

HISTORICAL POLITICS OF COMMUNIST ROMANIA IN THE OPINIONS OF PPR DIPLOMACY

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ABSTRACT. The article proposes to look at the phenomenon of the historical politics of the authorities of communist Romania through the prism of opinions on this subject from the diplomacy, also communist, of the Polish People's Republic. It is about opinions of representatives of a state whose citizens during the communist period were not subjected to and did not succumb to such strong political indoctrination as in other satellite states of the Kremlin on the subject of a state which, from the 1960s onwards, conducted the most independent and distanced foreign politics from the Kremlin among these satellites and which went furthest among these states in instrumentally using historical politics and the often accompanying nationalism for political purposes. As the Polish observers have argued, the Romanian authorities saw in the image of Romanians and Romanian history created by them a valuable tool to shape for themselves the favor of society, its views and public sentiment depending on the political demand of the moment. It was most controversial among Poles, but supported by the Romanian public, that the Romanian authorities used history to more or less openly attack the Soviet Union in the name of defending their sovereignty. The Polish authorities also viewed with distance the theory deriving modern Romanians from the ancient Dacians and generally considered Romanian historiography to be biased and unreliable. In spite of the fall of communism, unlike in Poland, the picture of Romanian history shaped earlier, with a strong nationalist accent, is still readily accepted by Romanians.

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INTRODUCTION

The discussions on the instrumental use of history to achieve current political goals in communist countries, which have already been undertaken many times after 1989, because this face of the so-called "historical politics" – simultaneously lined with na-



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tionalism¹ – was most commonly adopted by the ruling parties, may also prompt us to consider the perception of this issue by the representatives of the authorities in other “brotherly countries”. Did the ruling echelons lean on this question at all, and if so, how was this phenomenon evaluated. An attempt to answer these questions, which may also further expand our knowledge of the relations in the camp of the Kremlin’s satellite countries, may become a proposal to show and analyze the opinions of the diplomatic services of the People’s Republic of Poland on the historical politics of communist Romania.

The choice of the diplomacy of the People’s Republic of Poland and the People’s Republic of Romania and, since 1965, the Socialist Republic of Romania for the pursuit of the present topic can be in a sense taken for granted. Although both countries belonged to the Soviet sphere of influence and their foreign politics was not fully sovereign, in the light of the surviving documentation, one cannot help but notice that in the case of the PPR, however, after the breakthrough 1956, which was in many respects the year of “thaw”, there were some “flashes” of its independent foreign politics, besides, the totalitarian regime of Poland in “Gomulka era”, and then “Gierek era” – of course, juxtaposed with other so-called “People’s Democracy Countries” (PDC) – was somewhat milder. With regard to the diplomatic spheres of the People’s Republic of Poland, it can be noted that from the documentation produced by them after 1956, the previously rigid characteristic ideological newspeak disappeared rather quickly, which makes it more valuable from a research point of view. Also, according to historians’ research, in the People’s Republic of Poland, especially “during Gomulka era”, a biased authorities’ approach to history and bandying nationalist slogans around as an instrument of its legitimization was not an uncommon phenomenon. In the case of Romania, on the other hand, it was dominated by the fact that, in the opinion of researchers, this country, as stated by Marcin Zaremba, went in the direction of using nationalism to legitimize the communist system² “by far the farthest of all the bloc countries”, hence the instrumental use of history in this process, which is often referred to as the phenomenon of Romanian national communism,³ also characteristic of Tito’s rule in Yugoslavia. Furthermore, Romanians, since the end of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej’s “reign” and during the years of Nicolae Căușescu’s rule, have managed – obviously compared to other Kremlin satellites – to “strike out for independence” the most, mainly in foreign politics, associated with the demonstration of independence, emphasizing sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs

¹ In Central and East European territories, the understanding of nationalism, which has negative connotations, dominated and still dominates, as an attitude aimed primarily at domination and defense of the interests and ties connecting one’s own national group at the expense of another group; M. Waldenberg, *Kwestie narodowe w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. Dzieje. Idee*, Warszawa 1992, p. 18–25.

² M. Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce*, Warszawa 2005, p. 279. See e.g. K. Verdery, *Compromis și rezistență. Cultura română sub Căușescu*, București 1994, p. 205–248.

³ B. Brzostek, *Narodowy komunizm w Rumunii*, “Przegląd Polonijny” 2004, no. 4, p. 110–123.

of “brotherly” states, choosing its own path to socialism, while remaining a member (albeit less active and sometimes recalcitrant) of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the Warsaw Pact.⁴ The origins of Bucharest’s attitude can be traced to the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the Romanian side reacted negatively to the Comecon reform plans pushed at the time by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, which placed Romania among the food-supplying states for the rest of the camp and plans to include a part of Romania’s territory in a supra-state economic complex on the border of the USSR, Romania and Bulgaria (the so-called Valev Plan), which the Romanians, wishing to modernize and develop their own industry, felt offended by. Adding up to the peculiar Romanian score of wrongs, the Kremlin leader exhibited at times dismissive and brusque attitude toward Romania, although the reluctance and fear of Romanian Workers’ Party leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej to embark on the path of de-Stalinization, pushed at that time by Khrushchev, was equally important in the entire Romanian volte-face. In this way, Gheorghiu-Dej was transformed from a faithful disciple of Stalin into a defender of Romanian sovereignty – so successfully that U.S. President John F. Kennedy described Romania, which was opening economically and politically to the West, in June 1963 as an “economic and political dissident” in the Eastern Bloc.⁵ Henceforth, terms such as balancing, lavaging, keying, duality, “sitting on two chairs” will also appear more than once in the communications of PPR diplomats with regard to Romania’s foreign politics.⁶

AT THE END OF THE REIGN OF GHEORGHE GHEORGHIU-DEJ

In the first half of the 1960s, Romanian authorities began restoring historical place names, removed remnants associated with the “cult of the individual”, or with the Soviet Union, abolished the distinctiveness of the M. Gorky Institute of Russian

⁴ Examples of this “otherness” of Romania in the Eastern Bloc include, in particular: its veto of integrationist tendencies within the Comecon, its ambiguous stance in the USSR’s dispute with the PRC, not breaking diplomatic relations with Israel, establishing diplomatic relations with West Germany in 1967, its temporary failure to send troops to WP (Warsaw Pact) exercises, not participating in the WP invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, criticizing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, not supporting plans for WP troops to intervene in the People’s Republic of Poland in 1980, not joining the Eastern Bloc’s boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

⁵ G.S. Manea, *Un adulter în familia comunistă. România și SUA în ani '60*, Târgoviște 2016, p. 82. For a broader discussion of the political turn of Romania in question, e.g. D. Floyd, *Rumunia. Intryga czy wyzwanie?*, Londyn 1965; V. Tismăneanu, *Stalinizm na każdą okazję. Polityczna historia rumuńskiego komunizmu*, Kraków 2010, p. 185–203; D. Catanuș, *Tot mai departe de Moscova... Politica externă a României 1956–1965*, București 2011, p. 265–292.

⁶ More extensively K. Nowak, “Romanian October” means breakthroughs and revaluations in Romania’s foreign politics in the first half of the 60’s of the 20th century (from the windows of the Polish People’s Republic Embassy in Bucharest), “*Studia Środkowoeuropejskie i Bałkanistyczne*” 2024, vol. 33, p. 113–137.

Literature and Language in Bucharest and the compulsory study of Russian in schools. Romanian-Soviet cultural events were canceled. Some of these measures were considered by Polish observers to be justified, “(...) since exaggerated forms of popularizing the USSR among the local population that did not take into account the traditions and mentality of the Romanian people often missed the mark”. As in the People’s Republic of Poland, Soviet citizens were dismissed from senior positions in the administration, army, and universities, sending students to study in the USSR was also discontinued. Furthermore, there was information from the PPR embassy about harassment of Soviet citizens, obstruction in their visa matters, and pressure to change their citizenship.⁷

When describing the changes taking place, the Polish side generally “diplomatically” avoided assessing the actions of the Romanian authorities, except when they had an explicit or camouflaged anti-Soviet blade.

The political culmination of these new trends in foreign politics during Gheorghiu-Dej’s declining rule involved the *Declaration on the Main Problems of the International Communist and Workers’ Movement* (dated 22.04.1964), full of allusions to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (e.g., the non-acceptance of the existence of the “fathers’ party” and the “daughters’ party”), the guiding role of which, widely accepted by the authorities of other satellite states and thus the Polish People’s Republic, was undermined by the Romanians in this peculiar “declaration of independence”.⁸ As Polish analysts noted, the above changes would not have been feasible, and discussions in party forums would not have taken place so “exceptionally easily”, had they not fallen on a fertile social ground, as Gheorghiu-Dej’s team was well aware. In Romania, “traditional anti-Soviet sentiments had not [yet] been eradicated; resentment against the Soviet Union due to the loss of fertile Bessarabia after the war, resentment over the revindications paid, the activities of Romanian-Soviet mixed societies [«SovRoms»], which were considered a form of exploitation of the Romanian economy, and so on”. On the other hand, the measures taken by the Romanian authorities “constituted a novelty in the practice of the party here, which, with regard to other countries, had never used such drastic forms. The events of April this year are unofficially referred to by Romanians as ‘Romanian October’, hinting that they mark the beginning of a new stage for them in relations with the Soviet Union”. However, according to PPR diplomats, this comparison was misguided, as the events of 1956

⁷ Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw, Department I, Romania [further: AMFA, DIRJ, 9/25/68, 25.02.1964 (memo from the Polish People’s Republic embassy in Bucharest on restricting certain forms of Soviet propaganda in Romania)].

⁸ Ibidem, (note on the extended plenum and declaration of the RPR Central Committee of 22.04.1964 on the position of the Romanian Workers’ Party on the issues of the international communist and workers’ movement. Text of the Declaration in *Documente fundamentale ale regimului communist din Romania (1948–1989)*, ed. C. Stanciu, Târgoviște 2012, p. 122–149; D. Cătănuș, *Declarația din aprilie 1964. Context istoric și ecou internațional*, “Archivile Totalitarismului” 2006, no. 3–4, p. 110–130.

in the People's Republic of Poland (allegedly) did not, in their view, have anti-Soviet and nationalist overtones.⁹

The changes in Romania's foreign politics were accompanied by a liberalization of cultural politics. Also in April 1964, a plenum of the Union of Writers of the RPR was held, which, with the approval of the party-state authorities, of course, decided to introduce Western literature to the reading public as a result of which annual publishing plans were adjusted. Related essays appeared in magazines and works by Franz Kafka, Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre, among others, appeared in bookstores. A theatrical "experimental stage" was established in Bucharest, and a comedy by émigré writer Eugen Ionescu, *Rhinoceros*, was staged. Western "new wave" films appeared in cinemas, Romanian modernists returned to art galleries. The intelligentsia was returning to the French language and Romanian culture, at the expense of Slavic, which was combined with a broader "deslavization" and "romanization" of Romanian culture. However, as the Second Secretary of the Polish People's Republic Embassy, Stefania Barońska-Bednarz, noted, the process observed was not vibrant (and was not intended to be), in turn, it was "slow and driven in a top-down manner."¹⁰ By sheer force of things, in order to mobilize the society more to work for the realization of this new vision of Romania, but at the same time to demobilize it and control it in the section of grassroots social activity, the propaganda of the highest communist authorities also reached out to historical topics. Therefore, it is worth taking a closer look at this issue from the windows of the communist embassy in Bucharest.

With regard to history, foreign commentators were obviously most interested in the new approach of the Romanian authorities to the so-called "slippery subjects" which, as in the People's Republic of Poland, concerned primarily relations with the Soviet Union, while in the case of Romania, additionally relations with Hungary. In the former case, it was mainly about – which was to some extent even expected – taking up Bessarabian subjects and in the latter about the approach to the history of Transylvania. The expected changes, moreover, did not have to wait long.

In 1963, foreign critics praised the Romanian feature film *Lupeni 1929*, made a year earlier, telling the story of the great miners' strike in the Jiu Valley in 1929. In Romania, meanwhile, the film *Tudor*, about the activities of 1821 peasant uprising leader Tudor Vladimirescu, was a box office success. Although the Polish side did not hold Romanian cinema in high esteem at the time, they noted a considerable demand for historical films, so they were not surprised by the announcements of their continuation, and with greater vigor, thanks to, among other things, cooperation with Italian filmmakers.¹¹

⁹ AMFA, DIR, 8/27/70 (Political Report of the Polish Embassy in Bucharest for the Period 1963–1964. Romania and the Soviet Union).

¹⁰ Ibidem, 9/25/68 (memo from the communist embassy in Bucharest on changes in Romanian cultural life, October 1964).

¹¹ Ibidem (Political report of the Polish Embassy in Bucharest for the period 1963,1964. Situation in the field of culture. Film).

The communist diplomacy considered the celebration of the 20th anniversary of Romania's liberation in 1964 to be a turning point in the RPR authorities' approach to history, a view also shared by the observers from other countries, which was linked to the abovementioned "revolutionary" atmosphere prevailing there. According to Polish accounts, the celebrations themselves reflected its emotional culmination, reaching a momentum surpassing "anything that has taken place so far in the RPR in similar cases", and their main purpose was to emphasize the leading role of Romanians themselves in the victory over fascism, initiated by the political and military coup of August 23, 1944. As noted, as early as 1962, the Romanian authorities in their propaganda did not attribute a previously undisputed decisive role in this work to the Red Army. Emphasizing the Romanians' reliance mainly on their own national forces, even in more distant historical periods, was now to provide a kind of ideological bridge between history and the present, reinforcing in some way the correctness of Bucharest's chosen new course in foreign politics. The peak of the celebrations of the round anniversary of the August coup was marked by the commemorative session of the Grand National Assembly of the RPR, a military and sports parade and a several-hundred-thousand-strong popular demonstration in Bucharest. On the portraits carried during the parade, in addition to Marx and Engels, only Romanians were visible, while Lenin was missing, which was also no coincidence. As emphasized by representatives of the PPR authorities, the new historical politics pursued by the Romanian party-state authorities met with a positive reception in society, although some undesirable effects were mentioned, apparently from the point of view of Warsaw, of "Romanizing, but also nationalistic" course, already visible also in domestic politics.¹²

In the following months, Polish observers reported an increasing amount of press publicism on the political history of the Romanian lands, also with regard to the process of the formation of the Romanian nation. These statements noted an emphasis on the "geographical uniformity" of the territory inhabited for centuries by Romanians, or the existence of a consciousness of a community of origin and language as early as the 15th century in the area.¹³ Some of these publications, which clearly also had a didactic dimension, were translated into Western languages in order to better understand the place of the Romanian people in European history and culture. In the opinions of Polish diplomats, they reflected the current views of the Romanian authorities on the history of the Romanians and Romanian statehood, "reevaluating in many cases the previous approach to these matters and their main line is to emphasize the role of the Romanian nation in shaping its history (...) as the creator of its successes today".¹⁴ The matters in question turned out to be only a prelude to the most spectac-

¹² Ibidem, 9/25/68, 5.09.1964 (memo [from the Communist Embassy] on the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the liberation of Romania).

¹³ Ibidem, 8/27/70 (translated from Romanian from the weekly Tribuna of 31/12/1964. University Consultations. The formation of Romanian nationality. Explanatory notes).

¹⁴ Ibidem, 11.01.1965 (letter from the PPR embassy in Bucharest to the Foreign Ministry in Warsaw).

ular, and eminently instrumental, use of history by the Romanian Communists for the purposes of current politics, namely, the publication in print at the end of December 1964 of Karl Marx's *Notes on the Romanians* (*Însemnări despre Români*),¹⁵ the originals of which were found in Amsterdam and preliminarily processed, by Stanisław Schwann, a native of Chernivtsi, a Polish lawyer, philosopher, historian of medicine, at the time a researcher at the Szczecin University of Technology, who passed the information about his discovery to his Romanian researcher colleagues. It was about Marx's manuscripts from the 1850s, which contained his reflections on the politics and rivalry between Tsarist Russia and Turkey in the Danube areas, written after reading French historian Élias Regnault's book: *Histoire politique et sociale principautés danubiennes* (Political and Social History of the Danubian Principalities, Paris 1855) and an unknown English-language publication.¹⁶ For, as was clear from the duly prepared *Introduction* to the edition and from press reviews of the publication, the father of world communism did not leave a dry eye on the attitude of the Russians toward the Romanians in the first half of the 19th century, whom they were supposed to have treated like slaves, and toward the Romanian lands that the Russians were regularly plundering at the time and wanted to subjugate. And although the authors of these statements did not directly accuse Tsarist Russia, they clearly did so between the lines, which was easily picked up by readers and foreign diplomats. All the more so because in the specific political conditions of communist Romania, it was not the criticism of the Hungarian magnates or Turks oppressing Romanian peasants that aroused the greatest interest, but precisely the references to Russian affairs, rightly perceived as allusions to the contemporary Soviet authorities. Polish observers also stressed the Romanians' peculiar way of fleshing out among Marx's statements his views on the unification thought present among Romanian ancestors living in Moldavia, Banat and Transylvania, and their sense of the need for a unified state. Thus, Marx was said to have supported the national struggle of the Romanian people for independence, recognized the activity of Romanian pro-freedom emigration in the West headed by Nicolae Bălcescu and demanded that Romanian aspirations be recognized in European politics and also emphasized the role of Romanians in the Danube Basin, often ignored by the diplomacy of the superpowers.¹⁷ The flavor of sensationalism to the whole affair was further added by the excerpts from the *Notes on Bessarabia* and their offhand interpretation indicating that Marx was pointing out that there was no legal basis for Turkey to relinquish the province to Russia in the so-called First Peace of Bucharest in 1812, since the Turks did not have a full

¹⁵ K. Marx, *Însemnări despre Români*. Manuscrise inedita, eds. A. Oțetea, S. Schwann, Bacău 2014 [subsequent edition of 1964 publication].

¹⁶ See K. Nowak, *Rumuńska afera z Karolem Marksem z 1964 r. (w świetle źródeł dyplomacji PRL)* [in:] Środkowa i wschodnia Europa w zwierciadle historii wielkiej oraz codziennej. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Profesorowi Sylwestrowi Fertaczowi, eds. M. Gruszczyk, J. Januszewska-Jurkiewicz, L. Krzyżanowski, M. Skrzypek, Bielsko-Biała 2021, p. 213–215.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 214–215.

power over it. Marx's notes on the so-called Akerman Convention of 1826 and the Treaty of Adrianople, which ended the Russo-Turkish War of 1828–1829, were similarly referred to, pointing out that Russia also did not exercise full sovereign authority over the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. The book in question was published in an edition of more than 20,000 copies and spread rapidly, causing a real sensation.¹⁸

Polish diplomats formed their opinions about Notes on the Romanians on the basis of conversations with their Soviet colleagues, who, in connection with its publication, conducted a "polemical and explanatory" campaign for the outposts of the allied countries. The Soviets, describing the very initiative of the publication as another stage of the anti-Soviet campaign, considered the Romanian editors' interpretation of Marx's views toward any Russian actions in the Balkans to be exaggerated, overlooking the role Russia played in the liberation struggles of many nations against Turkey. Besides, Soviet diplomats also informed the representatives of the Polish People's Republic's outpost in Bucharest that already a year earlier their authorities had drawn the attention of the RPR delegation then hosted in Moscow and headed by Gheorghiu-Dej to the allusions appearing in Romanian propaganda indicating Bucharest's claims to Bessarabia. The Romanian delegation was pointing out at the time that such cases were isolated and it was tactically inappropriate to intervene against them, and that the RPR had no claims to the area, which stood in contrast to the currently prevailing atmosphere surrounding the Marx *Notes*. The Soviet side also cited the establishment of a special "Commission for Bessarabian Affairs" in Romania, which included lawyers and humanists, and drew attention to Romanian press's silence on the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, not coincidental in their view, as opposed to the treatment of a similar event in distant Turkmenistan. The Soviets did not exclude the possibility that it might even be about preparing public opinion in Romania for some official speech by its authorities on border issues. In addition, USSR diplomats indicated that Romanian historians have recently been conducting research in foreign archives, including those of the Soviets and Hungary, in search of a material relating to Romanian lands.¹⁹

While the conclusions drawn from the published manuscripts about the nature of Russia's military and political presence on the Danube or in the Balkans as well as the legal side of Bessarabia's affiliation with the empire of the tsars between 1812 and 1917 may have sounded problematic, one can be sure that both the actors and observers of the "Karl Marx scandal" were well aware that it was not really about the final settlement of these issues. After all, it was not easy to undermine the views of the Communists' greatest authority, which could have further irritated the Soviet side, aware of the scale of Romanian manipulation – the reaction which the Romanians certainly received with satisfaction, especially since the editors of the publication in

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 217–218.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 217.

question had clearly avoided unambiguous anti-Russian statements. There was also no doubt that the whole scandal was a part of the RPR's nationalist rhetoric, which had been carried out for more than a year, and was carried out with the knowledge and consent of its highest party-state authorities. Bucharest's diplomatic spheres also soon learned that the release of Marx's *Notes* had been planned six months earlier, that is, it was intended, in a way, to strengthen the propaganda effect of Romania's April "declaration of independence" and was aimed at Khrushchev. Although Polish observers traditionally advocated the "Soviet" position and did not delve too much into the essence of the matter, it can be said that the Romanian authorities apparently did not want to further disturb the already tense relations with the Kremlin at the time, so they treated the previously unused weapon partly as a peculiar Romanian farewell to Nikita Sergeyevich, who was removed from his position as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU in mid-October 1964. Soon the "scandal", described today by historians as the biggest, clearest anti-Soviet propaganda attack in the Eastern Bloc, was hushed up by the RPR authorities.²⁰ In fact, Gheorghiu-Dej achieved his intended goals, because in this case he pushed back the threat of losing power hanging over him since 1956 by building on the historically driven anti-Soviet sentiment still alive in Romania and the Kremlin's satellite countries in general. He also became popular with the public, which once again received an almost official state interpretation of Romanian history, that is – new historical politics, which was collectively accepted by the society, centering around the RPR's new ideological offer and national-political myths. Therefore, the Stalinist Gheorghiu-Dej could continue to freely create the shape and scope of Romanian de-Stalinization and, dying in March 1965, he was already a national hero.

Although, of course, no official speech of any sort was ever made by Communist Romania on the border revision issue, one can be sure that every so-called average Romanian at the time was not only convinced that Bessarabia and northern Bukovina were territories deceitfully seized by the Soviets, but from the mid-1960s onward also believed that his country's party-state authorities held a similar opinion, which is what the authorities had in mind in the first place. In fact, it was difficult not to notice this manipulative approach also in the Romanian press's – all too eloquent – messages quoted by the Polish side, such as: "On June 28, 1940, as a result of the demands of the Soviet government, accepted by the Romanian government, Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina became part of the USSR,"²¹ even though they were not accompanied by any additional opinions or comments.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 220–222; A. Burakowski, *Geniusz Karpat*, p. 40–41; A. Cioroianu, *Karol Marks pomaga Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dejowi (1964)* [in:] *Piękna opowieść o historii Rumunów*, Wrocław 2018, p. 194–196.

²¹ AMFA, DIR, 8/27/70, 29.06.1966 (Ciphertext from the Polish Embassy in Bucharest to the Foreign Ministry in Warsaw).

UNDER NICOLAE CEAUŞESCU

Gheorghiu-Dej's successor (as early as March 1965), Nicolae Ceauşescu, maintained his earlier "independence" course, all the more so since it brought the Romanian authorities tangible propaganda effects both abroad and among his compatriots at home, thanks to which Romania, at that time, was regarded as the most liberal country in the Eastern Bloc, being also in good economic condition.²² It should also be mentioned that a few weeks after taking power, the new leader, apparently recognizing that Romanians had already reached the next level of social development, changed the name of the country to the Socialist Republic of Romania and the name of the ruling party to the Romanian Communist Party, under the banner of which the nation was to continue moving toward such a "bright" future. For Polish observers, there was a chance to revisit Bucharest's new historical politics with the round anniversaries falling in 1968, that is, during the period of Ceauşescu's greatest propaganda triumph, i.e., the non-participation of SRR troops in the August pacification of the "Prague Spring" by the Warsaw Pact countries and his public criticism of this act.²³ In the first six months of 1968, the First Secretary of the Embassy of the People's Republic of Poland, Jerzy Bauer, drew attention in particular to the publications related to the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth, which stressed "the lack of universal prescriptions from the father of communism for the activities in a reality that is, after all, diverse, because life is richer than any scientific predictions", pointed out the need to take into account "the realities of each era" and therefore the impossibility of imposing "a carbon copy of 100 years ago" on them. Only under such conditions could Marxism continue to be alive and enriched contemporaneously by the Communist parties, drawing from their own historical experience. Under such conditions, the ideology is not just a set of "ossified dogmas". Therefore, the RCP was to treat Marxism creatively, depending on specific conditions, according to "Romania's historical and national peculiarities". Of course, the Polish observer also noted the Romanians' continued emphasis on Marx's special interest in their country in connection with the former "struggle against the three imperialisms". At the same time, Bauer also stressed the "cursory, almost parenthetical" treatment of the references to Leninism, "the omission of the issue of the October Revolution, the absence of any reference to the current international situation or the ideological and political situation in the international labor movement". The attitude of Polish observers to the

²² Th. Kunze, *Ceaşescu. Piekło na ziemi*, Warszawa 2000, p. 167–176; A. Burakowski, *Geniusz Karpat. Dyktatura Nicolae Ceauşescu*, Warszawa 2008, p. 67–70.

²³ In fact, the USSR with its satellites, due to Bucharest's constant "meandering", had already begun to insulate the SRR from decisions on Czechoslovak affairs a few months before the intervention, and ultimately decided that the participation of such an ally in WP activities would be inadvisable. Hence, one can speak of an alleged rather than official refusal by the RCP leader to allow Romanian participation in the intervention, although Romanian propaganda presented it differently; L. Betea, F.-R. Mihai, *21 august 1968. Apoteoza lui Ceauşescu*, Bucureşti 2018; A. Burakowski, *Geniusz Karpat*, p. 105–115.

whole situation can be seen in the following statement, with which Bauer concludes his discussion of the anniversary: “the mention of Willy Brandt’s opening of the Karl Marx Memorial House in Trier and the R. Ebert Foundation’s exhibition about him, written without any further comment, constituted a political oddity.”²⁴

PPR diplomats also stressed that the narrative with regard to the RCP’s past was now being carried out so as to demonstrate the externally imposed errors of the views of the former Romanian Communists, who regarded Romania as a “typical multinational state” in which there was a necessity “to liberate the oppressed peoples from Romanian imperialism on the foundation of the peoples’ right to self-determination”. This was meant to lead to undervaluing one’s country as a unified nation-state and calling for its partition, i.e. the dismemberment of the Romanian nation. Later, however, the Communist Party stood in the vanguard of the independence and unification movements, as “the true ensign of the nation’s fundamental interests, the defender of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the motherland.”²⁵ It can be said that, to some extent, this was reminiscent of the earlier discussion going on in Poland on the attitude of Communist Party of Poland to the independence and the national question after 1918 and the national propaganda of the Polish Workers’ Party until 1948 and then of the Polish United Workers’ Party after 1956, especially during the period of the Millenium of the Polish state.²⁶ The Polish diplomats, of course, did not mention that resemblance. From Warsaw’s point of view, however, the differences were fundamental – as in the politics, propaganda, official journalism, or historiography of the Polish People’s Republic, the guiding role of Lenin and the significance of the October Revolution were not overlooked, nor was there any ambiguous content or veiled anti-Russian or anti-Soviet allusions.

Reports by Polish observers also drew attention to the ceremonial setting that the RCP authorities gave to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the annexation of Transylvania to Romania in 1968. Also in this case they noted that propaganda emphasized primarily the national accents and the factor of Romanians’ self-determination in the matters of the borders of their own state. However, Romanian authorities at the same time, almost as usual, overlooked the significance of the influence of the October Revolution on these events, which Warsaw could not accept. As reported by the First Secretary of the Polish People’s Republic Embassy, Jerzy Bauer, the highlight of the celebrations were Ceaușescu’s speeches on November 28 and 29, 1968, in Alba Julia (where a statue of the “unifier” Michael the Brave was unveiled) and on the floor of the ceremonial session of the Grand National Assembly in Bucharest. The commemorative resolution of the RCP Central Committee and the SRR Council

²⁴ AMFA, DIR, 7/8/74 (memo regarding celebrations in Romania of the 150th anniversary of Karl Marx’s birth).

²⁵ Ibidem (Memo [from the PPR embassy in Bucharest to the Foreign Ministry in Warsaw], June 1968).

²⁶ M. Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm*, p. 221–352.

of Ministers emphasized Transylvania's entry into Romania's borders as a manifestation of the will of the Romanian people and not of international decisions or treaties. It also emphasized the Daco-Getae traditions in the Transylvanian territory, which after centuries of Romanization was united with the rest of the Romanian state. It can be said, however, that historical matters turned out to be only a pretext for the RCP leader to take up the topic of the aforementioned place of national issues in the party's ideology, the subject which was apparently more topical for him. The term "national communism" first appeared in the Polish party's message at the time, albeit the RCP leader in turn distanced himself from it in his speeches, recognizing that it was wrongly used to refer to the policies and propaganda of the Romanian authorities, and rejected accusations that Romania was moving away from promoting so-called internationalist communism. According to Ceaușescu, emphasizing the importance of the national question in the RCP's policies did not preclude its ties to internationalism, since the two directions constituted an "organic unity" and the internationalism thus conceived could not be opposed to patriotism. Such a program of the RCP was supposed to stem from the expectations of society, by which the authorities also gained a legitimacy of some sort for the pro-national politics they were pursuing. It was to be modern and progressive, taking into account Romania's peculiarities, which, however, could not immediately be equated with nationalism. The denial of this state, in turn, was to lead to copying the ideas established in "some executive center". The allusion was obvious, which the Polish analyst did not comment on.²⁷ Also in November 1968, PPR diplomacy, drawing information from newspaper articles, further characterized the "new Romanian political concept", which considered the nation as its greatest value and proclaimed that the national ideals of Romanians had found their outlet over many centuries of history, in such events as the union of Moldavia and Wallachia, the unification of the provinces into a unified Romanian state after 1918, while the phenomenon of the affirmation of the role of the nation occurred only under the conditions of the construction of socialism, while the RCP was to be "the incarnation of the most important national interests, freedom and prosperity of the country".²⁸

On the occasion of the celebrations in Romania and Hungary of the anniversary of the Spring of Nations, Polish commentators drew attention to Hungarian authorities' voices of dissatisfaction already reaching Bucharest, about the narrative being carried out in Romania about Transylvania. Although during bilateral talks the delegations of the two countries were said to have agreed that "mutually sensitive issues will be eliminated in the celebrations", the embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic in Bucharest expressed dissatisfaction in backstage talks with, for instance, a fact of referring to the Transylvanian Hungarians participating in the revolutionary events only as Szeklers, "while in fact the Transylvanian Szeklers are Hungarians just as our high-

²⁷ AMFA, DIR, 7/8/74 (memo on the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Transylvania with Romania).

²⁸ Ibidem, 17.11.1968 (New Romanian political concept).

landers are Poles”, as the Polish side concluded this thread, clearly not in favor of the actions aimed at creating regional separatisms. Incidentally, it was claimed that, because of the Transylvanian issue, the Romanian authorities, during the Czech-Slovak celebrations in question, deliberately did not disclose the discussions about the concepts of making the Czechoslovak federation more real, due to the desire to avoid taking up this topic in their own backyard,²⁹ as it was always at odds with the strictly unitary concepts of Romanian statehood. It is worth recalling at this point that in 1968 the Romanian authorities abolished the so-called Hungarian Autonomous Region in Transylvania, which had existed since 1952.

In turn, there was the information which one can consider as highly telling – it was transmitted from Bucharest to the headquarters that during the visit to the capital of the SRR of a delegation of the Presidium of the National Council of the Capital City of Warsaw in July 1969, the Romanian side very much insisted that they also visit the exhibition “Trajan’s Column”, depicting, thanks to the 1967 import of a copy from Rome (commissioned by the Romanian government during World War II and kept in the Vatican museums), the period of the struggle between the Dacians and the Romans in the second century A.D. and testifying, according to the Romanians, “to the beginnings of the formation of the Romanian nation. In this way, Polish diplomacy noted the reactivated, and increasingly present in the statements of Romanian science, controversial “Dacian” theory on the ethnogenesis of the Romanians and the beginnings of their state-forming thought, as another important element of the historical politics of the SRR.³⁰

Summarizing the transformation of the SRR in the second half of the 1960s, the embassy of the Polish People’s Republic stated that “The Romanian leadership adopted a political line based on extreme nationalism, on the pursuit of short-term gains at the expense of proletarian solidarity”, and Romanian society, in turn, was

²⁹ Ibidem, 21.12.1968 (Letter from the PPR Embassy in Bucharest to the Foreign Ministry in Warsaw).

³⁰ Ibidem, 7/27/74 (Report on the visit to Bucharest of a delegation of the Presidium of the National Council of the City of Warsaw). The main problem of deliberations, discussions and heated disputes on the Dacian subject (i.e. the “founding myth”, “continuity”, autochthony especially in Transylvania) of Romanian and later also foreign scientific, cultural and political world since the end of the 18th century remained in the past and still remains in the question of the origin of the Romanians (speaking a Romance language derived from Latin, but with strong Slavic influences) from the “pure” Romans (the so-called Latins) who, under Trajan, conquered the country of the Dacians in 106 AD, or from the mixed Daco-Roman ethnics, or directly from the Dacians, or from a mixture of indigenous and immigrant peoples, including Slavs. During the Stalinist years, the RPR authorities were closer to the Romano-Slavic conglomerate theory, and during the Căușescu period to “Dacoism” and anti-Slavism, with theories about the formation of the Romanian language and people (whose progenitors survived from the departure of the Romans from Dacia in 271 A.D.) on the territory of present-day Romania as early as the 6th century. The discussions on this subject, continue to this day also due to the lack of reliable sources on these “Protoromanians” north of the Danube between the late 3rd and 13th centuries; L. Boia, *Dlaczego Rumunia jest inna?*, Kraków 2016, p. 31–61; B. Brzostek, *Narodowy komunizm w Rumunii*, p. 112, 114–115.

being integrated “on the basis of nationalist slogans”, facilitated by “the psychosis of an external threat heightened by the authorities after the Czechoslovak events and the building of the unity of the nation and the leadership on this basis (...), nationalist hysteria and nationwide mobilization in defense of allegedly threatened sovereignty, with simultaneous control imposed on the society.”³¹ Thus, it is clear from the opinions quoted above that the diplomats of the People’s Republic of Poland were already calling spade a spade when it comes to the tactics adopted by Ceaușescu in his foreign politics during the turbulent years of 1968–1969 in Czechoslovakia. This was politics, shaped also for domestic use, with which neither Moscow nor, still less, Warsaw agreed, but were forced to tolerate it and get used to it. Therefore, Moscow was apparently only trying to work out some *modus vivendi* with Romania during this period, since, as Soviet diplomats were to claim, “its politics will not change, although it causes great damage to the socialist community.”³² In the actions of the Romanian authorities in the international arena, Polish diplomats even saw parallels with the “zigzag” politics of Foreign Minister Nicolae Titulescu in the 1930s, who was, incidentally, rehabilitated by the RCP authorities, which also had its significance.³³ They also continued to play an important propaganda role by presenting the story appropriately.

As Polish observers reported from Bucharest in 1974, on the occasion of the celebration of the 30th anniversary of Romania’s liberation, the growing affirmation in the SRR for the person of Ceaușescu was mainly concerned with the state’s foreign politics, as the public reacted positively to the spreading of slogans about the country’s independence and sovereignty, which were associated with the period of struggle for national unity and independence. Subsequent celebrations of the anniversary of the coup on August 23, 1944, new commemorations associated with such historical figures as Mircea the Old, Stephan the Great, Michael the Brave, Dimitrie Cantemir became a pretext for promoting the policies of the RCP authorities, preceded party conventions, announced wage increases or the assumptions of the next economic plan, although more and more often they were used to promote the achievements primarily of Ceaușescu himself in the work of Romania’s continuing development, creating an impression of the nation’s historical continuity, the perpetuation of which was necessary for the authorities to strengthen both patriotic feelings and the public’s attachment to the RCP and its leader. Regarding the history of World War II, Polish reports highlighted a new narrative regarding the Romanians’ contribution to the victory over fascism. “The people’s uprising of 1944” – although it was in fact a conspiracy of political elites, a coup d’état and a political upheaval – was to have a break-

³¹ AMFA, DIR, 7/8/74 (Information from the PPR embassy in Bucharest on Romania’s domestic and foreign politics).

³² Ibidem, 5.11.1968 (Urgent note: Romania vis-à-vis Czechoslovak events. Briefing by Amb. Ochęduszko).

³³ Ibidem, 10/4/78, 13.11.[19]68–13.10.[19]73] (Report on the completion of the mission by Ambassador J. Ochęduszko to Romania).

through significance for the entire front in southeastern and central Europe and opened the way for the Red Army to the heart of the Balkans. The Romanian army, allied with the Allies, quickly fielded an army of half a million, losing 170,000 dead and wounded soldiers, and liberated 3,800 towns and cities in Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, including lands for which the Romanians were supposed to have fought for centuries.³⁴ In the case of referring to the Dacoromanian past of contemporary Romanians, which by that time had already firmly established itself in Romanian historiography and public consciousness, Polish diplomats were more critical, pointing out that the efforts of Romanian historians to demonstrate the historical continuity of the nation are not always carried out “with the help of scientific methods” because, as representatives of the PPR stressed, according to the knowledge currently available to them, “(...) the Romanian nation in the modern sense began to take shape only after World War I, and especially strongly in the last 15 years”. The Romanian authorities, on the other hand, sought to

stimulate and shape the sense of personality and values of the Romanian people by means of skillfully controlled influence of the means of information and propaganda, using for these purposes even nationalist elements. (...) Everything is done to provide the public with as many convincing pedigrees as possible of the heroism, valor, wisdom of various historical figures, in the history of the country's various districts. Extracting everything noteworthy from the process of historical development and presenting it to the public in an appropriate manner is an important task of loc.[al] propaganda.³⁵

Warsaw was also informed that Ceaușescu “even ordered to proceed with the production of films, plays that would praise the nation's struggle for a sovereign, independent and autonomous existence (...). In addition, almost every site in the SRR of a victorious skirmish with the enemy was to be festooned with monuments to “brave and courageous” Romanians. Romanian authorities were also expanding the network of museum facilities. In turn, “a particularly strong display of the Romanian character of Transylvania and Moldavia” was to lead to “irritation of the national feelings of the Hungarian minority”, especially when Romanians tried to prove that even Hungary's national hero of the Springtime Sándor Petőfi was an indigenous citizen of those lands³⁶ and thus – according to the new Romanian methodology – “Transylvanian” and not Hungarian. As reported in one analysis by the Polish People's Republic embassy in 1976, the coverage of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina and thus Romanian-Soviet relations also intensified. Articles emphasized the Romanianess of both provinces which had returned to their “ancient homeland” in 1918 as a result of their own unification aspirations. The issue of the Soviet ultimatum of June 1940, on the basis

³⁴ Ibidem, 9/34/78 (Note on the celebration of the 30th anniversary of Romania's liberation. More extensively on the removal of Marshal Ion Antonescu from power on 23/08/1944); see e.g. D. Deletant, *Romania. Hitler's forgotten ally*, Warsaw [2010], p. 339–360.

³⁵ Ibidem, 15.06.1974 (Attempted analysis on the topic: *Shaping social attitudes through the mass media of the Socialist Republic of Romania*).

³⁶ Ibidem.

of which the aforementioned areas were annexed by the Soviet Union, was also increasingly raised in Romanian journalism:

The ultimatum is placed on the same level with the so-called Vienna Dictate, i.e., the act by which Romania lost [in 1940] a part of Transylvania to Hungary and also lost a part of Dobrudja to Bulgaria. These events are taken together as acts of violence against “defenseless Romania, which was in international isolation and deprived of all outside help”. (...) Thus, from the context of such formulated assessments, it is clear that the war against the Soviet Union, as long as the Romanian army did not cross the Dniester, had the character of a just war. Such a position is also beginning to be presented in literary works, as exemplified by M.[arin] Preda's [1975] novel *Delirium* (...) The dissemination of such a view, which Romanian interlocutors from high places do not conceal, is aimed at maintaining in the public mind the conviction that the problem of Romania's eastern borders may one day become relevant again in historical terms. It is clear that such treatment of the issue feeds an anti-Soviet sentiment, especially among the younger generation. Also, the growing criticism of the mistakes of the Comintern was of most contemporary significance and is exposed to justify the thesis of the harmfulness of creating any center to coordinate the modern labor movement. There is no doubt that the above campaign has two objectives to fulfill: (...) to justify the correctness of the current political course with the help of an appropriate illumination of historical events, and secondly – it provides a directive inspiration for the entire ideological front in the preparations currently being made for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Romanian independence (...). Academics and artists have been set the task of commemorating this anniversary with works and artworks extolling the heroism of the Romanian people in their struggle for national unification and national sovereignty.³⁷

Romanian history was also to be compiled again, in a new light, in 10 volumes, and hence there was a suspension of the previous work in this direction by the Academy of Sciences of the SRR, as it was already considered inadequate in ideological and political terms. As the Polish analyst (E. Rokicki) concluded his elaboration, the negative implications of the Romanian views presented above in Bucharest's relations with the Kremlin were not perceived for the time being and the Soviet side did not intend to openly polemicize with Romanian historians for the time being, while Romanian-Hungarian polemics became a fact.³⁸

In analyzing the Romanian authorities' efforts during this period to pilot the historical narrative in the public forum in the direction desired for themselves, one cannot, of course, as before, ignore their broader, obviously political context. Indeed, observing the sinusoidal, clearly top-down, heating up or softening of historical or historiographical polemics, Polish diplomats noted their connection with the current state of relations between Bucharest and Moscow, which the Romanians were trying to shape according to their own typical tactics of balancing between the East and West and their current needs in the economic sphere. Thus, in the mid-1970s, the genesis of the propaganda actions undertaken by the Romanians was sought in their negative reaction to the American so-called “Helmut Sonnenfeldt Doctrine” of December 1975, which, to put it briefly, allegedly suggested that the White House administration ac-

³⁷ Ibidem, 14/80, 1976 (Memo [from the Polish People's Republic embassy to the Foreign Ministry in Warsaw on Romanian historiography].

³⁸ Ibidem.

quiesce to Soviet domination in Eastern Europe,³⁹ which experienced a cold welcome in Bucharest, critical of the creation of “spheres of influence”, and to which they responded with nationalist slogans and another campaign in defense of independence. All the more so because the concept proposed overseas was as much to the USSR’s liking as possible. And, as if by tradition, after a while the RCP authorities eased the accumulated emotions, especially since Moscow in May 1976 submitted Ceaușescu a new package of proposals for economic cooperation,⁴⁰ and in August, during the Ceaușescu–Brezhnev meeting in Crimea, the so-called historical-territorial disputes, among other things, were to be removed. The RCP leader even visited the Moldovan Soviet Republic, and there was a revival of the work of the mixed Soviet-Romanian historical commission that had been established several years earlier, with a view to removing false exposures. However, according to Władysław Wojtasik, the then Polish People’s Republic ambassador to Bucharest, it did not seem possible for N. Ceaușescu “to deviate, at any rate violently, from the so-called principals of Romanian politics, and if so, then by way of an unabridged evolution. The (...) Soviets are absolutely aware of this.”⁴¹

While citing the reports of PPR diplomacy on Romanian historical politics during this period, it is impossible to omit the information about the nervous reaction of one of Romania’s opinion-forming magazines, *Lucesfarul* (Bulletin), to an article by a Polish journalist Władysław Machejko in Cracow’s *Życie Literackie* titled *Historia po Rumuńsku* [History in Romanian], in which this editor-in-chief of the magazine (since 1952) and a well-known PUWP [Polish United Workers’ Party] activist clearly – as is also evident from its content – mocked the direction in which Romanian historiography and historical propaganda had been going for some time, describing it as “offensive rhetoric”. Romanians greeted Machejko’s piece of publicism with astonishment and bitterness, describing it as “ambiguous and profuse with serious mistakes” (indeed, the journalist had trouble correctly dating several events), not without touches of irony, which were, however, offensive to Romanians (e.g., “It is not known whether the ancient Dacians spit sunflower seeds in such a way as contemporary Olteans do”). Apparently unable to react in any other way, the editors of the Romanian paper called the whole thing a regrettable incident, as if seemingly or actually not understanding such behavior by a journalist⁴² hosted at the invitation of a friendly country that “has always valued Polish country and nation”. Apparently,

³⁹ See A. Mania, *Department of State i Foreign Service in U.S. w polityce zagranicznej USA lat gorącej i zimnej wojny 1939–1989*, Krakow 2019, p. 399–402.

⁴⁰ AMFA, DIR, 14/80, k.10–13, 7.06.1976 (Memo on the results of K. Katushev’s talks with the Romanian leadership).

⁴¹ Ibidem, 19.08.1976 (Cipher program of the Polish Embassy in Bucharest to the Foreign Ministry); Th. Kunze, *Ceaușescu*, p. 197–200.

⁴² AMFA, 14/80. Translation of Romanian-language material from “Lucesfarul” no. 37, 11.09.1976, included in the “Przegląd Zagraniczny” column, accompanied by an editorial comment (p. 6). A two-part text by Machejko appeared in issues of “*Życie Literackie*” (no. 34; 22.09.1976, no. 35; 29.08.1976).

however, the Polish side did not care about this criticism, as they did not return to this topic. Regardless of the substantive level of Machejko's text, or the quibbles about the permissible limits of "licentia poetica", one can assume that the influential publicist, who was close to the decision-making spheres of the People's Republic of Poland, evidently not only knew that he would be able to allow himself for the reflections maintained in such a style, but also probably knew the actual views of these spheres on historical politics and the internal situation in the SRR in general.

In 1977–1978, the most important historical events which anniversaries happened, lavishly celebrated by the authorities of the SRR, that is, of course, the 100th anniversary of Romanian independence and the 100th anniversary of reunification. When it comes to the discussion on Romanian historical politics, however, the translation, sent from Bucharest to Warsaw, of the resolution of the RCP Central Committee Plenum of November 16, 1977 is of more interest. It was published in its supreme organ "Scîntea" (Spark) and was regarding *the Celebration of the 2050th anniversary of the establishment of the first centralized and independent state of Dacia*, scheduled mainly for 1980. From the content of the resolution it was clear, among other things, that the creation of the Dacian state in the 1st century B.C. under Burebista "was an extremely important moment for the history of the Romanian nation, heir to the great virtues and traditions of its illustrious ancestors, namely the Getae and the Dacians, as part of a large Thracian population deeply rooted throughout the Carpatho–Danubian–Pontine area". A nation "which in the nearly 2,000 years of its existence has experienced a heroic, turbulent and magnificent history, constantly developing and firmly establishing its presence among the peoples and nations of the world". Adopting and promoting once again the objectively highly controversial (also contemporarily) thesis of the Dacian roots of the modern Romanian nation, the authorities of the SRR almost authoritatively affirmed not only the historical continuity, indigenism and national persistence of the Romanians since Roman times, but also pointed to the RCP, representing the working class, as the heir of these ancestors' struggles for national unity and independence, for their "ideals of social justice". Once again, too, the Hungarians were separated from the Szeklers by mentioning the "co-habitating peoples" settled "during the last 1,000 years on the territory of our country", and thus – unlike the Romanians – not indigenous. The authorities announced that they would undertake wide-ranging activities, dedicated to this anniversary, which, in addition to "greater mobilization of all working people – Romans, Hungarians, Germans and representatives of other nationalities" for the realization of the tasks set by the RCP, would also show "(...) in the light of the instructions given by Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu on reevaluating the historical past (...) the basic coordinates of native history, the continuity of the Romanian nation's existence in the territory where it was formed, and the factors that accelerated the development of Romanian society as well as those that constituted an obstacle to progress". Scientific research was also to be continued "in order to obtain new evidence on the genesis, evolution, organization and development of the first centralized Dacian state; the unity of material and spir-

itual culture throughout the national territory; the formation of the Romanian nation and its uninterrupted continuity in these lands.”⁴³

Nor can the above resolution, like other similar official speeches by Ceaușescu’s team, be immediately placed on the shelf of historical propaganda without its broader context. For in 1977, there were several events that took place in Romania and, while not yet shaking the totalitarian regime, left their distinct mark on it. At the beginning of March 1977, Romania was hit by a strong earthquake (7.9 degrees on the Richter scale, 1,400 dead) and the inept handling of its aftermath exposed the weakness of the system. Two weeks earlier, the communist embassy had first informed headquarters, using “reliable Romanian sources”, about the so-called dissidents in Romania. Although no major interest in the latter fact had been noted on the part of the Romanian public, and PPR Ambassador Wojtasik’s interlocutors from the Romanian Foreign Ministry tried to minimize and downplay the whole matter, in his opinion, taken from a statement by a member of the PCC, it may nevertheless have been not the end but a harbinger of similar problems in the future.⁴⁴ Besides, there were growing economic troubles in the SRR, which in August 1977 led to the outbreak of a major miners’ strike in the Jiu Valley in Transylvania.⁴⁵ Thus, one can be rather sure that Ceaușescu’s traditional reaching for an additional, this time ancient, motive to come out with a new ideological campaign, as if to spare three years of propaganda, was also aimed at distracting the public from the growing daily troubles.

Regardless of the revealing new elements in socio-political life and “potential foci of possible unrest”, however, Ceaușescu’s hold on power in the second half of the 1970s was still fairly strong. “The RCP is in full control of the situation, controlling socio-economic and political processes, using, among other things, various means of manipulating sentiment, not excluding even appealing to nationalist feelings” – the Romanian year of 1978 was summed up in such a way by the ambassador of the People’s Republic of Poland. The year was mainly marked by the successive anniversaries decreed by the authorities of the SRR, related primarily to the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the unification of the Romanian lands, the 60th anniversary of Ceaușescu’s birth, and the 30th anniversary of the unification of the Romanian labor movement.⁴⁶

The picture and methods of state historical politics in the SRR in the 1970s can be summed up by two extensive analyses of the PPR embassy in Bucharest, from November 1978 (*Note on the role of historical themes in mass ideological and edu-*

⁴³ Ibidem, 14/90 (Translated from Romanian: Resolution of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party on the Commemoration of the 2050th Anniversary of the First Centralized and Independent State of the Dacian People; K. Verdery, *Compromis și rezistență*, p. 207, 209.

⁴⁴ AMFA, 8/82, 23.02.1977 (Ciphertext from the Polish Embassy in Bucharest to the Foreign Ministry in Warsaw).

⁴⁵ See M. Willaume, *Romania*, Warsaw 2004, p. 231–241.

⁴⁶ AMFA, 3/31/83, 2.04.1979 (Memo on the internal situation and foreign politics of the SRR in 1978).

cational activities in the SRR) and December 1979 (*Romania's national history in the mass media of the SRR*), in a sense confirming the importance of the phenomenon in question during Ceaușescu's "golden era" and thus the increased interest in this issue on the part of foreign observers. What the second secretary of the Polish People's Republic embassy, Jerzy Kotlinski, emphasized in a 1978 memo was the fact of an unquestionably instrumental approach to historical issues on the part of the highest echelons, who were also the most important decision-makers "in popularizing native history in a new light among the broad masses of the population". The considerable amount of time and considerable attention given in the press, radio, cinema, theater, and television to "events and historical figures related to the struggle for the unity and independence of the country", as well as emphasizing the continuity of the fate of the Romanian nation and its territorial location from the earliest times to the present, often through polemics with Hungarian or Soviet historians, became a Romanian daily occurrence. New historical publications omitted "all traces that would testify to any dependence of the Romanian principalities on neighboring states", while the events of domestic history were "isolated almost completely from the context of general history", which was exemplified by the aforementioned anniversary of the centennial of independence, at which "the participation of Russian troops in the war against Turkey in 1877 was almost completely ignored. The reader of these studies may get the impression that the main role in the victory over the Ottoman Empire at that time was played by Romanian troops". In Kotlinski's opinion, the liberation of Romania during World War II was treated in a similar way, and "according to the current Romanian interpretation, [it] was primarily the result of the nationwide anti-fascist uprising of August 1944". The "negative treatment of the role of all the great powers in the Balkans", and therefore of Russia, was seen as another characteristic feature of Romanian historiography. Finally, it was noted that the solidarity action of all nationalities living in Romania for the development of the country was emphasized, as well as the cult of Nicolae Ceaușescu, "the continuator of the work of great leaders in the past", which was growing year by year. All the actions taken by the authorities, the accentuated content and in general "the re-evaluation of the entire native history were meant to inspire a sense of national pride and shape an attitude of full commitment to realizing the active politics of the party and the state."⁴⁷

Also, a disquisition by the First Secretary of the Polish People's Republic Embassy, Jerzy Bauer, in December 1979, confirmed that over the course of a dozen years "... the factor of Romanian history has turned into one of the basic and permanent mechanisms of the RCP's propaganda activities", and to such an extent that "... Romanian history is very often the subject of conversations, especially with foreigners, which is a visible source of national prestige". The elements of this prop-

⁴⁷ K. Nowak, *Polityka historyczna Rumunii Nicolae Ceaușescu. Dwa dokumenty ambasady PRL w Bukareszcie* [in:] *Silesia–Polonia–Europa. Studia historyczne dedykowane profesorowi Idziemu Pani-cowi*, ed. J. Sperka, Bielsko-Biała 2019, s. 480–483.

agenda included primarily anniversaries and jubilees “(...) of statewide significance, ‘piloted’ centrally over an extended period of time in the form of campaigns”, in addition to the constant emphasis on unity “both in territorial terms and ethno-cultural continuity in the area of present-day Romania within its legendary borders” through various television series, as well as the promotion of popular culture. The propaganda also concerned publishing, also under the auspices of the RCP Central Committee, historical periodicals, publishing books and articles with maps of Romania’s former borders, together with such actions as expanding the museum network and chambers of national memory, “where civic education lessons are held”, and “introducing monumental architecture to cities, taking into account regional features, and decorating city centers with monuments to rulers or “the very idea of independence”. Bauer also listed nine recurring themes in the Romanian authorities’ activities carried out in this way: the nature motif, the “Mother-Earth” motif, and the “Peasant-Salt of the Earth” motif. “(...) For example, there is a frequent – suggestive, but also shocking – comparison in art photography of the facial features of the Dacians with those of today’s Maramureş highlanders, who are unofficially regarded as the ‘racially purest Romanians’ /they were always free, unlike the subjects of Rome/”. Another was to be the motif of “Endangering the country”, “(...) calling Romania and its leader a ‘Citadel,’ a ‘Fortress,’ a ‘Ship on a Troubled Sea,’ etc.”); then the motif of “Continued complicity of national minorities in shaping the territorial-state image of the homeland”; and the next one was to be the motif of “Demythologizing” controversial historical figures and evoking the memory of personalities already forgotten by the public. (e.g., Vlad the Impaler or “Dracula,” famous for his cruelty, but well-deserved for Romanians because he strove to unite the country; Ecaterina Teodoroiu, “the Romanian Emilia Plater”, but from World War I); the motif of “‘Romanian primacy’ in a number of fields, discoveries, inventions”. However, as Bauer noted:

A side reflection of this attitude is the exposure, albeit to a lesser extent, of Romania’s uniqueness in various complex historical situations. As always in such matters-truth is mixed with *a priori* theses. A positive example might be the assistance to Polish refugees in September 1939 from Romania, which was, after all, weak, while a questionable example might be the country’s alleged failure to succumb to anti-Semitism throughout its history, which resulted in, among other things, the flight of Jews from Poland to Moldova in the Middle Ages, where they only enjoyed tolerance.⁴⁸

In addition, one could note the complete absence of the Church’s contribution to the work of national unity, the motif of connection with the other Romanian nations (so-called latinitate) and, finally, the motif of exposing Romania’s history abroad. In his message to the Warsaw headquarters, Bauer also drew attention to the effectiveness of the propaganda activities carried out by the Romanian authorities in this way, hence, in his opinion, “with all reservations about the extremely selective – thus biased – treatment of one’s own and others’ history (...) the knowledge of one’s own

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 483–488.

history by the average Romanian today is incomparably greater than, for example, 10–15 years ago”, and his final conclusions noted the likelihood of a “further strengthening of nationalist convictions and activities among numerous clusters of Romanian society”. They were also to be reinforced by the ideology of the “besieged fortress” as another increasingly pronounced component of the RCP authorities’ domestic politics. On the other hand, the *novelty* was to be the “classless thesis of the eternal, almost natural humanism of the Romanians, contrasted with the outside world”. This thought, Bauer continued, “which is also presented abroad, undoubtedly fits into the current discussions on so-called human rights.”⁴⁹ It follows that the problem of the so-called third basket from the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which ended in August 1975, slowly, like a “Troyan horse”, began to approach the Romanian “fortress” as well, causing its dictator a lot of trouble over time.⁵⁰

It is clear from the opinions presented above that the approach to the past promoted by the RCP authorities was not received positively in the PPR either in the 1970s, especially with regard to narratives concerning the past of Romanian-Russian/Soviet relations, about which the Polish side did not allow any ambiguity in the positive image of Russia and the USSR – as liberators of the Danube peoples from a foreign yoke and a decisive factor in the victory over the Third Reich. In a way, this is confirmed by the final section of Bauer’s elaboration, where we find proposals for the Polish side to influence the leveling of the vision of history created in the SRR through, for example, contacts between groups of young people, especially students and workers, or through the cooperation between the provinces and large industrial plants of both countries. Also because the PPR embassy apparently noticed among Romanians “(...) an undercurrent but clear interest in the culture and everyday life of certain countries, (...) including Poland”, which was to be, for example, in the field of culture, “a sought-after, valued, sometimes overrated partner. In certain opinion-forming circles (journalists, students, artists) the analogies from the history of Romania and Poland are being utilized, and sometimes interpreted in an anti-Soviet manner”. Therefore, the above considerations “highlight the need for a broader propaganda influence by us on Romania, which for various reasons the other socialist countries are unable to do.”⁵¹

However, there was no further continuation of this matter, probably also due to the political changes in the People’s Republic of Poland in 1980–1981, after which there could be no more attempts at propaganda influence of Polish diplomacy in the territory of the SRR. On the other hand, there should be emphasized the awareness of the representatives of the PPR of the specific, as if less schematic, perception of Poles

⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 488–489.

⁵⁰ The so-called basket III of the CSCE Final Act dealt with the cooperation in the humanitarian field towards the creation of a common European standard of human rights; A. Cioroianu, „*Koń trojański*” z Helsinek (lato roku 1975) [in:] A. Cioroianu, *Nie możemy uciec przed naszą historią*, vol. 2 (*Pięknej opowieści o historii Rumunów*), Wrocław 2019, p. 178–180.

⁵¹ K. Nowak, *Polityka historyczna Rumunii*, p. 489.

not only by Romanians, but also by the rest of the citizens or even the authorities of other countries of Eastern Bloc.

The negative reaction of the Directorate of the Department I of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Socialist Countries) to a compact popular science publication by the romanist and translator Mieczysław Jaworowski (a Polish émigré from Romania after WWII) *Historia narodu rumuńskiego. Krótki zarys (History of the Romanian Nation. A Brief Outline [510 pp.])* published in August 1979 under the auspices of the SRR embassy in Warsaw (especially by its Second Secretary, a graduate of Polish philology at the University of Warsaw, Nicolae Mareş), can also be regarded as an additional confirmation of the not very flattering opinions on the historical politics of the Ceauşescu regime coming from the diplomacy of the PPR. It was assessed as “(...) an attempt to present to the Polish reader biased assessments and facts concerning the past and recent history of Romania, calculated for immediate political-propaganda effects”. The accusations against the book concerned the presentation of Romania as the oldest state formation in Europe, formed between the Dniester and Tisza rivers, the presentation of Moldova, Bessarabia, northern Bukovina and Transylvania as indigenously Romanian lands, and the “prominence of Romania’s contribution to the victory over the Third Reich on an equal footing with the other states of the anti-Hitler coalition”. For these reasons, the Polish Foreign Ministry did not allow the book to be distributed.⁵² Although from today’s point of view we can speak of an unquestionable censorship procedure, it should be emphasized that some of the above-mentioned content in this publication, which was controversial for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of Poland, actually did have such a political, propagandistic and biased dimension.

In the following years, Polish diplomats sent less information or opinions on Romanian historical politics, which, due to growing economic problems, apparently had its most intense period behind it. The attention of foreign observers focused mainly on the public’s increasingly visible dissatisfaction with the ever-accelerating areas of pauperization, Ceauşescu’s dictatorial rule, and the bankruptcy of his foreign politics of independence, constructed for show and domestic needs. The diplomats of the People’s Republic of Poland (and not only) were then referring with increasing dislike to the authorities of the SRR, especially since ideological phraseology had already disappeared from their opinions during the period in question. In Romania of the 1980s, the ethnic problems also surfaced more and more strongly, especially in the Hungarian aspect, which also aroused the interest of observers of Romanian reality. Polish diplomats reacted negatively to the theory of the existence of a unified

⁵² AMFA, 21/40/84, 3.04.1980 (Memo from D I of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Comrade Minister J. Czyrek. However, the publication, published by “Książka i Wiedza” [The book and the knowledge], reached a certain group of people, while single copies are now made available, according to the catalog of the National Library, in six Polish libraries. *The Bibliography of Polish History* does not note its review.

Romanian nation, and informed Warsaw of criticism of Hungarian diplomats against Bucharest's actually pro-assimilation politics. Those diplomats, with whom they were, apparently, already in solidarity, had become their main source of information on the subject. And it is mainly within the framework of Hungarian issues in the SRR that we can also find some further opinions of PPR diplomats on historical politics, which, as is not difficult to guess, were related to the increasingly frequent accusations of revisionism directed from Bucharest to Budapest, the intensity of which increased with the growing internal troubles of the Ceaușescu regime. The actions of the SRR authorities in the historical direction were already unequivocally assessed as an attempt to divert public attention from the economic troubles at home, or as the artificial creation of an enemy, including foreign ones, and the causes that led to them. This was the case, for example, with the official reaction of the RCP authorities to publishing in Budapest in late 1986 a three-volume *History of Transylvania* (*Erdély története*), which had been published by the Hungarian Academy. The reaction was disproportionate to the circumstances, as similar publications, emphasizing the historical ties of the former Hungarian provinces, had been published in Hungary before. According to PPR diplomats, the dispute over this issue fueled Romanian nationalism, which in turn may have also radicalized the sentiment among the Hungarian minority especially in the context of the deteriorating economic situation in the SRR.⁵³

In turn, in the context of further Polish censorship activity in the Romanian aspect, one can note the temporary suspension in 1983, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of the printing in the Wroclaw "Ossolineum" of the doctoral dissertation by Alicja Sowinska-Krupka from the Institute of Socialist Countries of the Polish Academy of Sciences (*Stosunki Polsko-Rumuńskie 1945–1949*) this time because of, among other things, the inappropriateness of publicizing much of the information contained in it from the point of view of the current state of Polish-Romanian relations. Especially since, as the Department I of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, Romanian historians were supposed to write about difficult issues in mutual relations in a "measured and circumspect" manner, while public and meticulous dissection of them "would undoubtedly provoke a sharp Romanian reaction to the detriment of the current stage of development of bilateral cooperation".⁵⁴ Distancing them-

⁵³ AMFA, DIR, 1/34/73 (Quarterly information concerning selected aspects of the internal situation of the SRR and bilateral relations of the PPR-SR; January–March 1987; *Romanian-Hungarian dispute against the background of the nationality politics of the SRR*, [1987]); K. Verdery, *Compromis și rezistență*, p. 209–210; K. Nowak, *Polityka narodowościowa Rumunii w opiniach dyplomacji PRL* [in:] *Polska i Rumunia w Europie Środkowej w XX i XXI wieku. Studia, materiały i eseje poświęcone pamięci prof. dra hab. Wojciecha Rojka*, eds. A. Kastory, H. Walczak, Kraków 2017, p. 245–247.

⁵⁴ AMFA, 1/27/89, 15.02.1983 (letter from the Publishing House of the Ossolineum National Institute to the Director of the IKS PAN); ibidem, 11.03.1983 (letter from the Director of the IKS PAN to the D I of the MFA; ibidem, 7.04.1983; Letter from the Department of Archives and Historical Documentation of the MFA to the D I of the MFA); ibidem, 12.04.1983 (letter from the Director of the D I of the MFA to the Director of the IKS PAN. The MFA headquarters and the censors (UKPPiW) also had objections to, among other things, the accurate citation of archival references and the wording of documents, the disclosure of

selves from Bucharest's historical politics, the PPR authorities did not want to give the Romanians another pretext, this time from the Vistula River, to, perhaps, open a new front of nationalist crusade. Besides, they were apparently not yet ready for the new, critical approach to the sources and subject matter of relations between the later Kremlin satellites in the first post-war years presented by the author of the work, although not all, desired by her, documents from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were made available to her anyway.⁵⁵ Eventually, the publication in question appeared in print at the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences in 1985 – however, without certain elements that were controversial for the institutions concerned, but important for history researchers, thus, being today one of the exemplifications of the political barriers imposed on historians in the People's Republic.⁵⁶

SUMMARY

In light of the sources and analyses presented, it can be concluded that the scale of the use of history by the authorities of communist Romania to achieve specific political goals was considerable, and at the same time not always in accordance with the expectations of other Eastern Bloc countries. For this reason, this sphere of the activities of Romanian ruling echelons was also followed and analyzed by PPR diplomats, who clearly emphasized its instrumental nature. Wanting to stay in power after the Stalinist period, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej turned to nationalism, manipulation of history, appealing to national traditions and blaming external factors for failures in the development of the country and the nation, which was later continued and developed on an unprecedented scale in other communist countries by the national communism of Nicolae Căușescu. History served the Romanian authorities not only for obvious propaganda purposes, but also to legitimize to their own people a certain direction, above all in foreign politics, which for many years enjoyed genuine support among Romanians, all the more so because it found fertile ground among them, also bringing

the names of diplomats, the author's reference to "rumors" about the secret protocol to the German-Soviet pact of Aug. 23, 1939, which could raise "doubts among Soviet readers," or the mention of, documented, crimes and robberies by Hungarian troops on Polish soil. Besides, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out that the plan for developing Poland's postwar relations with the socialist countries, which was created in 1974 at the IKS PAN, did not assume printing its final results; *Ibidem*, April 1974 (letter from the Director of the IKS PAN to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Poland).

⁵⁵ This can also be evidenced by the censorship's withholding of the printing of the doctoral dissertation (defended in 1976) by Marek K. Kaminski, *Polisko-czechosłowackie stosunki polityczne 1945–1948*. It was not published in print until 1990; M.K. Kaminski: *Moje doświadczenia z komunistycznym aparatem represji wymierzonym w słowo pisane* [in:] *Cenzura w PRL. Relacje historyków*, compiled by Z. Romek, Warsaw 2000, p. 113–119.

⁵⁶ In the publication by A. Sowinska-Krupka does not present the titles of documents from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (limited only to the annotation "AMSZ" [en. AMFA]).

tangible benefits to the Romanian state in the international arena. Although the Polish side was generally accurate in diagnosing the social engineering of the Romanian authorities in the field in question, at times one gets the impression that it referred with understanding to the motivations behind the Cultural Revolution they carried out in the mid-1960s and appreciated its effectiveness. However, in the case of historical politics, negative assessments prevailed. Their sources, however, were by no means due to some kind of utilitarianism-lined concern or care on the part of PPR diplomats for objectivity and truth in historical research and the Romanian authorities' approach to history, the elements of which were in fact often missing (e.g., the "decryption" of the Dacian ancestry of the Romanians, the assessment of the nature and significance of the 1944 coup, Romania's contribution to the victory over the Third Reich), but from the circumstances surrounding Bucharest's actions in the episode in question and their political consequences. Above all with regard to, not so much – at times extreme – Romanian nationalism – as to the officially presented vision of the past of Romanian-Russian, Romanian-Soviet, Russian or Soviet relations, for which Warsaw had strictly defined boundaries – its Rubicon of the PPR's *raison d'état* – which it did not even try to cross. Although the PPR authorities themselves used the nationalist weapon and manipulated history more than once, this was done on a somewhat smaller scale, and, to use popular phraseology, they "didn't go beyond the mark" when it came to the history of relations with the Soviets. The official historiography of the Polish People's Republic, with Mieszko I and Poland's victories over the Teutonic Order, but with falsifications in the eastern direction, was rejected by Poles, while Romanian historiography before 1989 perpetuated in many Romanians a highly simplified approach to their own nation's past, biased, but apparently accepted by them even now.

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