Shafir has characterized the regime's objective as a "takeover from within of all social structures" by the party, and consequently a "withering away of society." In other words, the very notion of a Romanian society outside of or apart from the Romanian Communist Party ceased to exist.[411] A 1969 "Report on the preparation for struggle and the policies of the Securitate

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[409] Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*, p. *x.*
[410] Câmpeanu, pp. 258-262.
[411] Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society*, p. 57.

troops" states that in response to recent Party decisions, the "Council of State Security has taken measures for increasing the capacity for struggle of the Securitate troops." Having implemented the program of reorganization that the party had ordered, it raised the quality and the quantity of officers and improved their training.[412] The creation of the Front of Democracy and Socialist Unity (*Frontul Democrației și Unității Socialiste*) in 1968 represents an effort to keep all "popular" activism under strict party-state control and supervision. Every Romanian citizen, in effect, became a member of this umbrella organization that oversaw the official trade unions, women's organizations, and youth organizations. At the 1969 PCR Congress, Ceauşescu praised this new organization as a means of facilitating Romanians' expression of their views.[413] In reality, the Front, of which Ceauşescu himself was the president, was but an organizational body for official mass mobilization.[414] Along with the creation of the Front came enhanced Securitate supervision of all pro-regime demonstrations.[415]

As the popular acclaim that the Ceauşescu leadership had won in the wake of the Prague Spring was on the wane, the regime resorted to more intense ideological and

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[412] Arhiva Comandamentului Național al Jandarmeriei (ACNJ), fond. "C.T.S.", dosar nr. 43, 08 December 1969, vol. II/1974, reproduced in Florica Dobre, et al., eds. *Trupele de Securitate, 1949-1989* (Bucharest: Nemira, 2004), pp. 174-178.
[413] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism For All Seasons*, p. 206.
[414] For an analysis and description of socialist Romania's mass organizations, see Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society*, pp. 100-104.
[415] A new focus of the organization, a 1969 Securitate report signed by the President of the Council of State Security notes, was the "assurance, in cooperation with other security organs and other organs, of the normal course of manifestations of the working class." ACNJ, nr. 018300, fond "C.T.S.", dosar 19, 02 June 1969, vol. I/1971, reproduced in Dobre, et al., eds. *Trupele de Securitate*, p. 172.

organizational measures to maintain its authority.[416] Invoking the foreign threat was one of the tactics Ceauşescu and propagandists employed. But the foreign threat was also a threat from within. In late 1970s, the Romanian leader started to give a different kind of speech in which he raised the theme of traitors inside Romania betraying the homeland to foreigners.[417]

While Ceauşescu and his protégés implemented projects for enhancing the mass mobilization of the population, instances of dissent from within fueled their fears of factionalism. Reports of disloyal agents at high levels of state security struck an obviously sensitive nerve in the Ceauşescu leadership. One notable case of suspected treason emerged in 1971, around the character of Major General Ştefan Kostyal. Before an army commission, he had criticized Ceauşescu's foreign policy as "erratic" and had also opposed the General Secretary's dismissal of a host of army officers drawn from the ranks of national minorities. Although there appears to be no evidence to support the charge, Kostyal's actions, according to Deletant, were "written off in Party circles as the work of a Soviet agent."[418]

Far more worrisome for Ceauşescu, however, was the 1978 defection to the United States of the Foreign Intelligence head of the Department for State Security (DSS) Ion M. Pacepa. This loss represented an enormous wound for the party-state's prestige and for its sense of security. It also inspired a reorganization of the state security

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[416] Crowther, p. 118.
[417] Fischer, p. 240.
[418] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 343.

apparatus and led to the dismissal of security officers, although how many is uncertain.[419] After the high profile defection, the DSS was restored as a division of the Ministry of the Interior. According to Deletant, this action was "one signal of an end to the period of 'socialist legality' trumpeted by Ceauşescu a decade earlier; the second was the extension of the Ministry's remit to include 'defence of the independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity' of the state."[420] The newly reclassified DSS reported directly to Ceauşescu. According to the final report of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Romanian Communist Dictatorship, the body consumed 10 percent of the entire national income.[421] Ceauşescu charged the branch with running a counterespionage campaign, of which a component was the "organization and execution of activity of defending the security of the state by preventing, discovering, and liquidating actions of foreign espionage services and their agents…taken against the sovereignty, independence, and integrity of the Romanian state."[422] The DSS was also to find and identify "terrorists" and "spies" on Romanian territory.[423]

Other Securitate documents contain similar orders and objectives. The Securitate's program of action made public after the 1989 Revolution stated that the force was responsible for "acting consistently to carry out to the letter the orders and indications of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Comrade Nicolae

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[419] See Ibid., p. 322. Pacepa gives precise numbers but these, of course, are very high and doubtful given the source.
[420] Ibid., p. 326.
[421] Comisia Prezidențială Pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, *Raport Final*, Bucharest, 2006, p. 167.
[422] "Buletin Oficial," nr. 29, 08 April 1978, quoted in Troncotă, pp. 45-46.
[423] Troncotă, pp. 45-46.

Ceauşescu." Special attention was given to following "Hungarian reactionary groups" and to intercepting "agents sent to Romania to gather information and stir up trouble."[424] According to documents from the Securitate's Third Directorate,[425] "anyone belonging to associations with links abroad," such as stamp collectors and freemasons, was subject to special scrutiny.[426] In their reports on individual dissidents or suspected dissidents, Securitate officers stress the supposed foreign connections and loyalties of their subjects. In fact, the Securitate had generic blueprints for reports and investigations on suspect persons. According to the Presidential Commission's report, "investigations, for the most part, were in fact made up of some scenarios that had already been written, in which the investigators were bound to play their roles."[427] In a report on two writers, Liviu Cangiopol and Dan Petrescu, the case officer states that these two men want to "diffuse abroad material with a hostile content…Through their actions, they wish to create for themselves the status of political opponents, which offers a platform of external support, with a view towards a definitive departure from the country."[428] In their activity, visiting instructors from France played "an essential role" in developing the two Romanians' connections with "reactionary circles" in France. The document states that "the Securitate of Iaşi county will act to clarify the scope of the redaction of materials that Dan Petrescu

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[424] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 337.
[425] For a helpful set of charts and tables detailing the structure of the Securitate, see Annexes 1-5 of Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, pp. 377-385.
[426] See Ibid., p. 341.
[427] Comisia Prezidențială Pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, *Raport Final*, Bucharest, 2006, p. 179.
[428] ASRI, fond "D", nr. 10/966, vol. 14, 29 April 1988, reproduced in *Cartea Albă a Securității: Istorii Literare şi Artistice 1969-1989*, pp. 382-384.

and Liviu Cangiopol are working on and to prevent its possible diffusion abroad."[429] Expressions of domestic discontent, in the Securitate's conception, were tied with foreign aid and inspiration. According to the official 1987 plan for scrutinizing the activity of artists and writers, "foreigners who come into our country as emissaries of reactionary organizations" sponsor dissidence at home by "instigating people of art and culture to hostile actions."[430]

The tactic of conceiving of and portraying all dissidents as traitors continued until the very last days of the regime. The suspicious death of General Vasile Milea is a case in point. Milea either committed suicide or was murdered on 22 December 1989, after refusing to implement Ceauşescu's orders to fire on demonstrators. The newscaster at *Televiziunea Română*, the official state television network, announced Milea's death on the 22 December evening news:

> We inform you that the Minister of Armed Forces has acted against the independence and sovereignty of Romania, and sensing that he had been discovered, he committed suicide. We make an appeal to all those who love their country and their people to act with all firmness against any and all traitors. All rumors and lies have been directed in close coordination with other traitors of the country and imperialist circles by the traitor Milea, who has organized these provocations, has lied, and has given false information about the situation in the country.[431]

The tactic of linking disobedience to treachery had evidently reached farcical proportions. However, Ceauşescu seems to have thoroughly believed in the accuracy of such assertions.

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[429] Ibid.
[430] ASRI, Fond "D", nr. 120, vol. 1, reproduced in Chivu and Albu, *Noi şi Securitatea*, p. 174.
[431] *Televiziunea Română* newscast, 22 December 1989, excerpted in Harun Farocki, *Videograms of a Revolution*, Digital Video Disc, 107 min., Facets Video, Chicago, 2006.

Unity on Another Scale: The Challenge to Moscow's Pretensions Continues

Despite, or even because of, the party-state's increased concern over its own position of power that the territorial integrity of the national state had made possible, the PCR continued the project of encouraging an alternative set of communist allegiances and networks designed to challenge and resist those based around Moscow. Yugoslavia, Asian communist states, Eurocommunist parties, and liberation movements in the developing world all contributed to the alternative formulation of dissident socialist unity the PCR supported. Propaganda celebrated this alternative conceptualization of world socialism. A piece of scholarly propaganda published in 1985 describes the Romanian leader's original contributions to socialist thought:

> Conceptualized as a theoretical and practical science, scientific socialism, through its functions, contributes enormously to the humanization of the social [*umanizarea socialului*], to the modeling and the development of man and of society. In first place in the contemporary epoch stands Nicolae Ceauşescu, remarkable personality of international prestige, *with a decisive contribution in the definition of scientific socialism as a science of world transformation and an instrument of construction of socialist and communist society*. [emphasis mine][432]

Such statements were not mere talk, as the Romanian regime's policy toward the developing world indicates. This evidence renders questionable the literature's frequent assurances that "the Romanian model is not a commodity for export" and that "Romania has not cast itself, or found itself cast, in the role of exemplar."[433] Especially after Tito's

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[432] Trofin Hăgan, *Teoria şi Practica Socialismului Ştiinţific în România* (Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, 1985), p. 20.
[433] William Zimmerman, "Soviet Relations with Yugoslavia and Romania," in *Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe*, ed. Sarah M. Terry (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 127.

death, Ceauşescu hoped to emerge Eastern Europe's primary spokesman for a global "third way" movement.[434]

In the wake of the Prague Spring Ceauşescu had sought to strengthen his relationship with Yugoslavia. He and Tito had already emerged as Dubček's principal outside supporters, and they were criticized together in *Izvestiia* as having been "misled by imperialist propaganda."[435] The crisis drew the two states into closer collaboration and into a "close and lasting relationship" as Jeffrey Simon puts it.[436] Three days after the invasion of Czechoslovakia Ceauşescu and Tito met at the border town of Vršac to discuss their mutual defense. On this occasion, Ceauşescu proposed calling a meeting of communist parties for the purpose of condemning Moscow's behavior.[437] Romania's and Yugoslavia's policies towards the West and towards the rest of the communist world grew virtually identical. Yet while Yugoslavia was a member of the nonaligned movement, Romania was a mere observer.[438] The 1968 invasion seems to have led Ceauşescu to covet the independence Tito's regime enjoyed, an independence that its geographical distance from the Soviet Union certainly facilitated.

Ceauşescu maintained a particularly strong dialogue with the Chinese and North Korean regimes on the topics of resisting Soviet domination and safeguarding sovereignty. In 1974 talks, the PCR and the Chinese Communist Party agreed to support

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[434] See Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 324. Romania was, however, a mere observer, and not a founding member, of the Non-Aligned Movement.
[435] See Jeffrey Simon, *Cohesion and Dissention in Eastern Europe: Six Crises* (New York: Praeger, 1983), pp. 46-47, 58.
[436] Simon, p. 63.
[437] Vojitech Mastny, "Was 1968 A Strategic Watershed of the Cold War?," *Diplomatic History* 29:1 (2005), p. 170.
[438] Simon, pp. 58-63.

each other reciprocally in the face of Soviet challenges. On other occasions in private and at embassy events, Chinese officials are reported to have promised to stand by Romania against the Soviets.[439] Mao and Ceauşescu agreed that their countries were part of the same "family," one bound by a concept of communism without an international center. Discussing the USSR and the United States, Mao is quoted in the Romanian transcript as saying that "the big two consider that they have the right the offend the small…we say that all are equal."[440]

Similar views were aired during the Romanians' talks with the North Koreans. These two countries, of course, had more in common than did China and Romania. Ceauşescu and Kim Il Sung agreed that the Soviet Union has "an unfavorable attitude against all those who do not listen to them." Kim remarked that, "we consider that we don't have problems with the CPSU, but they think otherwise….but we must continue…*the Revolution goes on*. Our parties—the Romanian and the Korean—are in strong cohesion" [emphasis mine].[441] At a 1974 meeting, Ceauşescu and North Korean leader Kim agreed that "we need to find as many listeners [*interlocutori*] as possible," referring to national communist parties and small states throughout the world that had leftist tendencies but who resented the Soviet Union's demands of subservience.

As part of the program of spreading nonaligned socialism internationally, Romania developed warm relations with the "Eurocommunist" parties in Western

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[439] See Mastny, "Was 1968 A Strategic Watershed of the Cold War?," p. 170.
[440] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 96/1974.
[441] Ibid.

Europe.[442] The Romanian party-state and the Eurocommunist movement had one trait in common—they both rejected control from Moscow and supported the notion of polycentrism within the communist world. The WTO reaction to the Prague Spring helped cement the relationship between the PCR and the non-ruling parties in the West.[443] The Romanians did not, however, endorse the Eurocommunists' acceptance of contested elections with noncommunist participation. But nor did they condemn it. In fact, Ceauşescu refrained from commenting on the Eurcommunists' ostensible acceptance of bourgeois democracy altogether, citing the PCR's principle that the various communist parties should be free to craft their approaches to best fit the conditions in which they operated. In the 1970s Romania and these parties in the West grew closer when the latter grew more anti-Soviet in response to Moscow's criticism of Eurocommunist leaders.[444]

Strengthening Romania's alliance with them was part of an approach Ceauşescu had discussed with the Chinese and North Korean parties. In 1974, Kim Il Sung complained to Ceauşescu that so many communists in Western Europe had "illusions about the Soviet Union." Kim considered that his country and Romania "need to develop relations with all these parties."[445] The fact that Romania shared a Latin European heritage with all the countries where "Eurocommunist" parties operated added a cultural dimension to Bucharest's alliances with these Marxists who reluctantly came to terms

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[442] Eurocommunism refers specifically to the communist movements in Italy and Spain. Sometimes the French *gauche institutionelle*, the French Communist Party (PCF), may be included, but this party retained a Stalinist streak that complicates its classification.
[443] See Simon, pp. 44, 57.
[444] Robert Wesson, "Eurocommunism in Eastern Europe," in *East Central Europe: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, ed. Milorad M. Drachkovitch (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, 1982), pp. 59-64.
[445] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 96/1974.

with the pluralist political establishment.[446] Ironically, however, Romania was the one country that Eurocommunist ideas did *not* penetrate to influence dissident socialist thought. This issue will be treated at length in the following chapter.

Romania's relations with the developing world suggest a subtler strategy of challenging Moscow. Romanian propaganda suggested that the real cleavages in the world were not between capitalist and socialist states, but between different levels of development regardless of social system. Since the early 1970s Ceauşescu had presented Romania as a "socialist developing state," positioning the country as a bridge between North and South as well as between East and West. The purpose was to strengthen Romania's identification with the global south.[447] China began courting this region in the 1970s, and Romania picked up on the trend. In discussing a 1974 meeting with China's foreign minister, Ceauşescu remarked that "he talked a lot about the Third World," about a common struggle "against imperialism and colonialism."[448] China saw this ideological anti-imperialism that transcended Cold War divides as the building bloc for international alliances, and Romania increasingly did too.

Romania, we have seen, was the only Eastern bloc state to train its own security officers. But its autonomy in security services was not only inward looking. The RSR created a special section of the Securitate to train agents from other states in

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[446] See Trond Gilberg, *Nationalism and Communism in Romania: The Rise and Fall of Ceauşescu's Personal Dictatorship* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990), p. 220.
[447] Michael Shafir, "Romanian Foreign Policy Under Dej and Ceauşescu," in *The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, ed. George Schöpflin, (New York: Facts On File, 1986), pp. 370-371; and Thomas P. Barnett, *Romania and the East German Policies in the Third World* (Westport, CT: Praeger 1992) pp. 47, 57-58.
[448] ANR: SC a CC al PCR, 96/1974.

"counterterrorism," state security, and espionage. Most students hailed from Africa and the Middle East.[449] In conclusion, Romania's policy towards the developing world was not to be a trusted partner of the Soviet Union's in a bloc-wide Third World policy, as was the policy of East Germany.[450] Rather, Romania's courting of the Third World was a component of an international strategy to offer a non-Soviet, but thoroughly socialist, alternative to Moscow's hegemony.

The objectives of Romania's international diplomacy should be interpreted in light of its domestic context. Bucharest pursued a kind of alternative unity structure that would contrast to the Soviet one. The purpose was to protect both Romania as an autonomous party-state but also an alternative vision of international communist allegiance.

[449] Troncotă, pp. 44-45.
[450] See Barnett, p. *xviii*.

Chapter 4: Dissent as a National Project:

International Affairs and the Preemption of Opposition

It remains to establish the reasons that Romanians' disapproval of the Ceauşescu regime, undeniable by the 1980s, did not develop into a popular movement like those elsewhere in the Eastern bloc. This problem is related to the regime's autonomous foreign policy and therefore benefits from being examined within a foreign policy study. How did the autonomy/repression dialectic that solidified in the late 1960s affect the development of Romanian dissidence? On balance, the Ceauşescu regime's repressive policies were harsher than those of its Central European neighbors. In the entire region, the only competition Ceauşescu's Romania faced on this count was Hoxha's Albania. But treating this issue in the form of a comparative analysis remains controversial, as explaining a negative poses methodological problems. Writing in 1982, Stephen Larrabee argued that Romania was "the country most susceptible to Polish-style unrest" because its catastrophic economic situation and ration regime were similar to Poland's.[451] Such economically deterministic conclusions proved incorrect. Romania, as well as so many other parts of the world, has proven that poverty—even dire poverty that could be alleviated by simple changes in policy—does not necessarily inspire mass social movements.[452] Other cultural, demographic, economic, historical, and regional factors must be taken into account in explaining why mass social activism did not develop in the

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[451] Stephen F. Larrabee, "Instability and Change in Eastern Europe" in *International Security* 6:3 (1981-1982), pp. 41-42.
[452] Peter Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 15.

Eastern bloc country that, in many ways, had the most in common with Poland. While Poland and Romania were experiencing similar economic catastrophes, for a variety of social and historical reasons the two societies dealt with the crises quite differently. Economic hardship was likely to bring Poles out into the streets. Meanwhile, Romanians developed coping mechanisms that did not involve outright resistance.

The supposition that Romania necessarily *should* follow Central European developments—that its not doing so *ipso facto* provides evidence of a shortcoming in Romanian society—recalls the set of issues Maria Todorova has raised with some erudition in *Imagining the Balkans*.[453] As writers and governments reconstituted "Central Europe" as a geographical entity after 1989, "the Balkans" as their "Other," fraught with backwardness, tribalism, and irrationality, has also been resurrected.[454] Even though Romanians often draw "Balkanist" conclusions as evidence of their own society's "failures" vis-à-vis Central Europe,[455] an academic analysis should maintain some reserve regarding the normative judgments behind such assumptions. Despite the social cohesion and the courageous stubbornness that characterized Polish resistance to the abuses of state communism, Polish society is hardly recognized as a healthy, problem-

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[453] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[454] See Ibid., pp. 140-160, esp. pp. 141, 155, & 158.
[455] See Ole Nørgaard and Steven L. Sampson, "Poland's Crisis and East European Socialism," *Theory and Society* 13:6 (1984), p. 791; Todorova's Chapter 2, "The Balkans as Self Designation," pp. 38-61. See also Traian Ungureanu, *Despre Securitate: România, Ţara 'Ca şi Cum'* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006). Ungureanu's jabbing polemic chastises Romanians for not developing a Central European type resistance in the face of the communist "colonization" of society. Ironically, his historico-sociological profile of Romanian society in the twentieth century is so convincing that the vitriol directed at those who did not resist the communist regime in his prescribed manner seems misplaced.

free democratic polity today.[456] But of course, even the most advanced and well-established European representative democracies face crises of civic involvement, national identity, social unrest, terrorism, chronic unemployment, etc. While the Balkans have certainly had trouble in developing the habits and institutions characteristic of "mature" liberal democracy, Central Europe has hardly been the heroic ideal, even if Romanian critics sometimes treat it as such. Still, as far as the different societies' political traditions are concerned, Central Europe and the Balkans have historically had less in common than their inclusion in the same postwar politico-military bloc might suggest.

Different societies, therefore, should not be expected to produce similar kinds of social movements simply because their communist regimes had similar development aims. Nørgaard and Sampson find many structural "nation-specific" factors—"social, political, and cultural conditions"[457]—which meant that resistance was more likely to be cohesive and pronounced in Poland than in Romania. Romanians' frustration manifested itself differently—in complaining, cynicism, migration, sporadic work stoppage, and depressed productivity.[458] The fractures in the Polish Workers' Party leadership created a situation after 1956 in which social groups felt their demands would be considered and their grievances addressed.[459]

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[456] For a study of Poland's post-communist political culture, see Jacek Lubecki and Lech Szczegóła, "'Polish Exceptionalism:' What Explains the Low Turnout in Polish Post-Communist Elections?," in *The Polish Review* 52:1 (2007), pp. 3-36.
[457] Nørgaard and Sampson, pp. 774, 783.
[458] Ibid., p. 791.
[459] Ibid., pp. 786-787. Ouimet makes the same point in Matthew J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), pp. 108-109.

The Romanian leadership, meanwhile, remained unified, and so Romanian society adapted to worsening living conditions differently. Romania's widespread underground social networks, involving the black market in goods, kinship structures, and patronage arrangements (*relaţii*) lightened some of the blows of the austere 1980s, perhaps helping Romanians survive a bit more comfortably than an examination of state rations would suggest. Romanians' ties to ancestral villages meant that the official economy could often be ignored and bypassed to an extent unsurpassed in Eastern Europe.[460] According to Nørgaard and Sampson, a "dependence on individual centered strategies led to a more diffuse type of resistance based on 'getting by'."[461] This concept of "resistance" as indirect, cautious, and non-confrontational behavior is sufficiently dubious that other terms to describe acts of complaining, grumbling, and stealing are more appropriate.[462]

Dragoş Petrescu supports Nørgaard's and Sampson's conclusion that the commuting peasant-worker had the advantage of a village community to supplement an industrial worker's wages. This theory, according to Petrescu, explains why the major protests in Romania occurred where they did—in the Transylvanian counties of Braşov and Hunedoara. In these "pockets of industrialization," which had working class traditions stretching back to the interwar period, "'genuine' workers' environments" flourished; the habit of long-distance commuting that characterized other regions of

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[460] Nørgaard and Sampson, pp. 793-794.
[461] Ibid., p. 796.
[462] I thank David Curp for clarifying this point to me. For a discussion of the concept of resistance and the difficulties in discerning motives of workers' protest, see Mark Pittaway, "Control and Consent in Eastern Europe's Workers' States, 1945-1989: Some Reflections on Totalitarianism, Social Organization, and Social Control," in *Social Control in Europe, 1800-2000*, eds. Clive Emsley, Eric Johnson, and Pieter Spierenburg (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), pp. 348-350.

Romania had been lost. Strikes broke out because workers relied almost entirely on their factory wages. While the Jiu Valley and the Braşov strikes were impressive, Petrescu argues, they were isolated because the particular socio-economic conditions that favored them were unique to Braşov and Hunedoara counties.[463] Consequently, in most of Romania discontent with officialdom was unlikely to come to a head in forms associated with an entrenched culture of industrial labor.

Clever adaptation was manifest in intellectual life as well. The more independent thinking cultural producers—and not the "culturnicks," (*culturnicii*) as Vlad Georgescu labels the new class of ersatz intellectuals that rose to prominence in the late Ceauşescu period[464]—could use personal connections (and thus bypass official channels) to publish materials and provoke debates that perturbed the authorities. For all the pretensions of the totalitarian state, ordinary Romanians' circumvention of officialdom inhibited total control by affirming the legitimacy of social networks apart from the party.[465] For this reason, Deletant writes, it is "hazardous…to dismiss all cultural production in the 1980s as subservient to the regime."[466]

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[463] See Dragoş Petrescu, "A Threat From Below? Some Reflections on Workers' Protest in Communist Romania," *Xenopoliana* 7:1-2 (1999), pp. 143-145, 155-156. Some analyses of Polish Solidarity have come to the same conclusion: that Solidarity developed in wholly industrial regions which had no tradition of fostering the "peasant-worker." See Petrescu, p. 151, and Roman Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity: A Political Sociology of Poland's Working-Class Democratization* (Princeton: NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[464] For a discussion of this phenomenon see Vlad Georgescu, *Politica şi Istorie: Cazul Comuniştilor Români, 1944-1977* (Munich: Verlag, 1981), pp. 55-64.

[465] See Dennis Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), pp. 191-201. I must also thank Peter Siani-Davies for clarifying this point to me in conversation.

[466] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 200.

While the analytical rigors of scholarship correctly frown on evoking "innate national characteristics," ignoring the peculiarities of a society's traditions and popular psychology poses its own risks.[467] Scholars generally recognize that a complex cultural-historical tradition informed Romanians' attitudes toward unwelcome authority. The peasantry, so the standard argument goes, suffered under oppressive conditions for centuries and therefore developed a fatalistic character that accepts hardship and shuns confrontation and resistance as futile.[468] The "patterns of relationships between rulers and ruled" of the past centuries, Michael Shafir argues, produced a conformist attitude among the peasantry.[469] The necessity of making peace with earthly authority, a version of this cultural argument suggests, is deeply rooted in the "Romanian soul," whose true guardians are the suffering village dwellers. The attitude is exemplified in the peasant proverb that "the sword will never sever a bowed head" (*capul plecat nici sabia nu-l taie*).[470] The middle classes, too, the argument goes, have a tradition of subservience to state power because they were so often beneficiaries of government patronage. What some analysts have labeled passive resistance, although this characterization is highly questionable, took the form of plunder and theft of state property rather than outright defiance.[471]

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[467] See Martyn Rady, *Romania in Turmoil: A Contemporary History* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1992), p. 58.
[468] See Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 168.
[469] Michael Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society. Political Stagnation and Simulated Change* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985), pp. 132-139.
[470] See Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 168..
[471] Rady, p. 59.

Romanian philosophical traditions, especially Constantin Noica's recommendation that any effort at resisting authority be channeled toward platonic cultural development instead of into stubborn temporal struggle, also fueled this typology of Romanian quiescence in the face of the unjust. Noica even held that life could be more spiritually fulfilling under onerous circumstances, and so for a truly well balanced person austerity was to be welcomed.[472] Romanian intellectuals tended to understand themselves as "custodians of the nation's soul" rather than as agitators for the rights of the majority.[473] Nørgaard and Sampson detect a "mutual suspicion (if not hostility) between intellectuals and the working class" in twentieth century Romania.[474] Romanians' Orthodox Christian heritage, of course, cannot be overlooked as a factor in the approach toward authority.

The cultural factor must be kept in mind as contributing to the social atmosphere, but cultural tradition itself does not constitute a sufficient explanation for the poor record of Romanian efforts to struggle against the Ceauşescu regime. The shame and regret over this record of compliance, *specifically in comparison to Central Europe's record*, troubled Romanians after the fall of the regime and continues to do so today.[475] The

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[472] The fatalistic attitude is on full display in the famous Romanian pastoral ballad *Mioriţa*, which depicts a Moldovan shepherd quietly accepting his fate that his colleagues will murder him. See also Mircea Vulcănescu, "The Romanian Dimension of Existence: A Phenomenological Sketch," *Romanian Sources* 1:1 (1975): 5-34; and Siani-Davies, pp. 29-30.
[473] Rady, p. 59.
[474] Nørgaard and Sampson, p. 795.
[475] See, for example, Ungureanu, *Despre Securitate: România, Ţara "Ca şi Cum.*" For a discussion of the phenomenon among writers and the intelligentsia, see Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, pp. 201-202. The same tendency is evident in the controversial and much discussed 2006 Final Report of the Presidential Commission for

specifics features of the Ceauşescu dictatorship, we have seen, initially gained significant public approval and even support. Once this support waned the regime proved successful at deterring resistance with some modified tactics that this chapter will explore.

While some tenuous conception of cultural tradition can scarcely be denied as a factor in Romanian behavior, the especially harsh repression of the ubiquitous Securitate—in the form of both agents and occasional informers—should not be overlooked in creating an atmosphere that reduced the possibilities for independent social organization to a minimum.[476] Other specific policies, such as the regime-enforced usurping of time and the Romanian leadership's claim to bloc autonomy, also acted as more immediate pressures inhibiting unionism and other forms of overt resistance.

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the Analysis of the Romanian Communist Dictatorship (*Raportul Final al Comisia Prezidențială Pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România*). The lengthy report, which condemns communist ideology for its abuses of fundamental human rights and for its inherent anti-pluralism, is an official state document. Supporters of the project remark with pride that Romania has achieved something significant as the first former Eastern bloc country to officially condemn communism. See Comisia Prezidențială Pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, *Raport Final*, Bucharest, 2006, available online at http://www.presidency.ro/?_RID=htm&id=83. This process, it is no surprise, has had its detractors, most visibly the former president Ion Iliescu. Meanwhile, Daniel Barbu has criticized the very concept of the commission from a very different perspective. In his view, "the Romanan President, former party chief, secretary of state, deputy, minister and mayor, believe that politics—as Tocqueville defines it—does not exist…To establish something about our common living, we need a commission. Neither common people nor politicians are capable of formulating pertinent judgments about what has happened to them…in their quality as engaged citizens." According to Barbu, therefore, the very notion of calling an official presidential commission to establish a "scientific" truth about the past has its roots in an era and in a regime type hostile to the fundamental organizational principles of civic dialogue and democratic participation. See Daniel Barbu, *Politica Pentru Barbari* (Bucharest: Nemira, 2005), p. 15.

[476] Dennis Deletant, "Romania, 1945-89: Resistance, Protest and Dissent," in *Revolution and Resistance in Eastern Europe: Challenges to Communist Rule*, eds. Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe. (Oxford: Berg, 2006), p. 81.

Romania's place in the international environment, and the regime's portrayal of that place, served to deter domestic dissent in ways that this chapter will examine.

The approach forged in 1968 shaped official policy towards the nascent resistance of the late Ceauşescu period. The Romanian regime capitalized on the international environment of the late Cold War to preempt independent organization by tainting causes that gained popularity elsewhere in the region with official support. In short, Romania's unique international situation, and the Bucharest regime's manipulation of this situation in official propaganda, explains some immediate causes of "Romanian exceptionalism" that cultural arguments risk obfuscating. The "Ceauşescu doctrine" of autonomy, placed within the changed international environment of the late 1970s and 1980s, had a bearing on Romanian domestic treatment of nascent dissent.

From Nationalized Dissent to Internal Occupation

The atmosphere of foreign threat forged in 1968 proved particularly useful in deterring domestic opposition to the Romanian regime. Four principal mechanisms accomplished this task. First, some Romanians (although extremely few by the late 1980s) genuinely supported the regime because of its foreign policy of national defense and territorial integrity. Even those who began to doubt the intellectual wisdom of their initial support had powerful incentives to keep their reservations to themselves. Second, the regime capitalized on its reputation as a defender of the nation to channel discontent abroad instead of into the Romanian system. Third, the painting of even the most measured dissent as the cardinal sin of treachery intimidated Romanians into submission

and forced them to find subtler forms of expression. Fourth, the propaganda lauding Ceauşescu's achievements and his *international* popularity convinced the population that they alone could not topple a ruler so popular the world over. The first three points will be discussed immediately below and the final one, since it is especially expansive, will be treated in a section unto itself.

Keeping in mind the Romanian dictatorship's ideological conceptualization of liberty and liberation facilitates our understanding of the same regime's policy of "nationalizing" dissent. The PCR understood liberation in the collective sense only; this conception was completely separate from, even opposed to, individual liberty. Ceauşescu, explaining his thoughts on the topic in the context of developing countries, stated that "it is not pluralism which these countries need now, but one national force, capable of leading the struggle for full liberation, independence, and welfare."[477] The notion of dissent as a collective project, and not an individual one, operated in a similar fashion in a historically rural society that traditionally placed great importance on group autonomy but largely rejected individual autonomy as disruptive to social cohesion and solidarity.[478]

In 1968 Ceauşescu had gained genuine popularity and legitimacy with an image as a liberalizing general secretary who defended Romania's borders against Soviet aggression. August 1968 may have been "the first and also the last time that the people responded to the 'call from the party' to the national defense," as Retegan concludes, but the memory of that year's official defiance remained a powerful legacy that shaped

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[477] Michael Radu, "Romania and the Third World: The Dilemmas of a "Free Rider," in *Eastern Europe and the Third World: East vs. South*, ed. Michael Radu (New York: Praeger, 1981), p. 251.
[478] See Siani-Davies, pp. 14, 29-30.

official discourse on foreign and domestic affairs until the 1989 Revolution.[479] Though he owed his own political movement's position of power to the policies of a foreign state, Ceauşescu resented those more powerful than himself, and so it was perhaps natural for him to rebel against the Stalinist obedience to Moscow that had characterized the first decade of communist Romania. Ceauşescu, in a sense, became the national embodiment of collective dissent against Soviet control.

The effects of the autonomous course on the range of tolerated debate were already discernable in the late Dej years. As Troncotă remarks in the introduction of his study of communist Romania's security services, as early as 1964 "to oppose Dej's policies meant to situate yourself as a partisan of Moscow's. To support Dej meant to dissent from the Kremlin's politics. This is why in Romania there were so few political dissidents."[480] Ceauşescu merely continued this approach, and August 1968 enhanced its power as a legitimating device. As Tismăneanu has argued, "anyone who opposed Ceauşescu was guilty of undermining…unity and accused of serving the Kremlin's interests. A fictitious solidarity with Czechoslovakia's 'socialism with a human face' justified the perpetuation of an obtuse and ultra-authoritarian model of personal dictatorship."[481] Indeed, Romania's nascent personal dictatorship was a great beneficiary of the Prague Spring and, perhaps more importantly, of the way in which the Prague

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[479] Mihai Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring : Romanian Foreign Policy and the Crisis in Czechoslovakia, 1968* (Portland, OR: Center for Romanian Studies, 2000), p. 206.
[480] Cristian Troncotă, *Duplicitării: O Istorie a Serviciilor de Informaţii şi Securitate ale Regimului Comunist din România, 1965-1989* (Bucharest: Editura Elion, 2004), p. 14.
[481] Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism For All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 203.

Spring was ended. Romania's mandarin intellectuals used weekly journals to heap criticism on any dissenting voices. Those who did not want to face the vitriol of the "culturnicks," who did not want to put up with accusations of treachery and sympathy with "revanchist" neighbors, stayed quiet.[482]

The RSR was structured so as to deflect discontent away from the rulers and towards external targets. These targets in fact were the objects of genuine popular resentment. The regime trotted out Soviet and Hungarian scapegoats to guide discontent toward neighbors—conveniently, Romania's 'historic' enemies—rather than toward Romania's own rulers. As Shafir notes, the Ceauşescu regime did not invent this tactic. It was "as ancient as the history of the modern Romanian political system," having been a favorite strategy of the pre-war Bucharest governments.[483] Whereas Poles, for example, could direct their anger at the Polish regime abroad towards the Soviet Union, Romanians could hardly do the same since Romanian communists had worked so hard to discredit the notion that they were only in power thanks to the Red Army. Thinly veiled anti-Soviet rhetoric was part and parcel of Romania's official discourse on domestic and international affairs. By "integrating Romanians' anti-Soviet attitudes into his foreign policy," Nørgaard and Sampson contend, Ceauşescu had removed the powerful nationalist tactic of condemning foreign subjugation from the cards of any opposition to his rule.[484] Their conclusion that the PCR's adoption of anti-Russian prejudices

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[482] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 174.
[483] Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society*, p. 51.
[484] Nørgaard and Sampson, p. 792.

compelled Romanians to "patriotically tighten their belts," however, is more dubious.[485] A lack of alternatives based on the Ceauşescu regime's preemption of challenges, rather than a popular acceptance of officialdom, better explains the Bucharest regime's capacity to endure. A popular sense of desperate frustration and humiliation does not amount to active acceptance of regime legitimacy.

Pursuing dissent-from-above as a national project within the global communist movement left Romania the Warsaw Pact state with the fewest and the weakest ties to Moscow. From the mid 1960s into the 1970s, this scheme brought some popularity. In the later Ceauşescu years, however, the strategy served instead to deter the formation of opposition and to limit its appeal.[486] The usefulness of autonomy, however, had a flip side, and one that helps explain the intensity of ideological fanaticism among Romanian communists. Not only was Romania granted by Moscow a degree of autonomy unique in the bloc, but it was also left to rely on its own coercive, manipulative, preemptive, and repressive capacities in defending itself against its population.[487] While other Eastern European states pursued a "consumer based legitimacy" in the form of a social contract with the population not to revolt in exchange for material comfort, Ceauşescu cultivated a "siege mentality" to explain the need for unity, discipline and, eventually, staggering austerity. This strategy supported managed dissent in the figure of Ceauşescu and condemned any dissent from the PCR official line. This atmosphere, Crowther writes, "demands that the environment be inhabited by 'enemies' of the Romanian people, and

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[485] Ibid., p. 793.
[486] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism For All Seasons*, p. 14.
[487] William E. Crowther, *The Political Economy of Romanian Socialism* (New York: Praeger, 1988), p. 92.

this requirement has conditioned all other aspects of the regime's ideological development."[488]

Once the true character of the Ceauşescu regime became clear, the atmosphere of a nationalized dissent morphed into one of internal occupation. Once Romania's "dissident" within the bloc, Ceauşescu was by the 1980s condemned of as an agent of domestic occupation. As Romanian writer Paul Goma remarked to a Czech colleague, "You live under Russian occupation; we Romanians live under Romanian occupation, more efficient than a foreign one."[489] The Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Romanian Communist Dictatorship, too, portrays the Ceauşescu regime's tactics as characteristic of an occupying power. According to this document, "a specific characteristic over the entire course of the Romanian communist regime was the promotion of a special type of state violence, closer to that applied by occupying regimes."[490] Romanian communism, the report asserts, was "always foreign to its own people."[491] This assertion, while more polemic than scholarly, at least reflects attitude (or at least the wishes) of much of the population in the final years of the regime.

Preempting Unrest

Since the 1970s the literature on Romanian communism has offered theories about the Bucharest regime's preemptive or proto-preemptive strategies to deter

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[488] Ibid., p. 121.
[489] Paul Goma, *Le Tremblement des Hommes: Peut-on Vivre en Roumanie Aujourd'hui?*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil , 1979), p. 27.
[490] Comisia Prezidențială Pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, *Raport Final*, p. 172.
[491] Ibid., p. 169.

opposition. The most basic of these simply contends that the party-state in fact gained popular legitimacy through its foreign policy. According to this view, the Romanian people did not challenge the regime because they accepted its rule. Nørgaard and Sampson argue that a Solidarity-type movement would not rise in Romania because the strategy of legitimation had succeeded in inspiring in Romanians a willingness to sacrifice, to "patriotically tighten their belts."[492] A similar, but more plausible, analysis contends that since many Romanians associated Nicolae Ceauşescu with defense of the borders, they feared that opposition to the PCR would bring Soviet interference. This, in turn, contributed to grumbling acceptance and passivity.[493] Ceauşescu's reputation as a respected international statesman also contributed to domestic legitimacy.[494] Propaganda certainly sought to capitalize on the dictator's international reputation. The official media stressed Ceauşescu's activity on the world stage and reprinted all kind words that foreign dignitaries uttered. It even turns out that some of the telegrams from foreign heads of state that were reproduced in the pages of the official party daily were fraudulent; the words of "support" had been fabricated for a domestic audience and perhaps even to satisfy the dictator's own insatiable vanity.[495]

Other scholars see a more sinister mechanism at work in the party-states policies. Nørgaard and Sampson's theory that the Romanian party-state maintained a significant

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[492] See Nørgaard and Sampson, p. 793.
[493] Mary E. Fischer, *Nicolae Ceauşescu: A Study in Political Leadership* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1989), p. 266.
[494] See Michael Shafir, "Romanian Foreign Policy Under Dej and Ceauşescu" in *The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, ed. George Schöpflin (New York: Facts on File, 1986), p. 377.
[495] Rady, p. 66.

degree of legitimacy, we have seen, is at odds with the vast majority of the scholarship.[496] Keith Jowitt argues that the Romanian regime and other Leninist regimes in Eastern Europe pursued a method of "inclusive manipulation" to appeal to the population as well as to stave off the very desire for political pluralism.[497] According to Jowitt, "inclusion is an attempt to prevent…plurality by revising the regime's format and its relationship to society from insulation to integration."[498] Shafir, however, disputes Jowitt's theory as insufficiently appreciative of the coercive character of *soi-disant* "inclusion" tactics. Jowitt's theory, he argues, "puts too much emphasis on the means, and too little on the goals, of the envisaged post-consolidational policies." Shafir proposes an alternative theory of "modernization and containment," according to which a policy of "simulated change" masquerades as a kind of party-led democratization of society.[499] Indeed, even if in the "liberal" period the Romanian regime did adopt tactics of "manipulation and persuasion" rather than "command and violence," it reverted to more coercive methods as time passed and it lost any fleeting popular legitimacy.[500]

The rhetoric of persuasion and the strategies of preemption, however, remained and even intensified. In the 1980s, as challenges to party authority mounted in Central Europe, Shafir suspects that the PCR changed its slogans to cope with the threat. For

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[496] See, for example, Radio Free Europe, *Political Legitimacy in Eastern Europe: A Comparative Study* (Munich: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 1987).
[497] Kenneth Jowitt, "Inclusion and Mobilization in European Leninist Regimes," *World Politics* 28:1 (1975), pp. 69-96. For a critique of Jowitt's approach, see Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society*, pp. 53-54.
[498] Jowitt, "Inclusion and Mobilization in European Leninist Regimes," p. 71.
[499] Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society*, p. 55.
[500] See Jowitt, "Inclusion and Mobilization in European Leninist Regimes," pp. 79, 89-90.

example, in 1982 Ceauşescu announced that "dictatorship of the proletariat" was no longer an appropriate term for a Romanian regime that had evolved into a "workers' democracy."[501] Ceauşescu also spoke of a fictive "new economic mechanism" in Romania, when in fact no market reforms had been implemented. According to Shafir,

> one is entitled to suspect the Romanian leader here of attempting to cope with the influence of Polish political developments, for the evolution of the 'multilaterally developed socialist society' as an operative concept was influenced from the beginning by attempts to fend off 'undesirable' political innovation arising in other Eastern European countries where ruling elites had been less successful in their strategies for 'system maintenance.'[502]

The Romanian regime's decision to address the concerns that had led the Polish workers to protest represented an effort to demonstrate to the Romanian people that since Bucharest was taking initiative to solve problems, grassroots pressure was unnecessary.[503] The Romanian communists' response to unrest elsewhere in the bloc, therefore, was to show the population that similar movements were not required to address Romania's troubles because the party was ahead of the game.

Other versions of the "preemption" argument are somewhat more dynamic and sophisticated. Indeed, evidence made available after the collapse of the Ceauşescu regime in 1989 suggests that a veritable and multifaceted culture of preemption characterized state-society relations in the late 1970s and 1980s. Far more was at work in the state's chosen mechanisms of coercion than persuasion and force of arms; a particularly well-developed culture of preemption distinguished the regime's approach to the population in the late Ceauşescu period. The Securitate, under the direct command of Nicolae

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[501] Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society*, p. 58.
[502] Ibid.
[503] Ibid.

Ceauşescu, was tasked with detecting and preventing activity damaging to state security and "national integrity." Documents show that the principal objective of the Securitate, the "armed arm of the party" (*braţul înarmat al partidului*), was "to prevent, counter and neutralize actions perpetrated by reactionary circles and nationalist, irredentist and fascist groups abroad, by hostile *émigré* groups and by hostile elements in the country."[504] The prevention, countering, and neutralization troika, is invoked in other documents as well,[505] suggests a preemptive approach. The 1985 requirement that all contact with foreigners be reported immediately to authorities was likely conceived of as a measure to prevent diffusion abroad of information about conditions in Romania as well as an effort to preempt transnational coordination of East European opposition movements.[506] In 1983, Ceauşescu decreed that all typewriters must be registered with the police.[507] Policies were evidently enacted with a view toward impeding communication and organization.

The Securitate reports on suspected "enemies of the people" in the 1980s use language suggesting a culture of preemption in the security services. A March 1985 report on the writer Dorin Tudoran, suspected of preparing to send writings critical of the Romanian regime abroad for publication, details the "measures of prevention initiated by

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[504] Quoted in Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 337.
[505] A 1979 plan for the peacetime activity of the Securitate, for example, lists a similarly worded responsibility: "participation in activity of prevention, neutralization, and liquidation of actions of terrorist elements on the territory of the Romanian Socialist Republic." Arhiva Comandamentului Naţional al Jandarmeriei (ACNJ), fond. "C.T.S.", nr. 0008661, dosar nr. 3, 25 Septmber 1979, vol. IV/1984, reproduced in Florica Dobre, et al., eds. *Trupele de Securitate, 1949-1989* (Bucharest: Nemira, 2004), p. 462.
[506] Troncotă, p. 63.
[507] Dennis Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule* (Portland, OR: Center for Romanian Studies, 1999), p. 144.

the Special 'S' Unit" in what was termed "Operation Crystal." The objective of the operation was to fend off "acts of protest and disorder" by taking "specific measures of prevention...of creating impediments" to deter "acts of protest and disorder." Tudoran's offense was the suspected preparation of writings with "defamatory content addressed towards our country."[508] In a Securitate report on the suspected activities of the writers Liviu Cangiopol and Dan Petrescu, the First Directorate indicated it would take steps toward "the establishment of efficient measures of preventative intervention and counteraction."[509] Such statements are characteristic of the body of available Securitate reports on intellectuals and writers suspected of active opposition to the regime.

The austerity and the intensified ideological mobilization of the 1980s had their own effects on the possible development of organized opposition. As Katherine Verdery has remarked, the "shortage of resources…was converted into a seizure of time that immobilized it for any other use."[510] The regime's "mobilization of bodies" in a kind of regime-legitimating *corvée* for official demonstrations, celebrations, and special work projects intensified in the 1980s. The total hours in the working week were also slightly increased to forty-six in 1981.[511] Ubiquitous official demonstrations, however, were a double-edged sword, as they could potentially deviate from the program and evolve into riots. Romanian authorities, however, took steps to preempt independent worker initiative

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[508] ASRI, fond "D", dosar nr. 10/966, vol.25, 28 March 1985, reproduced in *Cartea Albă a Securităţii: Istorii Literare şi Artistice 1969-1989* (Editura Presa Românească, 1996), pp. 322-323.
[509] ASRI, fond "D", nr. 10/966, vol. 14, 29 April 1988, reproduced in *Cartea Albă a Securităţii: Istorii Literare şi Artistice 1969-1989*, pp. 382-384.
[510] Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 49.
[511] "Eastern Europe; Me Too," *The Economist*, 18 April 1981, p. 60.

by maintaining close Securitate supervision at factories, especially ones in which the independent union SLOMR, the Free Trade Union of Romanian Workers (*Sindicatul Liber al Oamenilor Muncii din România*), had shown an interest,[512] and by assembling the massive pro-regime demonstrations as late as possible to avoid dangerous "down time" that could have been popularly seized and used for "counterhegemonic purposes."[513] In her 1996 study *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next*, Verdery sees little evidence of a "relation[ship] between intentionality and structure" in the "seizure of time" that defined the 1980s. In her assessment, it was unlikely that the "austerity program behind so much of the etatization of time was intended to produce subjection."[514] Evidence made available since Verdery's writing, however, suggests that she was more correct in her characterization of regime policies than her evidence permitted her to say, although even her treatment brought criticism.[515] We do, however, have good reason to believe that robbing the population of time was indeed the *intent* of the domestic policies of the 1980s. Ceauşescu himself considered tightening the screws an effective preemptive measure; according to him, regimentation served to usurp personal time exactly as Verdery argues in her discussion of the "etatization of time."[516] At a mid-December PCR Executive Committee meeting, Ceauşescu concluded that

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[512] Daniel Nelson, *Romanian Politics in the Ceauşescu Era* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1988), p. 52.
[513] See Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?*, p. 49.
[514] Ibid., p. 50.
[515] See Mark Pittaway, "Control and Consent in Eastern Europe's Workers' States, 1945-1989: Some Reflections on Totalitarianism, Social Organization, and Social Control," in *Social Control in Europe, 1800-2000*, eds. Clive Emsley, Eric Johnson, and Pieter Spierenburg (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), p. 352.
[516] Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?*, p. 49.

unrest among Poland's workers was a product of the party's insufficient regimentation of daily life:

> The man who does not work talks to people, walks about on the street, hangs out in cafeterias. That is why [the Poles] have problems with the young people, and with all the others. *They have not managed to organize time*. [Emphasis mine][517]

These words were spoken in the context of a comparison of Polish and Romanian strategies of dealing with work stoppages and popular unrest. The clear implication is that the Romanian regime's "organization of time" was successful whereas the Polish regime's was lacking. Romanian authorities calculated that strict organization and coercion at the workplace, coupled with popular exhaustion due to mandatory official service in other domains, would prevent unwanted developments. Pittaway criticizes Verdery for her milder insinuations that, he writes, "confuse intention with outcome." According to Pittaway, Verdery "presents no actual evidence that this was party policy…a notion of the all-pervasive nature of the socialist state has led to the confusion of social outcomes and state intentions. The impression of a monolithic, all-pervasive state is reinforced by arguments that draw on the use of theories, not empirical investigations."[518] Ceauşescu's comments noted above constitute empirical evidence in support of Verdery's theory.

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[517] Arhivele Naţionale ale României, Secţia Cancelarie a Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român [Chancellery Section of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, National Archives of Romania] (ANR: SC a CC al PCR), dosar 104/1981, Political Executive Committee stenogram, 17 December 1981, available online at Cold War International History Project, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.browse&sort=Collection&item=Romania%20in%20the%20Cold%20War.

[518] Mark Pittaway, "Control and Consent in Eastern Europe's Workers' States, 1945-1989: Some Reflections on Totalitarianism, Social Organization, and Social Control," in

Comrades Abroad: Eurocommunism, Western Social Movements, and the Third World

Three particular aspects of the culture of preemption that exploited the international environment of the late Cold War deserve deeper investigation than existing scholarship has offered. The PCR's success at co-opting West European "Eurocommunism," the global peace movement, and the Third World international solidarity movement deprived Romania's domestic arena of phenomena that prompted and facilitated resistance elsewhere in the communist bloc. Instead of trying to insulate the population from movements that threatened the other East European party-states, the Romanian leadership praised and embraced these efforts, portraying them as in accord with Bucharest's official views. Their utility in facilitating domestic opposition was thereby preempted.

The vague notion of "Eurocommunism" designates a body of thought that emerged as various West European communist parties adapted themselves to capitalist electoral democracies. Eurocommunism represented a doctrine of evolutionary socialism that accepted free multiparty elections and rejected "revolutionary Leninism" as incompatible with the struggle for socialism in the late twentieth century's advanced industrial societies.[519] Eurocommunists held that each national Communist Party should be at liberty to forge a program adapted to the specific conditions of its own country.

Social Control in Europe, 1800-2000, eds. Clive Emsley, Eric Johnson, and Pieter Spierenburg (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), p. 352.

[519] Kevin Devlin, "Eurocommunism: Between East and West," *International Security* 3:4 (1979), p. 81.

Consequently, they affirmed that no party should be required to subordinate itself to the Soviet Union.[520] These principles were in total accord with those of the PCR.

The Italian and Spanish, and sometimes the French,[521] Communist Parties emerged as the major "Eurocommunist" power brokers. The designation Eurocommunist was popularized in the 1970s, but the transformations within international communist thought that led to its development trace back far earlier. The events of August 1968, however, were instrumental in informing the course of Western European independent socialism in the second half of the twentieth century. It is at this point that the West European communists' identification with the PCR solidified: The French, Italian, and Spanish Communist Parties (PCF, PCI, and PCE) all opposed the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia.[522] Indeed, the dissident East European states and the West European Eurocommunist felt most threatened by Moscow's aggressive defense of its imperium.[523] This common fear compelled them to form an international alliance in defense of independent communism, a Romanian project, we have seen, well before it was a West European one. The Romanian press routinely printed the speeches and writings of the Italian and Spanish communist leaders in a series entitled "In the life of Communist and

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[520] See Robert Wesson, "Eurocommunism in Eastern Europe" in *East Central Europe: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, ed. Milorad M. Drachkovitch (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1982), p. 56.
[521] The case of the PCF (*Parti Communiste Français*) is more complicated, since it maintained a vigorous Stalinist streak that was more pronounced at some times than others.
[522] See Devlin, pp. 83-86.
[523] Ouimet, pp. 58-59.

Workers Parties,"[524] and these individuals were frequent visitors to Romania. Some were described in the media as Ceauşescu's personal friends.[525] The PCR even helped to finance the Spanish Communist Party after it ceased to be on speaking terms with the Soviet Union following Spanish Party leader Carillo's biting criticism of Soviet socialism.[526]

The June 1976 Berlin Conference of World Communism was instrumental in facilitating these East-West ties. The conference struck a blow against Soviet pretensions, as both East and West European parties resisted Soviet domination. A common Latin cultural and linguistic heritage linked these parties as well. For these reasons, the West European reformist parties looked favorably upon the Romanian regime, conveniently ignoring the re-Stalinization of Romanian cultural and political life in the 1970s.[527]

Having condemned the 1968 invasion and spoken in favor of a "socialism with a human face," Eurocommunist thought influenced the critical and reformist-Marxist discourses that developed in East-Central Europe throughout the 1970s. Most notable was the strengthening of ties between representatives of Eurocommunism and dissidents in East Central Europe. According to many standard assessments, both Eurocommunists and East European dissidents focused on the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Accords, and Western communists used their influence to help Central Europe's dissidents. Activists in Central Europe, according to Ouimet, "organiz[ed] groups

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[524] See, for example, an address of Santiago Carillo's, "For a New Impulse of the Democratic Process," printed in *Scînteia*, 10 July 1980.
[525] Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society*, p. 181.
[526] See Wesson, pp. 62-64.
[527] Ouimet, pp. 85-87.

intended to hold the bloc's communist parties to their promises on human rights. In as much as the dissidents shared considerable common ground with the Eurocommunists, the two groups supported each other well into the 1980s." Eurocommunists even campaigned on behalf of individual persecutees in Eastern Europe.[528] The ability to claim support of West European Communist parties was a useful tool for persecuted dissidents.[529] Some, for example the East German Rudolph Bahro, cited Eurocommunist thought as an intellectual basis for critiques of "real existing" state socialism.[530]

While this narrative is not wholly untrue, it must be substantially revised when taking Romania—Eastern Europe's most populous WTO member after Poland—into account. The implications of this exercise for West European "reformist" communists are not flattering. Because of the warm relationship that developed in the late 1960s and early to mid 1970s, the Eurocommunists did not change their tune on Romania in the late 1970s, when they were supporting dissidents, albeit selectively, in Central Europe. As one might expect given the influence on Eurocommunist thought of the Czechoslovak quest for "socialism with a human face" in the 1960s, the Eurocommunists were particularly critical of the repression in Gustav Husák's Czechoslovakia.[531] Meanwhile, Romania *did* have counterparts to the persecutees in Central Europe in the late 1970s, in the form of intellectuals such as Paul Goma, the striking Jiu Valley miners, and the independent trade unionists of SLOMR. In many cases, these Romanian efforts built on the example of the Charter 77 movement in Czechoslovakia, and the Romanian activists

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[528] Ibid.
[529] Wesson, p. 72.
[530] Ibid., p. 73.
[531] Ibid., pp. 58, 69-70.

suffered repression sometimes worse than that of their colleagues who had Eurocommunist support.[532] However, the Eurocommunists were "silent on repression in Romania," in the words of one critical analyst.[533] Without external support, the Romanian regime succeeded in crushing the burgeoning dissident movement in the mid to late 1970s.[534] The Helsinki process had opened Romania to international criticism, but the Eurocommunists as well as Western governments ignored those who spoke up. Some were merely detained, beaten, or sent to psychiatric facilities. Others died in suspicious circumstances.[535] The Securitate, under Ceauşescu's personal direction, even targeted for death dissidents residing abroad, most famously in France.[536]

Eurocommunism thus had the least significant domestic impact in the WTO member state with which it had the warmest relations. As much as East European resistance movements *did* have in common in the late 1970s and late 1980s, Romanian dissidents were not like those elsewhere in the bloc insomuch as they never took seriously the promises of reformist communism. In a sense, having remained largely suspicious about the ultimate good of a socialist society, they were a decade ahead of their Central European colleagues of the anti-Bolshevik left who found sustenance and

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[532] See Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, pp. 235-242.
[533] Nor did the Eurocommunists express any support for victims of the Yugoslav regime, as the Eurcommunist parties had warm and mutually supportive relations with the government in Belgrade. See Wesson, p. 66.
[534] See Vlad Georgescu, "Romania in the 1980s: The Legacy of Dynastic Socialism," in *East European Politics and Societies* 2 (1988), pp. 88-89.
[535] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, pp. 121-124.
[536] For details, see Ibid., pp. 328-331. For a more technical look at the methods of intimidation the Securitate used against Romanians living abroad who were critical of the regime, see Carmen Chivu and Mihai Albu, *Noi şi Securitatea: Viaţa Privată şi Publică în Perioada Comunistă Aşa Cum Reiese din Tehnica Operativă* (Piteşti: Odiseu Paralela, 2006), pp. 162-170.

support in Eurocommunist thought. Romania, after all, was the only major country in East-Central Europe that had no significant tradition of indigenous leftism, despite its hosting the world's largest ruling communist party in per capita membership, one-third of the work force carrying party cards by 1980.[537] This phenomenon is doubly remarkable, as Tismăneanu remarks, given the Francophile tradition in Romanian intellectual culture. Nevertheless, the sophisticated Romanian intelligentsia "remained untouched by the French passion for leftist values."[538] Tismăneanu describes the attitudes and approaches of two notable Romanian dissidents, Dan Petrescu and Liviu Cangiopol, in the introduction of a volume of their conversations published immediately after the 1989 Revolution:

> They do not talk about determinisms and causalities, do not perorate pedantically about 'structural reforms' and about 'socialism with a human face'; their heroes are not Gramsci and Lukács. For them, the vital question is the retrieval of spontaneity, the doing away with the clichés of ideological fantasies, the foundation of an ethic of civic rebirth.[539]

The extent to which Romanian dissidents would have been receptive to Eurocommunist thought is therefore doubtful. In any case, the preemption of such ties by granting the movement official approval ensured reformist leftism would not carry a grassroots impact.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the Romanian regime's purported struggle against nuclear weapons and for disarmament and world peace gained importance in

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[537] See Fischer, pp. 192-200.
[538] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p. 35.
[539] Vladimir Tismăneanu, foreword to *Ce-ar Mai Fi de Spus: Convorbiri Libere Într-o Țara Ocupată*, by Dan Petrescu and Liviu Cangiopol (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1990), p. vii.

official propaganda. The pursuit of a nuclear free zone in the Balkans and the support for similar zones elsewhere in the world had long been rhetorical pillars of Romanian foreign policy.[540] Clearly Ceauşescu viewed these policies as overwhelmingly popular, and thus saw them as effective means to enhanced legitimacy. On propagandistic banners, billboards, placards, and painted messages on the sides of buildings and natural formations that adorned practically every corner of the country, Ceauşescu's efforts as a global peacemaker were celebrated along with his defense of Romanian independence and the surpassing of production targets. As Siani-Davies observes, "the omnipresent portraits of Ceauşescu and his wife were to prove simple but potential legitimizing devices cementing the authority of the leadership."[541] This assessment is no doubt correct, but we may take it a step further. The propaganda lauding efforts at demilitarization and world peace were far more sophisticated than a simple "legitimation" interpretation suggests. The choices of *which specific* "achievements" propagandists chose to stress must be taken into account. In the context of the early 1980s the stressing of antinuclear and peace initiatives appears to have been chosen in light of the international context.

The cause of the peace movement gained significant popular allegiance in the Soviet bloc in the 1980s. As Robert English writes in a 1984 *Foreign Policy* article, "the military build-ups of the superpowers have spawned antiwar sentiments among the peoples and the leaders of the Soviet bloc….If current trends continue, a regional peace

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[540] See Robert Weiner, *Romanian Foreign Policy and the United Nations* (New York: Praeger, 1984), pp. 76-78.
[541] Siani-Davies, p. 24.

movement could one day challenge Soviet control even more broadly than did Poland' s now-banned independent trade union Solidarity."[542] More specifically, a grassroots antiwar campaign took hold in East Germany in 1981-1984 in response to the additional missiles that the United States and the Soviet Union had stationed in Europe. Czechoslovakia's Charter 77 also issued antiwar resolutions. Pacifist movements gained traction in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland. Protestant and Roman Catholic religious leaders in East Germany, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia publicly opposed superpower militarism and contributed to the grassroots antimilitarist effort. The movements pleaded with *both* superpowers to reduce the risk of war by withdrawing missiles and tanks from Central Europe.[543]

These activists built transnational contacts with antiwar movements in Western Europe.[544] The East Europeans' concerns, however, were more immediate and complex than those of their Western neighbors. Consumer dissatisfaction, for which government spending on military buildup was partially blamed, revealed the East European regimes' rapidly collapsing "social contract" with the population. The peace movement, therefore, expressed more than just fears about militarism, but protested against the array of imminent catastrophes that state socialism had created and which it was confronting in the 1980s.[545]

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[542] Robert English, "Eastern Europe's Doves," *Foreign Policy* 56 (1984), p. 44.
[543] Ibid., pp. 45-49, 56-57. See also Jolyon Howorth, "The Third Way," *Foreign Policy* 65 (1986-1987), p. 129.
[544] English, p. 49.
[545] Ibid., pp. 56-57. See also Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 114-119, 131-135.

A peace movement developed in Romania during the same time, but it was of an entirely different nature even if protest banners carried some of the same slogans. As English remarks, a "very different sort of antiwar movement was gathering steam in Romania through 1981-1983," one that "stands alone as a party-controlled movement."[546] While the other East European party-states were struggling with how to punish peace activists and stave off the antiwar activism,[547] the Romanian regime built its own antiwar movement along the same lines as the mandatory pro-regime rallies but incorporating the slogans of the grassroots campaigns underway elsewhere. In 1986 the regime organized a referendum on reducing Romania's military spending to record low levels; propaganda hailed Ceauşescu as an "international champion of peace."[548] A famous poem warning against the dangers of militarism and the possibilities for peaceful development is attributed to the Romanian leader:

> Let us make from cannons tractors
> From atoms lights and sources
> From nuclear missiles
> Plows to labor fields.[549]

The regime's antiwar effort presented Ceauşescu as an indispensable voice of reason and moderation in international affairs. He even gained admiration abroad for his antimilitarist policies, building upon his reputation for independence in foreign policy

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[546] Ibid., pp. 45-46.
[547] See Ibid., pp. 49-50.
[548] Jonathan Eyal, "Romania: Between Appearances and Realities," in *The Warsaw Pact and the Balkans: Moscow's Southern Flank*, ed. Jonathan Eyal (New York: St. Martin's, 1989), p. 94.
[549] Nicolae Ceauşescu, *Romania on the Way of Building up the Multilaterally Developed Socialist Society—Sept. 1977–March 1978* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1980).

matters.[550]

The Romanian regime, it seems, recognized the power mass movement pacifism was gaining among its neighbors, and so it organized a preemptive mass movement of its own. As English notes, "unlike previous crises in Eastern Europe, pacifism cannot be isolated and eliminated in one country."[551] More threatening for the Ceauşescu regime, the transnational East-West grassroots contacts linked peace and human rights as related issues. While circles within the international peace movement had served as instruments of Soviet propaganda in the past, the movement by the 1980s was far too dynamic to be credibly derided as a mere instrument of Soviet manipulation; by that time, activists were militating against the Soviets' own interests.[552] As Tismăneanu remarks, "the evolution of independent pacifism has been linked to the growing awareness of the militarization of Soviet type regimes."[553] Far from being an anti-Western campaign, much of the mass-movement pacifism in East Central Europe protested against the Cold War division of Europe as such. Nevertheless, it is likely that the Romanian authorities feared that the mass movements elsewhere were mere fronts for the Soviet-controlled World Peace Council.[554] The Bucharest government's establishing an official mass peace movement in Romania, therefore, meant that the focus could be kept independent of the Soviet Union

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[550] U.S. Senator Vance Hartke authored an admiring forward for a 1987 English language edition of Ceauşescu's speeches. See Nicolae Ceauşescu, *An Independent Foreign Policy for Peace and Cooperation: A Selection of Speeches* (Washington, DC: The Political Science Library, 1987).
[551] English, p. 53.
[552] Howorth, pp. 129-130.
[553] Vladimir Tismăneanu, "Unofficial Peace Activism in the Soviet Union and East Central Europe," In *In Search of Civil Society: Independent Peace Movements in the Soviet Bloc*, ed. Vladimir Tismăneanu (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 6.
[554] Ouimet, p. 52.

and centered on international peace and antimilitarism alone. Human rights issues, of course, played no part in the official movement. With so much of the rhetoric being adopted officially, a parallel grassroots organization was deterred from developing.

Subtler mechanisms were at work in the official peace movement. The regime indirectly generated hostility towards mass organizations through the mandatory participation in official rallies.[555] The causes for which the rallies were held, it follows, would meet with little popular sympathy or adherence so long as they were favored by the despised regime.

Propaganda identified the mass mobilizations within Romania with those abroad. One piece of scholarly propaganda, in a discussion of the frequently discussed theme of the "democratization of international relations," advised that "it is necessary in each country that the largest masses mobilize" for addressing international affairs.[556] The "democratization of international relations," the piece continues, was "linked to the rising role of the popular masses in the elimination of war in people's lives, the ensuring of freedom and independence of each nation, general disarmament and nuclear disarmament."[557] No distinction was made between voluntary, popular mass mobilizations and mandatory, official ones.

Throughout almost all of the 1980s, virtually every issue of the party daily *Scînteia* carried at least one lengthy article on peace, disarmament, demilitarization, and denuclearization. Many issues carried two, three, or four such pieces. A typical article

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[555] Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society*, p. 95.
[556] Edwin Glaser, *Dreptul Statelor de a Participa la Viața Internațională* (Bucharest: Editura Politica, 1982), p. 64.
[557] Ibid., p. 60.

covering major antiwar demonstrations within Romania from November 1981 is entitled "For the Triumph of Reason, For the End of the Nuclear Threat in Europe in the Entire World: The Peace Initiatives of President Nicolae Ceauşescu Receive an Enthusiastic and Soul-filled Response From the Entire People." The article then divides into various sections, each with the name of a county as a subheading. Within these subsections are reports on specific public manifestations in the various counties, which tens of thousands of "working people" are reported to have freely attended. Photographs accompanying the stories show Romanians carrying the obligatory portraits of Ceauşescu along with banners reading "Slow the Course of Armament," "Ceauşescu, Peace," "No Neutron Bombs," and "Disarmament!"[558]

Press reports on the peace movement demonstrations outside of Romania, always chronicled in *Scînteia's* "International Life" section, follow the same pattern. But a suggestive mechanism of association is at work in these pieces. The presentation style linked protests in the West and elsewhere in the non-communist world with the same cause as the Romanian state. An August 1981 article offers a typical portrayal of the global piece movement in official propaganda. The headline of the piece reads "In the Different Continents and Countries of the World There is One Wish, One Voice: No to Nuclear Arms!" The report includes captions about different peace demonstrations worldwide, with a country name as each subheading. Included are the Following: "Japan: 'Never Another Hiroshima!';" "France: 'The March of Peace' at the Gates of Paris;" "Holland: 'Foundations for Feeding Children, Not for Killing Them';" "U.S.A.: 'Stop the

[558] *Scînteia*, 25 November 1981.

Production of the Means of Death';" "Portugal: 'Against the Placement of Arms on the National Territory';" "Sweden: 'For the Denuclearization of Northern Europe!';" "G.D.R.: 'Sweeping Away the Myth'."[559] Of the seven countries mentioned, only one of them is a fraternal socialist state. And the DDR, the one that was included, represented the Eastern bloc state with the strongest mass peace movement. A similar article from December 1981 entitled "For Détente, Disarmament, Peace!: Declarations of Political Personalities, Many Demonstrations and Meetings Against the Course of Nuclear Armament" features notes about protest meetings in Western capitals exclusively (as well as one in Tokyo).[560] An article from August 1981 entitled "For Peace in the World: No to Other Hiroshimas and Nagasakis!" reports on demonstrations in Japan, Holland, and Italy. A photograph of an international antiwar demonstration in Copenhagen accompanies the text.[561] A July 1982 piece entitled "Abundant Actions for Disarmament, For Peace" describes protests in Portugal, France, and Japan.[562] An article detailing Ceauşescu's views on peace in a December 1981 edition of the paper is entitled "President Nicolae Ceauşescu's Peace Initiative: In Accord with the Aspirations of International Public Opinion."[563]

The Romanian media thus treated Ceauşescu as a crucial voice of sanity in a world gone mad.[564] He is portrayed as one leader who understands and listens to the voices of the people. A transnational ideological community is implicitly invoked in this

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[559] *Scînteia*, 08 August 1981.
[560] *Scînteia*, 08 December 1981.
[561] *Scînteia*, 09 August 1981.
[562] *Scînteia*, 01 July 1982.
[563] *Scînteia*, 23 December 1981.
[564] See Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society*, p. 81.

coverage, one that links the Romanian people with social movements abroad in both the non-communist and communist worlds through the activity of an East European state that is portrayed as in accord with popular movements worldwide.

Declaring solidarity with the peace movement was not the only instance of the regime's attempts to align itself with popular grassroots movements. Anti-apartheid, anti-colonial, anti-racist, and pro-independence movements all fell under the banner of the global "international solidarity" movement of which the Ceauşescu regime claimed to be a sponsor and fellow traveler.[565] At every chance, PCR propaganda allied the party, at least rhetorically, with the world's popular movements, "freedom fighters" and "progressive forces."[566] The 1980s saw the linking in Romania's propaganda rhetoric of the official peace movement to the official Third World solidarity movement. Ceauşescu articulated this approach in a July 1982 public speech that was reportedly given to an audience of 60,000 in the Moldavian city of Botoşani:

> As is well known, we are witnessing an unusual tension with regard to military actions, an intensification of the course of armament, and a growing gap between rich and poor countries. At the same time, we must say that working people, people everywhere, are taking great action against imperialist and colonialist policies, for putting an end to the politics of force and diktat, and for assuring the free development of each people as it wishes, without outside interference.…We are firmly convinced that the future belongs to independence, progress, socialism![567]

Propaganda subtly communicated that there was only one correct organizational forum for the popular movement. As a sign read at the rally at which Ceauşescu made the above comments, "Long Live the Unshaken Unity of Our Entire People Within the Framework

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[565] See Glaser, *Dreptul Statelor de a Participa la Viaţa Internaţională*, p. 74.
[566] See Ibid., pp. 9, 44.
[567] *Scînteia*, 02 July 1982.

of the Front for Socialist Unity and Democracy."[568] As described in Chapter Three, this official institution constituted the only permitted organizational locus for "popular" movements and civic expression.

Throughout the 1980s, official discourse stressed socialist Romania's support for leftist leaders of newly independent states as well as anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and Third World radical movements. In official ideology, all "democratic forces" engaged in "revolutionary struggle" were worthy of support in the cause of "peace, progress, democratic transformation" and "progressive evolution."[569] Ceauşescu's politics became more overtly "anti-Western" throughout the 1980s, coinciding with this renewed support for socialist construction in the Third World.[570] In addition to offering diplomatic recognition and rhetorical support, the Romanian regime sold large quantities of arms to the Third World. Ironically, the East European regime whose propaganda stressed peace and nonviolence emerged as the WTO's second largest arms exporter after the Soviet Union.[571]

Despite Romania's stifling bureaucracy and institutional paralysis, the country's leader genuinely considered himself a vanguard revolutionary, and judged "negative phenomena" such as Polish Solidarity and the ruling regimes' creeping "*dezideologizare*" (deideolgization) not only a threat to the status quo in Eastern Europe, but also a serious

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[568] Ibid.
[569] See Glaser, *Dreptul Statelor de a Participa la Viaţa Internaţională*, p. 63.
[570] Trond Gilberg, *Nationalism and Communism in Romania: The Rise and Fall of Ceauşescu's Personal Dictatorship* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990), p. 214; and Fischer, p. 225.
[571] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, p. 372.

error in historical development towards socialism.[572] This European context of Ceauşescu's changing global policy must be remembered when evaluating the motives of his focus on the Third World. In the global south there were youthful, dedicated revolutionaries who possessed the ideological vigor that East European socialism was increasingly lacking.

The press's constant evocation of Third World anti-capitalist struggles appears as a feeble attempt to gain legitimacy by evoking a transnational ideological community to which Romanians should, the regime considered, have felt connected. As Ceauşescu explained in a 1982 speech:

> In the confrontation between the two tendencies in the world arena…the ensemble of the international situation is in favor of progressive, anti-imperialist forces, of peoples who fight for independence. And we are firmly convinced that the future belongs to independence, progress, and socialism!...We are going to strengthen our solidarity with the countries on the path to development in order for these countries to assure progress, good standing, and independence.[573]

Another typical article in *Scînteia* from December 1981 affirms socialist Romania's "permanent, profound solidarity with peoples everywhere who rise to the fight for their national being, against imperialism, colonialism, and neocolonialism."[574] Romania drew parallels between its own period of foreign domination and the colonial regimes of Africa.[575] The connection is portrayed not as a generic one between the Third World and the socialist bloc as a whole, as this article—and many like it—carries captions of leaders from the global south, in this case featuring the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat,

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[572] Ion Constantin, "Aspecte Privind Relațiile Româno-Polone în Perioada Anilor '80," *Arhivele Totalitarismului* 13:48-49 (2005), p. 123.
[573] *Scînteia*, 02 July 1982.
[574] *Scînteia*, 13 December 1981.
[575] See Weiner, pp. 141-144.

Mozambican revolutionary and eventual president Samora Machel, and Zimbabwean strongman Robert Mugabe singing the praises of Ceauşescu as an especially loyal comrade in the international revolutionary movement.[576]

In propaganda and in practice, this alliance between Romania and the global south was taken to new extremes in the late 1980s. From January to October 1988 the Romanian leader made official visits to nearly a dozen states in the global south.[577] It was common for entire pages from the "International Life" section of *Scînteia* to contain almost nothing but headlines heralding Third World leftism.[578] This ideological offensive to identify Romania with ideological brethren in Africa and the Middle East was underway in the midst of other geographico-ideological reorientations in Romanian cultural politics. As Verdery has discussed, images of "Europe and Africa, culture and barbarism, colonial exploitation and western dictatorship" marked élite discourse in the late Ceauşescu period. This influence indicates the extent to which regime propaganda had an impact on élite culture and national identity. Propaganda celebrated native Dacians against Roman imperialists.[579] The famous "letter of six," which a handful of disillusioned first generation communists sent to Ceauşescu in March 1989, chastised the Romanian leader for his attempt to "move Romania into Africa." His personality cult, they continued, was "worthy of an African state."[580] The remark is not merely a racist analogy to African dictatorships—although racist it certainly is. Rather, it reflects the

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[576] *Scînteia*, 13 December 1981.
[577] Rady, p. 66.
[578] See, for example, *Scînteia*, 02 January 1989.
[579] Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceauşescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 2.
[580] Ibid., pp. 1-2.

extent to which official identification with the developing world loomed over Romanian life in the 1980s. The Third World grew in importance as Ceauşescu saw Europe ceding ideological ground. Moreover, the relentless evocation of global popular struggle and the Romanian regime's support for it created the impression of a Romanian on the side of the popular movement, thereby preempting a genuine popular movement at home through the cynicism and confusion that the official policy generated.

It is tempting to infer that the regime's treatment of West European revisionist Marxist philosophy, of the peace movement, and of the international solidarity movement were deliberately designed to preempt similar grass roots movements from developing outside of the official sphere. The available evidence—the existence of a preemptive approach among the security services as well as the upper echelons of the party apparatus; the more convincing evidence suggesting the deprivation of private time was deliberate and not a mere product of economic mismanagement; and the conclusions implied in official propaganda on the peace movement and Eurocommunism—makes a persuasive circumstantial case.

While the case for intent is circumstantial, evaluating the *effects* of the Romanian regime's approach involves less uncertainty. The communist regime, whether by design or by luck, deprived organizational principles of dissident potential by co-opting them into official policy. This policy was either a brilliant coincidence or, more likely, yet another example of a rather sophisticated policy of preemption.

The International Context of Romanian Social Movements in the Unbearable Eighties

It seems astonishing how long Washington maintained a favorable attitude towards the Romanian leader. Well into the 1980s, the prestige Ceauşescu had gained with his unorthodox foreign policy had not lost its luster among some circles of the United States government. Vice President George H. W. Bush still referred to Ceauşescu as one of Europe's "good Communists" in a 1984 speech on his return from a visit to Europe.[581] Ceauşescu's foreign policy, Tismăneanu writes, "helped to obfuscate Western awareness of the growing internal repression."[582] It was only in the second half of the Reagan administration, once Mikhail Gorbachev had taken over the reins of Soviet power upon the death of the "last Bolshevik" Constantin Chernenko, that Ceauşescu's warm relations with the United States government ended.[583]

Although the repression in Romania was hardly a secret, Western publics were less well acquainted with conditions in Romania since throughout the 1980s so few Western journalists secured permission to enter the country.[584] While the Romanian section of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty broadcast some of the most biting and polemical criticism of Ceauşescu to be found on the Eastern bloc radio waves, the

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[581] See Georgescu, "Romania in the 1980s: The Legacy of Dynastic Socialism," p. 69.
[582] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p. 188.
[583] For an excellent analysis of U.S.-Romanian diplomacy during this period see Roger Kirk and Mircea Răceanu, *Romania vs. the United States: Diplomacy of the Absurd, 1985-1989* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994). Kirk was the United States Ambassador to Romania during the period, while Răceanu served as the Romanian ambassador to the United States. See also Ilya Zemstov, *Chernenko, the Last Bolshevik: Soviet Union on the Eve of Perestroika* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1989).
[584] Comisia Prezidențială Pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, *Raport Final*, p. 367.

American public was far better acquainted with the repression in Central Europe and the dissidents Central European regimes abused.[585] It took years for the reports of abuses to make a significant impression on American politicians and the American people. Ceauşescu's dramatic foreign policy gestures made more of an impact than the findings of human rights inquiries.[586] The Romanian regime's policies permitting Jewish emigration (albeit in exchange for hard currency) contrasted with the policies of other East European countries, and so they too were instrumental in gaining the regime friends in the West.[587] So long as the traditional Cold War mentality persisted, Western governments shared some responsibility for "shoring up" the Ceauşescu regime in its darkest hours.[588] While Romanian dissidents such as Doina Cornea and Paul Goma were ignored, Romania's "dissident-in-chief" was celebrated. As the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Romanian Communist Dictatorship finds, "the apparently independent foreign policy in the midst of the Soviet bloc, applauded repeatedly in the West, rendered Ceauşescu, for much of the world, Romania's most important 'dissident'."[589]

It was a difficult task for Romanians to fight against a regime that Soviet Union's Cold War rival treated as popular and successful. Consequently, Romanian dissidents, throughout much of the 1980s, were deprived of a base of support in the West. This

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[585] See Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000), pp. 239-240.
[586] Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society*, pp. 192-193.
[587] Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, pp. 208-210.
[588] Ibid., pp. 204-206.
[589] Comisia Prezidențială Pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, *Raport Final*, p. 376.

neglect combined with the indifference, as we have seen, of Western Europe's Eurocommunists. In a polemic berating the West's silence on the abuses in Romania, Mark Almond notes that only the architectural destruction required by Ceauşescu's rural and urban Systemization scheme (*sistemizare*) inspired the kind of foreign condemnation of the Ceauşescu regime that Romania's human rights record had long warranted.[590] There is little doubt that earlier Western pressure would have improved the lot of the few courageous Romanian dissidents. Romanian dissident Mihail Botez discusses in a 1989 interview with Vladimir Tismăneanu what the West might do to help the anti-regime forces:

> First of all, it is important to speak about the civil society and dissidence in such a manner that they become popular in Romania. That could have a positive effect on people; it could make them less obedient. People are more courageous if they know somebody is listening…Opposing the evil regime is often not a matter of mere courage but also of a cost-benefit analysis. A lot of my colleagues from the university often say: 'Lets suppose we'll speak out…What will be the result? I will be expelled from the university, sent into internal exile or forced to leave the country. The consequences of my actions for the system will be nil. The system is very well organized to resist my challenge. *And the West? It's practically not interested in us. For years, nobody in the West cared about the internal problems of Romania*.' [emphasis mine][591]

Botez was correct that Western support for dissent favored its development and partially shielded its instigators. For example, once the well-known anti-regime professor Doina Cornea did receive expressions of diplomatic support from the West in the late 1980s, she was not imprisoned or forced abroad as others like her had been.[592] The policy of

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[590] Mark Almond, *Decline Without Fall: Romania Under Ceauşescu* (London: Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies 1988), p. 5.
[591] See Freedom House, Romania: A Case of "Dynastic" Communism (New York: Freedom House, 1989), p. 53.
[592] See Rady, p. 74.

"sanitizing news," under which instances of resistance were not reported in the official media, increased the popular sense that individual acts would be futile.[593] Foreign radio broadcasts, after all, did not catch wind of each and every act of dissent.

While Romania's social structure seems to have complicated the formation of resistance to totalitarianism, and while the pervasive fear of the police engendered the conviction that protest would only bring harm, the regime's immediate tactics of deterring dissent that were linked to the international situation must be taken into account as well. Tactics of deterrence, neutralization, and preemption can only be fully appreciated in the context of the international politics and the transnational social movements of the 1980s. A particularly well-developed culture of preemption deterred resistance until Romania was cast as an international pariah by all but a few Third World dictatorships in the late 1980s.[594]

Once this international context had changed decisively, the atmosphere for Romanian dissent did as well.[595] The final two years of the Ceauşescu regime saw an emboldened domestic opposition, and one that finally received some international publicity.[596] A September 1988 conversation of a group of writers, preserved in the form a Securitate transcript of all conversations at the host's bugged residence, reveals the importance of the changed international context. Writer Dan Deşliu discussed the changed atmosphere of the late 1980s:

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[593] Deletant, "Romania, 1945-89: Resistance, Protest and Dissent," p. 82.
[594] See Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, p. 27.
[595] See Siani-Davies, p. 45.
[596] See Ibid., pp. 28-31.

> I want to highlight once again the changed historical context. If in 1980-1981 the Writers' Union had succeeded in scaring the leadership to a degree…This was due not only to our actions, although they were well organized…but to the context, to the existence of Solidarity in Poland, which at the same moment had won some ground…*We are once again in a favorable context! A favorable contexts exists which we cannot forget or underestimate! We cannot lose this chance! We have to do something now!* [emphasis mine][597]

Indeed, once the evolution of the Cold War in the late 1980s had provoked the collapse of Romania's autonomy/repression dialectic, the kind of coordination and networking that had been underway elsewhere for years *did* begin to flourish in Romania. And once it did, even Romania's communist neighbors were eager to keep their distance from the disgraced regime.[598]

Scholars have remarked upon Ceauşescu's apparent "faulty analogy" between 21 August 1968 and 21 December 1989.[599] Both days saw massive demonstrations in the heart of Bucharest, ones that defined the Ceauşescu regime for Romanians and for the world at large. But here the similarity ends. Whereas in 1968 Ceauşescu basked in popular legitimacy as a different kind of communist who would defend the homeland from foreigners and usher in a less objectionable version of state socialism, in 1989 he was universally despised, at home and abroad, as an intentionally cruel madman, hopelessly out of touch and chronically derelict. The political capital that Ceauşescu had gained through guarding Romanian independence and sovereignty had dried up years before 1989. But in his December 1989 speech Ceauşescu repeated what were by then the all but deadpan motions and rhetoric he had employed to great popular acclaim in August

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[597] ASRI, fond D, dosar nr. 11/119, vol.7, 07 September 1988, reproduced in *Cartea Albă a Securităţii: Istorii Literare şi Artistice 1969-1989,* pp. 394-408.
[598] See Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate*, pp. 271-272.
[599] Siani-Davies, pp. 6-7.

1968. Once he saw the crowd was not responding to his words as programmed, Ceauşescu, apparently perplexed, launched into the need to maintain unity in order to protect Romania from foreign threats:

> Citizens of the capital…I would like once again to stress that we must demonstrate with all power, force, and unity for the defense of the independence, the integrity, and the sovereignty of Romania! This constitutes one of the fundamental needs of our entire nation! [600]

The Executive Committee members flanking the dictator on each side, visibly nervous, applauded these words anxiously, but the booing from the crowd remained audible. Most strikingly, the Romanian dictator seemed to believe what he was saying, as the records from the Political Executive Committee deliberations also suggest. The official recording of the December speech, now publicly available, registered Ceauşescu's exchange with his wife Elena when the crowd was beginning to revolt. "This is a provocation!," he exclaimed to his companion and de facto co-ruler. The Ceauşescus had only four more days to live. Their execution after a kangaroo trial at the army base in Târgovişte left Romania the consipicous exception to the wave of "Velvet Revolutions" across Eastern Europe.

The spirit of 1968 had died well over a decade before. The peculiar basis for Romanian socialism's assertion of legitimacy—the maintenance of a formidable external threat—had disappeared for certain with Gorbachev's rise to power in the Soviet Union. Still, dissidents' and other resisters' difficulties in assembling a true "revolutionary

[600] The speech is available online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YV6v2Hwe3Fs.

coalition"[601] must be understood within the context of the nexus of domestic-international threat that the regime used to justify its rule.

[601] See Siani-Davies, p. 15.

Conclusion:

Towards a Framework for Analyzing Personal Dictatorship

Throughout the Ceauşescu period, the ruling Romanian Communist Party sought to keep its ties to Moscow and to Moscow-directed international communism as few and as weak as possible. The Romanian leadership fancied itself one of the leaders of an informal alliance of independent, nonaligned communist states. Romanian communists conceived of this project not only on nationalist grounds, but on socialist ones as well. They believed theirs was the genuine conception of socialism since, unlike the Soviet leaders, they rejected old-fashioned imperialism.

The Ceauşescu regime remained concerned that the superpower bordering Romania on the east and on the north was aiming to overthrow or to otherwise undermine the uncooperative Bucharest leadership. The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 only reinforced these fears. It looks doubtful that the Soviet leadership seriously considered invading Romania after August 1968, but all too often the literature has simply assumed that the Romanian leadership knew this. A key element in evaluating the Ceauşescu regime's domestic orientation in the wake of the Prague Spring is its understanding of the Soviet threat, which the Romanians considered quite real. This conviction about the international situation, in turn, had domestic repercussions.

Romania's defiance, of course, brought it hero status in the eyes of the Soviet Union's adversaries. Ceauşescu's foreign policy was part of a struggle for a "Third Way" in Cold War Europe. It also represented an alternative concept of international socialism, one that dissented from the Soviet line. However, this thesis has argued that in Romanian

history the legacies of 1968 had their most direct and powerful impact not abroad but at home. The lessons of the Prague Spring and Ceauşescu's fear of Soviet intervention led to a domestic crackdown and an ideological mobilization well underway before the Romanian leader's famous visits to the Asian communist states in 1971. The regime conceived of domestic and foreign threats as two sides of the same coin, and so within the framework of Romania's repressive mechanisms, domestic dissent was conceptually impossible without foreign involvement.

In the late 1960s, much of the Romanian population was receptive to the regime's foreign policy goals. The increasingly repressive domestic policy the regime pursued in the 1970s and 1980s, coupled with the chronic shortages in foodstuffs and basic consumer goods, eroded the climate of approval that characterized Ceauşescu's early years in power. The Romanian leader, the regime's official ideologists, the Securitate, and the writers and cultural figures who subordinated their own intellects to party-state power raised the specter of foreign threat against all who expressed disagreement with Romanian officialdom. This tactic was certainly a convenient official line, but it was more than that. Distant systems analyses consider the association of dissent at home with threat abroad a mere tactic to delegitimize opposition. All indications suggest, however, that Ceauşescu actually believed in the association between dissidence and foreign loyalty. It is a tall order to argue that a leader who says the same things in public, in private, in his writings and in his speeches for decades, and who hears his own colleagues and subordinates saying the same things, could not possibly believe them. For this reason, analysts of one-party dictatorship are well served by studying the political psychology of

conspiratorial groups. Analysis undertaken before the availability of the documents examined in the previous chapters have underestimated the ideological fanaticism that clouded Romanian communists' capacities for rational thinking.[602]

While condemning any dissent as part of a foreign conspiracy of hostile powers, the Romanian regime took preemptive measures to avoid the trouble of popular activism that had been developing elsewhere across Eastern Europe. Cruder forms of preemption entailed the use of domestic intelligence to interrupt and prevent anti-regime demonstrations, organizations, and publications. More sophisticated ones involved the Romanian party-state's endorsement of movements that had been the focus of popular agitation abroad. It might be tempting to see in the regime's efforts to preempt independent trade unionism a recognition of its fundamental unpopularity and structural failures. But this conclusion underestimates Romanian communism's guiding teleology and its manipulative paternalism. In the official understanding, citizens could desire independent trade unions simply because they did not understand that their activism needed to be channeled into official structures in an advanced, developed, socialist society. If only they would do this, problems would be solved.

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[602] Pittaway writes that "one might argue that Communists were ever really interested only in power, and few believed their own ideology. A full and definitive answer to this objection must await the outcome of detailed empirical research into the dictators, their followers, and policy making processes." The above discussion of the Romanian case is a contribution to the case for genuine ideological conviction. See Mark Pittaway, "Control and Consent in Eastern Europe's Workers' States, 1945-1989: Some Reflections on Totalitarianism, Social Organization, and Social Control," in *Social Control in Europe, 1800-2000*, eds. Clive Emsley, Eric Johnson, and Pieter Spierenburg (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), p. 351.

While concerns over new, transnational forms of totalitarianism mark the discourse of the early twenty-first century, we must not forget that the old forms have not disappeared. The end of the Cold War and the era of "globalization" have not erased dictatorship from the international system. The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe's Popular Republics disappeared in 1989-1991, but the one-party state and the personal dictatorship have not. Personal dictatorships—ones that share features of the Ceauşescu regime and some of which are still even ruled by his erstwhile friends—remain a problem with serious international implications today. Saddam Hussein's Iraq, of course, is a recent example, as is Saparmyrat Nyýazow's regime in Turkmenistan. These regimes have fallen in the 2000s, but as of this writing Fidel Castro remains the President of Cuba (although since he is ill his brother Raul is acting president as of this writing), Kim Jong Il rules North Korea, and Robert Mugabe holds onto power in Zimbabwe. These examples by no means constitute an exhaustive list.

Personal dictatorships are rife with pent up power struggles, ethnic frictions, and stunted civic, economic, and social development that explode into violence and instability when the all-powerful dictator exits the scene. Iraq and Turkmenistan have already begun these difficult transitions from personal dictatorship to whatever comes next. Other regimes, most notably those in Cuba and Zimbabwe, might be on the cusp of collapse. Studying the Ceauşescu regime offers some clues of how to understand versions of the autonomy/repression dialectic that are at work in other repressive systems. This is especially true for those dictatorships of the left in Cuba and North Korea, since they share some of the same ideological heritage as the Romanian communist regime.

Venezuela under Hugo Chavez may be heading down a similar path. For all the different cultural environments in which they develop, after all, personal dictatorships have strikingly common characteristics—the career sycophants, the cult of personality, the mass rallies, the official political movement subordinated to the leader, the political police, etc. These regime features, moreover, produce some similar dynamics at the popular level.

The constant evocation of foreign threat is common to personal dictatorships. Subject populations are urged to preserve unity and to work together to defend freedom from an outside menace. Leaders of such states seem to convince themselves that the protection of the regime from perceived foreign threats is as real and as important to the population as it is to them. Ceauşescu's own delusional conviction that he alone could defend the people has been noted in the previous chapters. An analysis of Robert Mugabe's dictatorship in Zimbabwe published in a February 2007 edition of the Financial Times sounds familiar to students of Romanian communism: "Mr. Mugabe comes across as a pained, puzzled figure, who truly believes he has restored 'the land' to his people and guaranteed them their sovereignty."[603] For all of Romanian communism's idiosyncrasies, the Ceauşescu regime's autonomy/repression dialectic suggests points of departure for examining similar regimes. Understanding these dynamics helps the world prepare for regime collapse and could help minimize the chaos that follows.

For all its inviting and suggestive theoretical jumping-off points, Romania's current history remains a worthwhile enterprise in its own right. Indeed, European state

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[603] Alec Russell and Tony Hawkins, "Zimbabwe's Defiant Dictator," *Financial Times*, 24-25 February 2007, p. 7.

socialism from the mid-1950s to its collapse remains largely "virgin land" to historians.[604] As the recent publications affirm, there is only a small recent literature available in English devoted to Romania's twentieth century.[605] Even in Romania, free inquiry into the past, as well as access to necessary materials, has only been possible within the last two decades.[606] Its ongoing attempts to make sense of its communist path invite a number of questions for further investigation and study. Hopefully Bulgaria's and Romania's 2007 European Union accession will spark some further interest in the recent history of southeastern Europe. Even if it doesn't, those interested in the nature of totalitarianism and in a new Cold War history will find much to study in the Romanian example.

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[604] Pittaway, p. 360.
[605] Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism For All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 12.
[606] See Comisia Prezidențială Pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, *Raport Final*, Bucharest, 2006, p. 21. Regarding access to archival materials, there is still much progress to be made.

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