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TITLE: THE WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET TROOPS FROM
ROMANIA IN 1958: AN ANALYSIS OF THE
DECISION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research originated with a scientific interest in the subject rendered stronger by the possibility of examining an area previously unexplored. To the present date, the subject of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania in 1958 has not been studied systematically. No comprehensive studies exist in the political literature in English, French, German, Russian or Romanian.

In May 1958, it was announced that the Soviet Union had made the decision to withdraw its military forces from Romania in a larger context of reductions in armed forces of Warsaw Pact states. This was the third such Soviet action, the USSR having previously withdrawn completely from Austria and Finland (the military base at Porkala-Udd).

This research addresses the Soviet decision through an investigation of the existing material, and in addition, of declassified archival material available in the United States and in the United Kingdom, and through interviews with former Romanian diplomats, U.S. and British foreign affairs officials, either stationed in Romania or dealing with Soviet and East European affairs, as well as specialists in Soviet, East European and strategic studies.

This report presents a brief survey of the deployment and fluctuation of Soviet troops in Romania during the first post-war years until the conclusion of the Peace Treaty, and the following period (1947-1958), as well as an analysis of their territorial location.

A detailed analysis of the process of the making of the Soviet decision for withdrawal, some of the basic conclusions, and its impact are examined. At the same time, the following hypotheses concerning the objectives of the Soviet troop withdrawal from Romania are addressed: (a) as a move seeking concessions from the West, and possibly a partial withdrawal of U.S. troops from Europe; (b) as a purely political-propaganda gesture with little or no military significance; (c) as a Soviet decision based on interrelated military-strategic, political, diplomatic, and economic reasons.

After the completion of the current study it can be seen that all three objectives were inseparable components of the Soviet decision to withdraw its military forces from a country included in their sphere of influence.

One of the basic conclusions of this research is that the Soviet decision, which represented an unprecedented act of Soviet foreign and military behavior, was made over a long period, in separate stages. The timing of the entire process is related to the 1955-57 period.

The first stage and a major factor in the Soviet decision was Khrushchev's personal involvement and the process of

formation of his own perception. During his second visit to Romania (August, 1955), the idea of withdrawing Soviet troops from Romania originated in Khrushchev's mind.

The second stage in the Soviet decision to withdraw its troops from Romania was connected with the Hungarian uprising and the Romanian political behavior during these events, which was to reinforce Khrushchev's conviction that he could withdraw Soviet troops from Romania at any time without endangering Soviet interests.

Even if Hungary represented a serious setback for Soviet policy, it provided, at the same time, an additional element favorable to Khrushchev's intention of a limited withdrawal from Eastern Europe: the Soviet garrison which Moscow decided to leave in Hungary after the uprising was more than double in size compared to the Soviet deployment in Hungary before the uprising. This laid the groundwork for the potential implementation of a compensatory strategy concerning Soviet military posture in Eastern Europe with a guarantee of support by the Soviet military.

It is the assumption of this research that the third stage of the decision made by the USSR to withdraw its troops from Romania occurred in late April-early July of 1957, the period between the conclusion of the Status-of-Forces agreements and Khrushchev's meeting with Tito in Bucharest (August 1957).

According to this research, the meeting with Tito in Bucharest would have been the most logical timing for Khrushchev

to announce the Soviet decision to both Tito and Gheorghiu-Dej. It was intended to be a major Soviet concession and an impressive gesture of goodwill towards Yugoslavia, ostensibly fulfilling Soviet (Khrushchev's) promises. Concerning Romania, the meeting in Bucharest would be the last occasion (before the May 1958 meeting in Moscow) for Khrushchev to meet according to his memoirs, with Gheorghiu-Dej.

An important additional element, suggested by the former U.S. Charge to Romania in 1958, is the role of the Soviet Ambassador to Romania, Yepishev, who presumably acted as a powerful intermediary between Khrushchev and the Romanian leaders. According to the American diplomat, Yepishev was able to contribute to the building of Khrushchev's perception, to give a good idea of Khrushchev's intentions toward Romania, and to use his personal relationship with the Romanian leadership in suggesting the way and the time to approach Khrushchev on the issue of troop withdrawal.

The Soviet decision to withdraw troops from Romania was essentially of propaganda value. Due to the compensatory strategy adopted by the Soviets, this action had no military value: the military balance between the Warsaw Pact and NATO and the Soviet conventional supremacy in Europe was not altered. Moreover, the total Soviet military deployment in Europe in that area was at a higher level than prior to the invasion of Hungary. The fundamental elements of Western assessments of a possible Soviet withdrawal from different East European countries remain, from

the point of view of this research, relevant to an important degree under present day conditions: (a) the Soviet withdrawal alone would be less important than a settlement which allows these countries to pursue at least a neutral policy; (b) the geographical proximity of the Soviet Union to East European countries means that the Soviet forces deployed on Soviet territory represent a permanent threat; (c) any Soviet troop withdrawal supposedly relates to a withdrawal by the United States from Europe.

From different perspectives, historians, politicians, and analysts are being confronted with the same problem in the 1980s as they were in the 1950s and 1960s: the continuity of the basic elements and interests in Soviet security policy, versus the "new thinking" ("new course" during Khrushchev) which emerged, to a different extent, during both periods. The documents investigated in this research assert the relevance of historical developments to the present international evolution. In fact, some of the ideas recently advanced by the USSR, including some parts of the "methodological approach," as for example the system of unilateral reductions outside the disarmament negotiations, originated in the Khrushchev period. Moreover, the post-war Soviet objective of causing the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Europe, which had been one of Khrushchev's main objectives, remains operational under Gorbachev.

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INTRODUCTION

The USSR's 1958 decision to withdraw its military forces then occupying Romania, a country included in their sphere of influence, was a unique Soviet decision, representing a challenge to the long established rules of the Soviet empire. It was an unprecedented act.

This research addresses an important question of Soviet foreign and military policy behavior with direct reference to Gorbachev's present policy. One of the intentions of this research is to clarify the Khrushchev era's episode of troop withdrawal from Romania by investigating declassified archival material available in the United States and United Kingdom, and by interviewing former Romanian diplomats, and western foreign affairs officials stationed in, or dealing with Romania, as well as specialists in Soviet, East European and strategic studies.

I consider the investigation of the post-war Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe a timely and highly sensitive subject. From different perspectives, historians, politicians, and analysts are being confronted with the same problem in the 1980s as they were in the 1950s and 1960s: the relationship between the continuity of the basic elements of and interests in Soviet security policy and the new thinking (in the Khrushchev years new course) which emerged to a different degree and extent during both the Khrushchev and Gorbachev periods.

In fact some of the ideas which have been advanced recently in the conventional arms control area by the new Soviet leader,

including parts of the "methodological approach" used--the system of unilateral reductions outside the disarmament negotiations framework--originate from the Khrushchev period.¹ Moreover, the post-war Soviet objective of causing the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Europe, which had been one of Khrushchev's main objectives, remains operational under Gorbachev.

According to declassified archival material, intelligence estimates and various military records, the Soviet military never accepted a decrease in the total of troops deployed in East European countries, below a limit considered to reflect the accepted risk factor.

After Stalin's death, the number of Soviet soldiers in those countries remained at a roughly constant level exceeding 500,000.² During the post-Stalin period--Khrushchev and his successors--there was no change in that ceiling, except for some local compensatory moves which maintained the Soviet military strength unchanged. One such compensatory move came in 1958; when the Soviet withdrawal from Romania occurred, 65,000 to 75,000 troops remained in Hungary, exceeding the previous deployment of Soviet troops in both countries. Since then 80,000 Soviet troops have been deployed in Czechoslovakia. Currently the total level

¹ In 1955, Khrushchev announced a unilateral reduction of Soviet armed forces of 640,000 men; in 1956-57 another unilateral reduction of 1,200,000 men; in 1958 an additional unilateral reduction of 300,000 men.

² I do not discuss in this research the problem of improvement in weapons systems.

of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe has reached its highest level--more than 600,000 troops.

In order to evaluate the reasons for the Soviet troop withdrawal from Romania in 1958, this research explores various hypotheses such as the withdrawal as a consequence of the conclusion of the Austrian State Treaty; a consequence of a Romanian demand; from military-strategic motivation; a pure political-propaganda gesture with little or no military significance; and a move seeking concessions from the West, including possibly a partial withdrawal of US troops from Europe.

However, it is necessary first of all to examine the build-up of Soviet military forces in Romania³ after World War II, as well as their successive locations in order to estimate the importance Romania played in Soviet military plans.

SOVIET TROOPS IN ROMANIA (1945-1958)

By occupying Romania and other East European countries after World War II, the USSR advanced its military influence 500 miles west into Central Europe and established a buffer zone garrisoned by hundreds of thousands of soldiers. This area provides advanced air bases, space for a forward air defense system, and naval bases. A long list of facts, many of which were already being reported by the media in the late 1940s, pointed out domination

³ There are different transcription rules. Romania is used in the text. However, the documents transcription is maintained: Rumania, or Roumania.

by the Soviet Army of economic, political, and military life in the occupied countries.

Several reports belonging either to the Romanian General Staff⁴ or to the US military⁵ mentioned that immediately after the War the Red Army in Romania was in excess of 1 million soldiers. The first estimates concerning the strength of Soviet troops in Romania, as in the other countries from the end of 1944 until the end of the war, were based on indirect assessments, using the supplies demanded by the Soviet troops from the Romanian government under the provision of the Armistice Agreement as a basis for calculation.⁶

⁴ U.S. Mission, Bucharest, No. 380, June 23, 1945, "Rumanian General Staff 1st Section, 3rd Bureau Army Mobilization to The Rumanian Armistice Commission," No. 54600, June 17, 1945, (signed for the Chief of the General Staff, General Eftimiu). [Enclosure] Record of the Department of State [hereafter RG 59], Decimal File 740.00119 Control (Rumania)/6-2345.

⁵ The former US Representative to the Allied Control Commission for Romania, General Cortland V.R.Schuyler, The View from Romania, in Witnesses to the Origins of the Cold War, Thomas T. Hammond (Ed), Seattle, 1982, University of Washington Press, p. 138, as well as U.S. Mission, Bucharest, June 23, 1945, RG 59, 740.0019 Control (Rumania)[Signed by Roy Melbourne].

⁶ OSS cables from Bucharest referred to the estimation made by some Romanian officials that the food and supplies requested by the Soviet authorities were sufficient for approximately four million people. (OSS Report No. L 47689, 8 October 1944 and L 48499, 10 November 1944, to the War Department, Records of the Office of Strategic Studies [hereafter RG 226], Country File, Rumania.)

British military sources estimated the number of Soviet military in Rumania at between 750,000 and 1,000,000, finally establishing a figure of 750,000. "Sovietization of Satellite Armed Forces," 15 March 1951, p. 7, Foreign Office [hereafter FO] 371/94451, Public Record Office [hereafter PRO]

One of the first global estimates of Soviet military strength in the occupied territories appeared in a State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee document. The document estimated Soviet

Thus the Soviet military deployment in Romania consisted of the maintenance of a large armed force after the end of the war (1945) until the conclusion of the Peace Treaty (1947).⁷

The fluctuation of the size of the occupational forces

strength in Rumania at 420,000 men. ("US Policy Concerning Soviet domination of Governments of Yugoslavia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Poland," Annex "B" to Appendix "B", "Soviet Military Capabilities" [by Dec 1, 1945], p. 45, SWNCC 243/D, 4 January 1946, Record of the United States Chiefs of Staff [hereafter RG 218].)

There was some disagreement between this report and other US intelligence reports, for example the report submitted by the US Representatives in the ACC for Romania, who estimated the same figure at approximately 515,000. (U.S Military Representation, Allied Control Commission for Romania to the War Department, January 10, 1946, "Estimate of the Military Situation in Rumania," Record Group of the Army Staff [hereafter RG 319], Decimal File 1946-48, 384 Sec V-B to 400 Sec I, Plans & Operation Division.)

⁷ Table 1. Soviet Forces in Romania (Nov.45-Nov.46)
Includes Air, Navy, Security troops and Ground)

Nov.1, 1945	500,000
Mar.1, 1946	615,000
Jun.1, 1946	400,000
Nov.1, 1946	240,000
1947	(between 60,000-130,000)

Data for Table 1 compiled from the estimate provided by The Intelligence Review, No. 4, March 7, 1946; No. 17, June 6, 1946; No. 41, November 21, 1946, Military Intelligence Division, War Department, Washington, D.C. (Naval Aide Files, Folder I.R., Harry S. Truman Library); and Joint Intelligence Staff, "Strength and Disposition of Soviet Armed Forces, Intelligence Estimate of Specific Areas in Southern Europe, the Middle and Near East and Northern Africa," 14 October, , RG 218, Geographic File 1946-48; U.S. Naval Forces Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, "Military Capabilities of the USSR," 4 Dec. 1947, RG 319, Plans & Operations Division, Decimal File 1946-48; U.S. Military Representation, Allied Control Commission for Romania, Final Report, Annex A, p.3, Undated, RG 59, Decimal File 1945-49/Rumania 10-1047; Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, "Intelligence Division Daily Briefing," 17 April 1947, RG 319, Plans & Operation Division, Decimal File 1946-48, 350.05 Sec II,

during the period 1945-1947 confirmed later analyses which stated that for the USSR, Soviet military deployment in Eastern Europe had served a variety of military and policy goals.⁸

The period after the conclusion of the Peace Treaty with Romania reflected the process of decreasing and arriving at a relative ceiling of Soviet military forces reaching after 1952 and until their withdrawal, approximately 30,000. However, the level of Soviet troops in Romania and Hungary has to be analyzed in relation to its declared function: maintaining the lines of communication with troops deployed in Austria.⁹

The most striking phenomenon is the change of the ratio between (a) the number of Soviet troops deployed in Austria and (b) the Soviet troops deployed to maintain the lines of communication. Thus the ratio between (b) and (a) moved from 0.87 (May 1948) and around 1.2 during the rest of 1948 and 1949 to a ratio between 2.2 and 1.88 during 1950 and the following years

⁸ "Eastern Europe constituted a military staging and buffer zone that could be used for either defensive or offensive purposes." (A. Ross Johnson, "The Warsaw Pact: Soviet Military Policy in Eastern Europe" in Sarah Meiklejohn Terry, Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1984, p. 256.

⁹ Estimation made according to data compiled from: Office of the Chief of Naval Operation, Washington, D.C., "Strength and Disposition, USSR and Satellite Ground Forces," 12 July 1949, 11 Oct. 1949, 18 Jan. 1950, 21 Apr. 1950, RG 218, Geographic File 1948-1950, 319.1 USSR; Central Intelligence Agency, "National Intelligence Estimate," NIE-33, 7 November 1951, President's Secretary File, Intelligence File, Harry S. Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Library; The Charge in Romania to the State Department, "Developments in Romania," Bucharest No.317, March 24, 1952 and Bucharest 146, October 1952, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, [hereafter RG 84], Bucharest Legation General Records, 1952.

until the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Austria. The USSR needed approximately twice the number of troops deployed to safeguard their lines of communication.

Analysis of data declassified during the last ten years reinforces the idea that the military force deployed by the Soviets in the Balkans, including Romania, and its fluctuations were related to such Soviet actions as the launching of the Cominform and the pressures against Yugoslavia, the coup in Czechoslovakia, the Berlin Blockade, etc.¹⁰

Location of Soviet troops

A short time after the conclusion of the Peace Treaty in 1947, the problem of the presence of Soviet troops on Romanian territory ceased to be a public issue. From time to time, there were reports in the Romanian newspapers mentioning the participation of Soviet commanders of local garrisons at

¹⁰ US Intelligence estimates drew attention to the fact that during 1948-50, both Soviet ground forces and Soviet tank strength in the Balkans increased (Joint Intelligence Group, "Memorandum for General Bradley," 25 July 1950, RG 218, Geographic File 1948-50, CCS 092 USSR). According to these data, an increase in Soviet ground forces was achieved towards the end of 1949; at the very beginning of 1950 the Soviet garrisons in Romania and Hungary increased by approximately 70%.

Several documents issued by CIA (Central Intelligence Agency, "Memorandum: Recent Developments in Southeastern Europe," 8 July 1950, President's Secretary File, Intelligence File, Harry S. Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Library, as well as C.I.A. "Situation Summaries," [issued weekly] from 20 July 1950 until 8 Dec. 1950, President's Secretary File, Intelligence File, Situation Summaries, CIA Reports, Harry S. Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Library) listed, among others, an increased Soviet military activity in Romania, airfield construction in Hungary and Romania, food and petroleum shortages in Romania and Bulgaria attributed in part to the stockpiling program for military use, etc.

different celebrations observed on Soviet and Romanian holidays. Some local areas such as Timisoara-Arad and Galatzi-Braila, as well as Constantza, where Soviet troops were deployed, or cities where Soviet military airfields were located (Ianca and Otopeni) were restricted zones and were closed to public traffic. Even for official and business travel, Romanian citizens, as I recall, needed a special authorization, issued in some areas by Soviet local commanders.¹¹

After the first deployment, by the end of 1945, Soviet troops in Romania were permanently stationed in (1) parts of Muntenia and Southern Moldavia, and all of Dobrogea; (2) Oltenia; and (3) parts of the Hungarian Plateau, and Olt Valley. By the end of 1946, after the fourth phase of demobilization of the Soviet Army, Soviet units in Romania were concentrated in five areas, namely: Craiova-Slatina, Bucharest-Giurgiu, Sibiu-Alba Iulia, Constantza, and Braila-Focsani.¹² The deployment of Soviet troops corresponded to a somewhat skeleton structure which, in case of need, could be rapidly expanded. Some of the concentration areas played a greater military role.¹³

¹¹ ACC for Rumania (U.S.), "Estimate of the Military Situation in Rumania," 10 January 1946, RG 319 (Army Staff), Decimal File 1946-48.

¹² US Military Representation, Allied Control Commission for Romania, Final Report, undated, RG 59, Decimal File 1945-49, 74o.00119 Control, Annex A, p.3.

¹³ For example, the zone which included Soviet troops closer to the Yugoslavian border (including the Timisoara and Oradea areas). This latter area was also essential during the Hungarian uprising. Diplomatic and intelligence reports stated that Soviet units stationed around Timisoara were the first to enter Hungary

The location of Soviet forces in Romania during the examined period could explain to what extent Romania was important or valuable, from a military point of view, to the Soviets. In this respect there are two different periods: the period until the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Austria; and the period from 1955 to 1956, with the exception of the Hungarian uprising. The fact is, that except for the 1956 post-October period, there was no change in the deployment of Soviet forces in Romania after 1947, a fact which is reinforced by the data provided by the Romanian cities where farewell ceremonies on the occasion of Soviet troops departure took place.¹⁴

This suggests that the maintenance of lines of communication never represented the real reason for Soviet troop deployment. The Soviet garrisons were not entirely located along the rail route connecting Romania with Hungary and Austria.¹⁵ It also

in October 1956.

¹⁴ The Romanian media covered the farewell ceremonies of departing Soviet troops in 1958, from the following areas: Braila, Galati, Focsani and Ramnicul Sarat, Timisoara, Constanta. These are the same parts of the country which for a long time were considered strategically important to the Soviets. (Scinteia, 13 June 1958, 14 June 1958, 15 June 1958, 17 June 1958, 26 June 1958, 1 July 1958; Romania Libera, 2 July 1958, 4 July 1958.)

¹⁵ At the same time a document originating in the Plans & Operation Division emphasized that "there are other routes through Poland and Czechoslovakia to Vienna and Budapest which provide a considerably greater logistical capacity than through the Balkans." The document provided as examples the route from Warsaw via Sasnowic and Katowic to Vienna, and Brest-Litovsk via Devlin, Krakow, Katawik, and Zilina." (Message to London Area Office, USFET, London, England, USMILAD, CFM, Undated, RG 59, Decimal File 1945-49.)

suggests that at least one of the missions of the Soviet forces was to present a potential threat to neighboring countries, in this case Yugoslavia, and to increase the military presence in the Black Sea area. Occasionally, the Soviet troops on the Yugoslavian border were subject to fluctuations, with increases during the period corresponding to crises in Soviet relations with the Yugoslav regime.

THE KHRUSHCHEV YEARS AND SOVIET RELATIONS WITH ROMANIA (I)

One of the basic conclusions of this research is that the Soviet decision to withdraw its troops from Romania was outlined over a long period of time and in separate stages. Khrushchev's personal involvement, including the process of formation of his own perception of the problem of withdrawing troops from Romania, represented one of the most important in the Soviet decision-making process. According to this research, the timing of the entire process during which the various elements culminated in the decision, is related to the 1955-57 period, after the early transition in the post-Stalin power structure in the USSR.

Due to the Soviet reverse on the Austrian Treaty, the legal issue of the prolonged Soviet military presence in Hungary and Romania was brought back to diplomatic life. On April 25, 1955, two former diplomats, Paul Auer, the former Hungarian Minister in France, and Grigore Gafencu, the former Romanian Foreign Minister--acting as Vice-Presidents of the Central and East

European Commission, an emigre organization--drew the attention of Western governments to the legal implications of this new development in Europe.¹⁶

The British Embassy in Paris, which received the letter, recommended to the Foreign Office "a polite acknowledgement."¹⁷ The dispatch mentioned that "to contest (the right of Russian troops to be in those countries by agreement) might lead to embarrassment at some future date over the position of our troops in the German Federal Republic or in Berlin" (Italics added)¹⁸ The Foreign Office supported this recommendation, adding that in the most general terms "the Peace Treaties do not provide that after the termination of the Allied occupation of Austria, no Soviet troops shall ever again be established in Hungary and Romania."¹⁹ There are also many other British documents referring to the same subject and reaching the same conclusion.²⁰ The

¹⁶ Commission de l'Europe Centrale et Orientale, Lettre a Son Excellence Monsieur Harold MacMillan, Ministre des Affaires Etrangeres de Royaume Uni et Grande Bretagne, April 25, 1955, FO 371/116121, PRO.

¹⁷ British Embassy, Paris to Foreign Office, April 25, 1955, Northern Department, General 1081/1, FO 371/116121, PRO.

¹⁸ Ibid. An additional explanation was offered in another Foreign Office dispatch: "In considering the legal aspects of the problem we have of course to bear in mind the position of our own and United States troops in Western Europe and the fact that we modified the Italian Treaty, in respect of Trieste, without the consent of all other parties..." (Foreign Office to British Legation, Budapest, August 19, 1955, FO 371/116371)

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ See for example, Letter from Sir A. Rumbold, Undated, [probably April 1955], FO 371/116371, PRO; British Legation, Budapest, August 4, 1955 to H.A.F. Hohler, Esq., Northern

whole issue remained entirely at the Soviet latitude.

Rumors on troop withdrawal

In 1955 Khrushchev paid two visits to Romania in a three-month period. On the first visit Khrushchev was accompanied by the other members of the Soviet post-Stalin leadership. The second time, Khrushchev was alone and spent a relatively longer period of time concentrating mainly on Romanian issues.

Essentially, the visit to Bucharest had the purpose of a mini-conference of East European leaders from Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, for a brief on the Belgrade discussions.

After his Belgrade visit, Khrushchev was faced with two related questions: (1) The willingness to consolidate and make credible the Soviet "self critique" toward the Yugoslav regime; (2) the stronger desire to reinforce his own position and to give increased plausibility to the Soviet policy toward the Western world which was already in the process of limited formulation, but which still had to defeat Molotov's opposition, and to outline long-range negotiable objectives.

From Moscow, Ambassador Bohlen sent an analysis of Khrushchev's meeting in Bucharest.²¹ One of the important

Department, Foreign Office, NH 10338/5, FO 371/116371, PRO; Foreign Office to British Legation, Budapest, (from H.A.F. Hohler to C.L.S. Coepe, Esq.) FO 371/116371; British Legation, Budapest, December 16, 1955 to H.A.F. Hohler, Esq., Northern Department, Foreign Office, NH 10338/7, FO 371/116371, PRO.

²¹ Bohlen to Secretary of State, "Visit of Soviet leaders," Moscow 2192, June 7, 1955, RG 59, Decimal File 661.66/6-755.

conclusions of his dispatch was that the meeting sent the message of the Soviet intention of seeking a more stable and permanent basis of relations with its satellites. Obviously, this did not mean willingly losing control over them, but, on the contrary, making certain readjustments based on more realistic assessments of the situation since Stalin's death in order to retain a maximum degree of influence and control.

The British evaluation was more extensive. On June 2, 1955, the British Embassy in Moscow sent a telegram to the Foreign Office which was intended to be a general dispatch on Soviet foreign policy. This cable did not exclude the possibility that

The Russians might quite conceivably be contemplating the withdrawal of their forces from the satellites in return for the neutralization of Germany²²

The latter statement was made in view of speculation that the Russians could include part of the satellite area in the "neutral belt" which they had proposed to create. However, this remains the first reference to a possible Soviet withdrawal of troops from East European countries.²³

²² British Embassy, Moscow to Sir Ivonne Kirkpatrick, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., Foreign Office, June 2, 1955, FO 371/116114, PRO.

²³ Memorandum "Soviet Control of the Satellites," Undated, FO 371/116114, PRO.

During the same period, a brief by the Northern Division (Foreign Office) made a follow-up evaluation on the possibility of Soviet troop withdrawal from some East European countries as a result of a Yugoslavian demand and a Soviet gesture of good-will. The document was similar to Bohlen's assumption that the Soviet Union does not intend to weaken the link between itself and the Satellites. (Brief, Northern Department, June 11, 1955, FO 371/116114, PRO.)

The first public rumor after the Soviet delegation's visit to Bucharest came at the end of July 1955 when the London Observer published Lajos Lederer's article "Russia to Leave Hungary and Rumania." The well-connected British correspondent in Belgrade gave a deadline: "All Troops Out by October".²⁴ Lederer referred to the June meeting in Bucharest. The report asserted that the Soviet leaders had told the Hungarian and Romanian governments of their intention to withdraw all Russian troops from those two countries by October, simultaneously with the withdrawal from Austria.

Reinforced by information from Bucharest transmitted through diplomatic channels, Lederer's report attracted attention. On August 10, 1955, Harold Schantz, the leading US diplomat in Bucharest, sent a cable to Washington mentioning the statement made by the Romanian Foreign Liaison Officer to the US Army Attache, that the Soviets would evacuate Romania that same autumn: "The Russians will positively move all of their forces out of Rumania by the end of October."(italics added)²⁵ The corresponding British cable from Bucharest admitted that at least Soviet air forces would be withdrawn from Romania, an appraisal which was accepted by the Foreign Office and was considered reliable even after Romanian officials denied any kind of Soviet

²⁴ Observer, July 31, 1955

²⁵ Schantz to the Secretary of State, August 10, 1955, Office of European Affairs, RG 59, Decimal Files 661.66/8-1055, Control 5081.

withdrawal²⁶.

On August 12, 1955, Scinteia published a front page interview given by the Romanian leader Gheorghiu-Dej which strongly denied rumors of the withdrawal of Soviet troops.²⁷ The statement implied that, as long as the Western military grouping continued to be as it was, Soviet troops would remain in Romania. The Gheorghiu-Dej statement was not followed by any comment in the Romanian newspapers.

In some western diplomatic reports the Gheorghiu-Dej interview was considered to be connected with Soviet long-range plans. Thus, it was assessed that the Soviet government wished to extract a price for its troop withdrawal instead of simply acquiring credit for good intentions.²⁸ A handwritten remark appended to the report stated that the Russians may well feel obliged to keep some troops in these two countries, perhaps only as a potential bargaining chip against the withdrawal of US forces from NATO countries. The latter argument could suggest that at this particular moment in London and possibly in

²⁶ British Legation, Bucharest to Foreign Office, August 11, 1955, FO 371/116588, Northern Department, 10338/4, PRO.

²⁷ Raspunsul tovarasului Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej la intrebarea primita din partea d-lui A.L. Bradford, vicepresedinte al agentiei "United Press," Scinteia, 12 August 1955

²⁸ Draft by H.A.F. Hohler, "Stationing of Soviet Troops in Rumania and Hungary", August 19, 1955, Foreign Office, Northern Department, N 1081/3, FO 371/116121, PRO: "Gheorghiu-Dej's remarks suggest that the Soviet Government wish to attempt to exact a price for the withdrawal of their troops instead of acquiring merit. (Italics added) The British report suggests that Hohler paid a visit to Budapest that same year in order to calculate the chances of a Soviet withdrawal.

Washington, some Soviet actions with regard to troop reduction in Europe were expected as part of the new Soviet diplomatic course inaugurated by the signature of the Austrian State Treaty.

The interview given by the Romanian leader was a new development. For the first time an announcement concerning Soviet troops was made not by the Soviet leader, or even by a high Soviet official, but by the leader of the country where the Soviet troops were stationed. Moreover, according to a former Romanian Foreign Office official, who claimed to know the inside story, the Gheorghiu-Dej statement was made without any preliminary consultation with Moscow.²⁹ If this was the case, the statement could be seen as reflecting a certain pressure on Moscow, rather than a Soviet-Romanian agreement or common line of action. From this perspective, Gheorghiu-Dej's statement could please or annoy the Soviet leaders who had to play the Romanian card.³⁰

²⁹ Interview with Corneliu Bogdan, former Romanian Ambassador to the United States, Washington, D.C., March 1989. According to Ambassador Bogdan who at that time held an important position in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gheorghiu-Dej was out of the Romanian capital at one of his usual treatment residences in Olanesti, and the Foreign Minister, G. Preoteasa had to travel there for the final touches to the document.

³⁰ In one of the dispatches of the American Legation in Bucharest on the second Khrushchev visit to Bucharest the possibility was admitted that the visit could represent a reprimand to Gheorghiu-Dej for issuing a denial of the Soviet withdrawal (AmLegation Bucharest 67 to the Department of State, August 31, 1955, RG 59, Decimal File 661.66/8-3155).

Khrushchev's second visit to Romania (August 1955)

The appointment and arrival of the new Soviet Ambassador to Romania A. A. Yepishev³¹ and Khrushchev's second visit to Romania occurred under these circumstances. From the Romanian point of view, Khrushchev's visit was totally unexpected. Since Romania was celebrating its 11th anniversary, normally the highest official from East European countries attending the celebration would have the rank of vice president of the Government. Khrushchev's visit, which was officially one week long, provoked a variety of possible explanations.³²

³¹ I am deliberately mentioning Yepishev's arrival in Bucharest. According to my research, he plays a very important role in the building of Khrushchev's policy towards Romania and was a very influential broker in influencing the Soviet leader as to the rationale of withdrawing troops from Romania. At the same time he reacted as a very sensitive barometer during the clashes for power in Kremlin. US Minister to Bucharest Thayer reported "Yepishev's jubilation" when in 1957 Khrushchev took over supreme power in Moscow (Bucharest Legation [Thayer] to Secretary of State, July 10, 1957, RG 59, Control 6036).

³² Cf to British Legation, Bucharest to Foreign Office, August 25, 1955, FO 371/116588, PRO; British Embassy, Moscow to Foreign Office, August 25, 1955, FO 371/116588, PRO; British Legation, Sofia to Foreign Office, September 2, 1955, FO 371/116309, PRO; AmLegation, Bucharest to Secretary of State, August 31, 1955, RG 59, Decimal File 661.66/8-3155.

Among these explanations: Romania's turn to have a visit from Khrushchev; initiation of a post-Geneva policy of top-level Soviet appearances on Liberation Days, Romania being the first; "good politics" on the part of the Soviet Union; Soviet reprimand of Gheorghiu-Dej's failure to effect a speedy rapprochement with Tito; Gheorghiu-Dej's requirement for a demonstration of Soviet support; an assessment by Khrushchev himself of what the consequences of Soviet troop withdrawal at a future date would be (In this respect it is noticeable that it was rumored that after departing, on his way back to Moscow, Khrushchev might have visited combined manoeuvres somewhere in Romania), (British Legation, Bucharest to Foreign Office,

Khrushchev's memoirs, as well as some other sources which were investigated, point to this visit (August 1955) as the moment when the idea of withdrawing troops from Romania originated in Khrushchev's mind. Essentially Khrushchev confirmed meeting with Romanian officials (and discussing) the question of withdrawing troops from Romania. He stated that the topic was raised by Romanians, namely by Emil Bodnaras, a member of the Politburo and a close supporter of Gheorghiu-Dej. Finally, an examination of Khrushchev's recollections of that particular moment revealed that at this time, he did not accept on principle the idea of withdrawing troops from Eastern Europe.³³

What is missing from Khrushchev's memoirs is the context in which the whole discussion arose, whether as a matter of Soviet-Romanian relations, as a comment on Soviet disarmament proposals, or as an exchange of opinions on Gheorghiu-Dej's interview.

There are some special circumstances which could support in part Khrushchev's version. Khrushchev quoted Bodnaras as holding the position of Minister of Defence, a position which he left shortly after. Bodnaras's name is listed by a British Legation report from Bucharest among the Romanian officials who left with the same train to escort the Soviet leader and returned after two

September 6, 1955, FO 371/116588, PRO); Soviet support for a Gheorghiu-Dej rapprochement with Tito; dissolution of Cominform; a new Soviet policy which required detailed explanation to the satellite governments themselves; a reprimand of Gheorghiu-Dej for issuing a denial of Soviet withdrawal; Khrushchev's desire to revisit Romania for relaxation.

³³ Khrushchev Remembers, translated and edited by Strobe Talbott. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1970, pp. 513-14.

days. This could support the idea of a discussion between Khrushchev and the Romanian leaders, including Bodnaras.³⁴ The official Romanian explanation reported by Western diplomatic representatives in Bucharest, was that Khrushchev had gone hunting.

Khrushchev's journey lasted longer than was initially estimated. Usually, the Soviet media reports both the leader's departure from the host country and his arrival in Moscow. During Khrushchev's visit to Romania Pravda carried no information on his arrival back in Moscow. Khrushchev's presence is mentioned by Pravda only on September 10, as a member of the Soviet delegation at the negotiations with Adenauer. However, Khrushchev was not present one day before when Adenauer arrived.³⁵ This could support the timing of his discussion with the Romanian leaders.

I have received an important confirmation of a Khrushchev-Bodnaras discussion (actually presented as a discussion between Khrushchev and Romanian leaders accompanying him to the hunting party in August 1955) from the former Romanian Ambassador to Washington and to the United Nations Silviu Brucan. Brucan

³⁴ British Legation, Bucharest, September 6, 1955, FO 371/116588, PRO.

³⁵ On August 27, Pravda reported Khrushchev's departure by train from Bucharest. On the following days in Moscow there were many official opportunities for Khrushchev's participation: on August 30 - Dinner at the Yugoslav Embassy; on August 31- Reception at the Yugoslav Embassy; on September 1 - Signature of the Soviet-Yugoslav economic agreements; on September 2- Reception at the Vietnam Democratic Republic Embassy; on September 8 - Adenauer's arrival in Moscow. Khrushchev's name was not mentioned at all.

stated that his story, which supports Khrushchev's recollection, is based on both Gheorghiu-Dej's and Bodnaras' accounts in private discussions held in 1958, as well as later, during the 1970s, shortly before Bodnaras died.

According to Brucan, the Khrushchev talks with Bodnaras, once in Gheorghiu-Dej's presence, were held with no translators. During the talks Khrushchev did not agree to the Romanian proposal. It took another two years until, during a second discussion with the Romanian leaders, namely with Gheorghiu-Dej, Khrushchev again brought up the subject and expressed his agreement to the withdrawal of troops from Romania.

Thus, the August 1955 discussion between Khrushchev and Bodnaras, remained essential to Khrushchev's perception of some possible moves in this area.

This period connected by Khrushchev's two visits to Romania could be considered as STAGE ONE of the process of formation of the Soviet decision to withdraw its troops from Romania. It consists essentially of the way Khrushchev's perception was built in choosing the most valuable move to improve Soviet post-Stalin strategy and position in Europe. Probably, between the two visits, Khrushchev alone, or under advisement of the newly appointed ambassador to Bucharest, drew an initial plan according to which an unilateral Soviet withdrawal from an East European country, with no damage to Soviet military posture in the whole area, could be followed by negotiations with the West.

It is also possible to consider the existence, as an outside

input, of some kind of Romanian involvement. I do not exclude that a discussion between Khrushchev and the Romanian hosts took place, but probably at Khrushchev's initiative, eventually including an exchange of opinion on the problem of troop withdrawal. In accordance with this, the Romanian opinions played an "advisory" role, reinforcing or diminishing some of Khrushchev's own perceptions. However, I consider more plausible Bohlen's opinion on that subject, expressed more than one year after Khrushchev's second visit to Romania. In December 1956, discussing Soviet policy in Eastern Europe and the problem of troop withdrawal, as it was expressed in a Moscow statement from October 30, 1956, he wrote:

On troop withdrawal question, according to our information, this was not raised in absolute form by Poles and not at all by Romanians³⁶

I presume that (a) it was too early for the Romanian leaders to speak this way with Khrushchev; moreover at this particular time Khrushchev's influence on Kremlin decisionmaking was not clear; (b) at the same time, Khrushchev could not accept this kind of suggestion; it was a matter involving fundamental Soviet interests to the highest degree, to admit that somebody else, other than the Soviets could have and recommend solutions was impossible.

³⁶ Moscow to Secretary of State, No. 1413, December 10, 1956, RG 59, Decimal File 660.61/12-1056.

The same opinion was expressed by Robert Bowie and the former charge to Bucharest Emory Swank in the interviews I have with them on two separate occasions in Washington, DC.

1956: A bonus for Romania

One of the developments relevant to the subject of this research is the evolution of relations between Yugoslavia and Romania. Some scholars on Eastern Europe wrote about Tito's reasons for developing some kind of special relation with Gheorghiu-Dej during the first years of post-Stalin leadership or at least for improving the bilateral relations between the two countries.³⁷ I would not exclude, in addition, that Tito's rationale was also motivated by his intention to use the bordering East European communist countries as assets and not liabilities in Yugoslavia's relations with the Soviet Union. From this perspective, Yugoslavia was already prepared to continue to act in favor of a more independent status for Romania within the Soviet system. Gheorghiu-Dej certainly understood Tito's intention to play a greater role in Eastern Europe and accepted Yugoslavia's plans. In his Moscow Diary, Micunovic explained that Soviet-Yugoslav agreements concluded during Tito's visit to Moscow in June 1956 in offering "Romania and the other countries of the 'camp' greater room for maneuver in their struggle for independence and equality in relations with the Soviet Union."³⁸ Micunovic also described Tito's return from Moscow through

³⁷ See for example Ghita Ionescu, Communism in Romania 1944-1962, London: 1964, Oxford University Press, pp. 272-73.

³⁸ Veljko Micunovic, Moscow Diary, New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1980, p. 75.

Romania, which he considered a triumphal progress.³⁹

The most suitable area in Soviet foreign policy which Tito could address with a view to indirectly offering to the East Europeans more room for maneuver was the area of arms control and disarmament.⁴⁰ At the time of Tito's visit to the Soviet Union and to Romania, there was a great deal of speculation about the possibility of Soviet troop withdrawal from Romania and Hungary- countries bordering Yugoslavia--as a goodwill gesture from the Soviet Union.

The Foreign Office was inclined in June to accept the rationale of a Soviet troop withdrawal in connection with Tito's visit to Moscow, and adopted a diplomatic position as a possible explanation in case such a withdrawal took place.⁴¹ The US point of view concerning the Soviet domination of the Satellites was more nuanced. An NSC Staff Study dating from approximately the

³⁹ According to Micunovic, Tito's travel to Moscow passing through Romania was a deliberate choice. (Micunovic, Ibid. p. 59)

⁴⁰ Soviet diplomacy chose disarmament as the most appropriate topic in which post-Stalin policy could be promoted, and in which an improvement in Soviet relations with the Western Powers could be obtained.

During 1955 and early 1956, the USSR continuously tried to act primarily in the arms control area. Despite the domestic agenda and the campaign which followed the 20th Congress, the Soviets made an impressive diplomatic effort in the area of disarmament; they agreed, for a short time, even to the implementation of verification measures, a subject where, for the next three decades, the Soviet Government did not accept any Western proposals.

⁴¹ "Soviet control can be maintained by economic and administrative means without the actual presence of the Red Army." (Foreign Office Minute, June 5, FO 371/122068, PRO.)

same period considered that the Soviet forces, stationed in Poland, Hungary and Romania were probably not essential to the maintenance of Soviet control over those countries "what counts is rather Moscow's over-all military ability to dominate this region."⁴² (Italics added)

During 1956 Tito visited Bucharest twice, in both cases, after his negotiations with the Soviets. Concerning the June visit to Bucharest, Tito did not mention his intention to his Soviet hosts.⁴³

The second Khrushchev-Tito meeting and discussions in Crimea were areas open for speculation. On October 2, 1956, the Reuter correspondent reported from Vienna that the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary and Romania was one of the principal subjects of the discussions in Crimea. In addition to reporting the Reuter dispatch, a British diplomatic cable also sent from Vienna made reference to the cancellation of Hungarian passenger trains for a period of three weeks,⁴⁴ supposedly due to "the imminence of the Russian troop withdrawal rather than to the coal shortage."⁴⁵ Finally, on October 4, The Times mentioned the confirmation of

⁴² National Security Council, "U.S. Policy Toward the Soviet Satellites in Eastern Europe," Annex to NSC 5608, July 6, 1956, p.1, (provisional) Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

⁴³ Micunovic's Diary gives the impression that this was a deliberately well-guarded secret. (Micunovic, op. cit. pp.74-5)

⁴⁴ It was announced in Budapest on September 26 that over a period of three weeks from September 30, six hundred passenger trains in Hungary would be cancelled.

⁴⁵ British Embassy, Vienna No. 182, October 2, 1956, FO 371/122086, PRO.

the Reuter's report by travellers reaching Vienna from Budapest.

The Foreign Office rejected the possibility of a Soviet troop withdrawal at that time. It is not clear if this attitude was due to the flow of information about the increasingly tense situation in Hungary, or to the absence of reliable information on the Yalta discussion. Nevertheless, the Soviet system was faced with growing uncertainties and increasing troubles, especially because of the developments in Hungary and the fact that Soviet behavior was again not far from playing the military card.

It was not the intention of this research to discuss per se the Hungarian uprising or its impact. It is essential, however, to examine to what extent Romanian political behavior during the Hungarian uprising reinforced Khrushchev's conviction that it could withdraw Soviet troops from Romania at any time without endangering Soviet interests.

For several reasons, including long-time historical apprehensions, Romania compared to other East European countries played a key and unique role in the Soviet scenario of crushing the Hungarian uprising. I consider that, in evaluating the entire process of the Soviet decision to withdraw its troops from Romania, Romanian political, ideological, and even military behavior during the Hungarian uprising has to be considered as the most favorable prerequisite.

There were many ways in which Romania succeeded in pleasing the Soviets. I will emphasize essentially the military reasons.

At the beginning of the Hungarian crisis, the Romanian media maintained a complete blackout on the subject. Due to Gheorghiu-Dej's absence from Bucharest,⁴⁶ the Romanian officials who were contacted by western diplomats gave ambiguous explanations about the events in Hungary.⁴⁷ On the 28th, the tone started to change.⁴⁸ On October 31, Scinteia published the Declaration of the Soviet Government in which the readiness to open negotiation with other East European countries for the withdrawal of Soviet forces stationed in those countries was expressed. However, the Romanian public, as well as the western, were not aware for many years of the fact that on November 1, Khrushchev and Malenkov paid a secret visit to Romania to meet the Romanian, Czechoslovak and Bulgarian leaders. Khrushchev did not expect, and probably was not concerned with any possible objections to the already adopted decision to intervene in Hungary. "The leaders of the fraternal Socialist countries were unanimous: we

⁴⁶ Between October 19 and October 28, a Romanian official delegation headed by Gheorghiu-Dej visited Belgrade.

⁴⁷ The US Legation in Bucharest in response to its inquiry on the developments referring to the Polish and Hungarian situation, received from Alexandru Lazareanu, the Deputy Foreign Minister and from the Foreign Office desk officer Gabor the following comment: "Things are just as they should be: Let people decide. It is (the) necessary process of democratization. (Bucharest Legation to the Secretary of State, October 25, 1956, RG 59, Decimal File 764.00/10-2556 HBS.)

⁴⁸ The Romanian press gave information about the Soviet troops' first intervention in Hungary, in a most atypical way, by quoting the statement made by the US Department of State spokesman. The latter referred to a Hungarian official diplomatic communication. This way, no reference was made of the involvement of the Soviet military units stationed in Romania. (Scinteia, 29 October 1956)

had to act swiftly," mentioned Khrushchev in his memoirs.⁴⁹ Moreover, Khrushchev received a voluntary offer of military support from the Romanian and Bulgarian leaders.⁵⁰

Recent statements confirm the possibility of a Romanian military involvement in Hungary.⁵¹ Romania was the most active eastern ally in supporting Soviet policy and objectives at this particular moment. The Soviet leadership rejected any direct military involvement from the satellite countries. US military sources considered that the reason behind this decision was probably the substantive downward revision in the Soviet estimate of the reliability of the satellites' armed forces and secret police.⁵² In this respect, the US Legation in Romania made the following estimation:

Evidence now overwhelming that Rumania aided and abetted Soviets in their attack on Hungary by permitting Soviet troops to pass through Rumania over Hungarian border and by affording them base from which to take aggressive action. Troop movements probably still in progress.⁵³

⁴⁹ Khrushchev Remembers, p. 420.

⁵⁰ Ibid. However, in Brioni, according to Micunovic, Khrushchev mentioned only the Romanian offer. During this period I recall that among the media word was circulating that Romanian troop involvement in Hungary could be imminent.

⁵¹ In a press conference in Budapest, Gyula Horn, the Foreign Minister of Hungary mentioned: "We are also aware that the Romanian leadership at that time was also ready to contribute militarily to 'bringing order to Hungary'" (Nepszabadsag, 10 June, 1989. Quoted from FBIS-EEU-89-115, 16 June, 1989, p. 35 (English translation by FBIS).

⁵² Memorandum, "Reliability of Satellite Armed Forces," 6 Dec. 1956, RG 218, Chairman's File, Admiral Redford, 1953-1956.

⁵³ Bucharest Legation to Secretary of State, No. 256, November 6, 1956, RG 59, Decimal File 764.00/11-656.

There are many additional details on Soviet troop facilities during that period of time including the areas, mainly Soviet military bases which were "off limits" to all Romanians.⁵⁴ One important detail: shortly after the Hungarian uprising, when the transportation of the Soviet troops over Romanian territory was extremely important for the USSR, Bodnaras was appointed Minister of Transportation and Communication.

Other areas of the Romanian involvement during the Hungarian uprising were the deportation of Hungarian,⁵⁵ and political support.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Bucharest Legation to Secretary of State, No. 298, November 16, 1956, RG 59, Decimal File 764.00/11-1656.

⁵⁵ The basic reference on this subject are contained in the United Nations, Report of the Special Committee on the problem of Hungary, General Assembly, Official Records: Eleventh Session, Supplement No. 18(A/3592), pp. 124-5. Romania had an indirect involvement in the deportation of Hungarians by Soviets. On November 23, 1956 a US dispatch from Budapest mentioned the "use of Romanian transportation facilities for deportation Hungarian people." In his oral history interview, which was done for the Eisenhower Library, former US Minister to Romania, Thayer confirmed the facts concerning the Romanian regime's involvement in the Soviet deportation of Hungarians through Romania. (Robert H. Thayer, Oral History Interview 243, pp. 24-25, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.)

⁵⁶ Robert H. Thayer, U.S. Minister to Romania, reported from Bucharest the Romanian press attacks of unusual violence on developments in Hungary and a "possible beginning conditioning people for announcement intervention in Hungary on large scale." Thayer's perception, based in this case exclusively on the language used by the media reports, was highly accurate." (Bucharest Legation to Secretary of State, no. 241, November 2, 1956, RG 59, Control 1753.) It was obvious that the Bucharest regime preferred the establishment of a repressive regime in Hungary instead of a government pledged to introduce liberal reforms. (British Legation, Bucharest to Foreign Office, No. 342, 22 Nov. 1956, FO 371/122412, PRO.)

A separate question which so far the public analyses have neglected is the Romanian involvement in Nagy's abduction. Romanian official action looks even today, after more than three decades, like a predetermined political act taken with no hesitation.⁵⁷

THE POST-HUNGARY TRANSITION: STATUS-OF-FORCES AGREEMENTS

After the Hungarian crisis the relationship between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe entered into a transition period for which new rules and relations had to be elaborated. The Declaration of the Soviet Government of October 30, which was outlined under the pressure of Polish and Hungarian developments, could not be accepted by Soviet leaders as the ideal framework for this specific period. It appeared necessary that the transition be governed by rearrangements and adjustments.

⁵⁷ On November 22, when Nagy was abducted and on the following day a Romanian official delegation, headed by Gheorghiu-Dej was in Budapest for negotiations with Kadar, so the agreement on according a so-called asylum to Nagy must have been made by Gheorghiu-Dej himself, and possibly this was one of the reasons for the Romanian visit to Budapest.

At the United Nations, Romanian Foreign Minister G. Preoteasa reiterated the story, mentioning that Romania had granted asylum to Nagy, a report which was not published by Romanian newspapers. Thayer cabled from Bucharest: "Romanian Foreign Minister's emphasis on Nagy's personal relief and gratitude at being in Romania, offers good opening for must be presumed that if Nagy now able to act for self he would wish receive GA's [UN General Assembly] representatives and give them convincing ocular proof he not under duress." (Bucharest Legation to Secretary of State, No. 375, December 12, RG 59, Decimal File 764.00/12-1256.)

Romania did not allow the UN Representatives' visit.

The instrument of adjustment found in the military area was the conclusion of status-of-forces agreements, defining the number of Soviet troops stationed in the East European countries and their obligations.⁵⁸ It was a compromise between an indefinite deployment of Soviet troops and the promise made in the Declaration of October 30 to negotiate their withdrawal.

It can be assumed that the decision on this new formula was made in Moscow some time during the middle of November 1956, with Poland especially in mind. During the Polish-Soviet discussion in Moscow (November 15-18, 1956) this formula came into the picture for the first time.⁵⁹ Following the Moscow talks on December 17, 1956, an agreement regulating the status of Soviet troops in Poland was signed in Warsaw. One week later, a Romanian delegation arrived in Moscow. The joint Romanian-Soviet statement declared that both governments considered it "appropriate" that the Soviet troops be temporarily stationed in Romania. However, there was no reference to the conclusion of a status-of-forces agreement. The Romanian visit concentrated

⁵⁸ Status-of-Forces agreements were concluded in the following order: with Poland (December 1956); with the GDR (March 1957); with Romania (April 1957); with Hungary (May 1957). After the invasion of Czechoslovakia, a similar agreement was concluded in October 1968.

⁵⁹ Both sides stated that the temporary presence of Soviet Army units on Polish territory is desirable, mentioning in addition that both sides would "consult each other on the problem connected with the presence of Soviet Army units, their number, and their composition" and that the status of these forces should be determined by certain principles to be embodied in a formal agreement to be concluded in the near future. (Keesing's, December 1-8, 1956, p. 15242.)

mainly on economic issues.

According to my analysis, the Romanian side insisted that the visit take place immediately after the Polish talks. Witnessing the generous Soviet economic concession to the Poles, the Romanian leadership possibly wanted to collect the expected bonus for being so heavily involved on the Soviet side in the Hungarian affair.

Assessing the Romanian visit, it is important to notice that it took 10 days comparing with three, which was the duration of the Polish visit.⁶⁰ The Romanian-Soviet communique showed that the Romanians had secured food and economic aid and also longer credit for the repayment of certain loans.⁶¹ However, it was a limited bonus. The evaluation by the US Embassy in Moscow stated that the amount of Soviet credit offered to Romania was apparently no greater than the amount granted to Bulgaria and to East Germany before the Hungarian events, and much less advantageous than the Soviet concessions accorded to Poland.⁶² From Bucharest, the US envoy signaled the disappointment of

⁶⁰ The Romanian coverage of this visit shows a large interruption, until the beginning of December when the reports start to be published again. (Scinteia, between November 27 and December 2 did not publish any information on this subject.)

⁶¹ Moscow Embassy (Bohlen) to Secretary of State, No. 1392, December 6, 1956, RG 59, Decimal File 661.66/12-656. In his cable Bohlen emphasized the evidence of a minimum amount of bargaining during the negotiations. After one week of discussions the final communique and the statements made in Moscow showed again the usual strong alignment of the Romanians at all points with the main lines of Soviet foreign policy.

⁶² Ibid.

Romanian officials.⁶³

Moscow acted on its list of priorities. The situations in Poland and East Germany were at the top of the list. Irrespective of its 1956 policy, Romania's position in the Soviet bloc did not improve. At the same time, perhaps the Romanian regime had no desire for a radical change in its political and military relationship with the USSR. An analysis made by the US Legation in Bucharest pointed out that the retention of Soviet troops in Romania was perceived as being in full accordance with the Romanian regime's interests.⁶⁴

There are several differences in the Status-of-Forces agreements concluded with the various Eastern countries.⁶⁵ For

⁶³ Bucharest Legation to Secretary of State, No. 356, December 5, 1956, RG 59, Decimal File 661.66/12-556: "Western diplomatic sources whose information in past has often proved reliable and who claims contacts Rumanian Communists says latter had expected from visit Rumanian delegate Moscow about what Poles got, i.e., cancellation all debts to USSR incurred prior some very recent date; credit out of which Rumanian might buy Soviet products chosen by selves; and increased prices for goods sold USSR. These Rumanian Communists say Rumania got no cancellation of debts; grain and fodder only in place credits; and no increased prices for Rumanian goods delivered to USSR. They severely disappointed this outcome, and particularly hurt by circumstances prices paid uranium were not increased."

⁶⁴ "[US] Legation has always maintained regime would insist Soviet troops remain due to hostility Rumanian population and unlikelihood loyalty Rumanian Army in crisis." Bucharest Legation to Secretary of State, No. 355, December 4, 1956, RG 59, Decimal File, 661.66/12-456.

⁶⁵ On Status-of-Forces Agreements see Scinteia, 17 April 1957, for the Rumanian text of the Agreement; Keesing's, December 22-31, 1956 (Agreement on Status of Soviet Forces in Poland), p. 15275; Keesing's, May 11-18, 1957 (SOVIET UNION-RUMANIA. Agreement on Status of Soviet Troops), p. 15538; Moscow Embassy to Secretary of State, No. 2143, March 15, 1957, RG 59, Decimal

example, the agreement with Poland mentioned a more precise idea of Soviet troops' fixed location (no troop movements outside these locations were permitted without Polish authorization); the agreement with the GDR and Romania have no restrictions on Soviet troop location and their movements. None of the Status-of-Forces agreements provided any details on numbers, character and locations of Soviet forces. In addition, according to Soviet-Romanian agreement the Soviet Government in practice exempted Soviet troops from Romanian jurisdiction when on duty.

The period which could be identified with the Hungarian uprising represented STAGE TWO of the decisionmaking process of withdrawing troops from Romania. It was a serious setback for Khrushchev's policy. Not only Khrushchev, but also the East European regimes felt threatened by the Hungarian uprising. However, Hungary provided, at the same time, an additional element favorable to Khrushchev's intention of a limited withdrawal from Eastern Europe: the Soviet garrison which Moscow decided to leave in place was more than double the size of the Soviet troop deployment in Hungary before the uprising. This way, conditions were created for the potential implementation of a compensatory strategy concerning Soviet military posture in this area, which represented a major guarantee of being supported

File, 661.62B/3-1557. Bucharest Legation to Secretary of State, No. 606, April 17, 1957, RG 59, Decimal File 661.66/4-1757.(Comment on Soviet-Romanian Agreement on Status-of-Forces); British Legation, Bucharest to Foreign Office, No. 52S, April 18, 1957, FO 371/128904, PRO (Comment on Soviet-Romanian Agreement on Status-of-Forces).

by the Soviet military and an additional involvement of the military on Khrushchev's side in his future plans. This way Khrushchev succeeded in remaining on the best terms with the Soviet military, playing the military card in Hungary, and starting the transitional post-Hungary process, having once again the Soviet military as close allies.

**THE KHRUSHCHEV YEARS AND SOVIET RELATIONS WITH ROMANIA (II)
THE FINAL DECISION PERIOD**

This research assumes that the final decision made by Moscow to withdraw Soviet troops from Romania occurred during the period of late April-early July 1957. This coincided with the period after the conclusion of the Status-of-Forces Agreement with Romania and with Khrushchev's taking full power in the Kremlin. Analyzing the developments in Soviet official politics toward Europe in relation to the information and analyses provided by the diplomatic and military declassified Archive documents, it becomes evident that during this period there was a strong relation between military and political actions in Moscow directed towards starting a new peace offensive along the lines of long-term Soviet objectives.

I have in mind first of all the involvement of the Soviet military leadership, as a powerful group in the comprehensive Soviet campaign. Evidence exists of the strong alliance existing between Khrushchev and the military, including the special relationship between Khrushchev and Zhukov which culminated in July 1957 when, with Zhukov's help, Khrushchev ousted the

opposition group in the Politburo.

In late April 1957, the Soviet military, and, most probably Zhukov's close associates, apparently embarked on an extensive campaign of disinformation⁶⁶ which by all probabilities served its purpose. Several messages both from the British and United States diplomatic sources in Bucharest started to report during the month of April, 1957 that according to their information the Soviet General Staff was in the process of reconsidering Romania's strategic value after the Hungarian events.⁶⁷

Similarly, there were intense rumors from the same sources concerning Soviet plans to station large bodies of troops in Romania, mentioning figures of 200 to 300,000 and some figures even higher.⁶⁸ The reason advanced to explain these plans was a combination of the intention to deploy Soviet forces strategically to meet possible trouble in the Middle East with "the rearrangement of the Soviet defensive barrier resulting from the conviction that since the Hungarian events, satellite armies

⁶⁶ This was not the first time than Zhukov acted as a direct disinformation agent. The former Ambassador to Moscow, Charles Bohlen reported similar Zhukov behavior during the Hungarian crisis.

⁶⁷ British Minister in Bucharest, Alan Dudley, expressed the following opinion to the Foreign Office: "My personal impression is not only that military value of Roumania for offence and defence is well appreciated by the Soviet Union, but that efforts are now being made to develop its potentialities." (Italics added) (British Legation, Bucharest to Foreign Office, 1017/2/57G, April 9, 1957, N1011/19, FO 371, PRO.)

⁶⁸ Bucharest Legation to Secretary of State, No. 628, April 27, 1957, RG 59, Decimal File 661.66/42757.

are a potential liability rather than an asset."⁶⁹ What were the sources of these rumors? The US Minister in Bucharest gave the following details:

In the last two days western diplomats known to have good local sources as well as our own local sources have not only repeated to me these rumors but added reports tending to partially confirm them.⁷⁰

Finally Zhukov during the signature of the Status-of-Forces agreement with Romania, redefined the country's geopolitical position declaring that "the Armed Forces of the Romanian Popular Republic guard the frontier of the Socialist camp."⁷¹ (Italics added)

The fact that there were some doubts about this unexpectedly generous flow of information has to be taken into account.⁷² It was impossible to admit that in a very short time after the Hungarian events the Soviet Union could afford to pay

⁶⁹ Ibid. A separate Joint State-Army message was sent to Washington ten days earlier, having approximately the same perception of potential changes in the Soviet intentions in the geographical area which included both Romania and Hungary: "Subsequent Hungarian uprising, with realization Hungarian land area and armed forces do not constitute such cushion to current status RPR [Romanian Popular Republic] as had been thought, training activities Rumanian troops have increased. Possible that need for presence Rumania of larger and perhaps, more various Soviet forces, conducting own exercises, thought necessary in order to guarantee adequate control." (Italics added) (Bucharest to Secretary of State, "Joint State-Army Message," No. 607, April 17, RG 59, Decimal File 661.66/4-1757.)

⁷⁰ Bucharest Legation to Secretary of State No.628, April 27, 1957, Op.Cit.

⁷¹ Romania Libera, April 16, 1957.

⁷² "Legation is not (repeat not) prepared to subscribe to accuracy of all these reports but in view their increasing numbers, sources and cogency, they are forwarded.." (Ibid.)

the price of deploying such immense numbers of armed forces in Eastern Europe, or even to signal their potential involvement in a Middle East crisis. Evidently, the purpose had to be different: to emphasize a so-called new value of Romania in Soviet eyes.

Political and diplomatic actions

At the same time, in April 1957, other developments took place in the political area concerning the Soviet opening on what became known as the military disengagement in Europe. There were changes especially in the Soviet consideration of the area to be submitted to a military disengagement. For the first time, starting in April 1957, **Romania was included** in that area.⁷³

This was connected by the Soviets with their proposal of Great Power reduction and withdrawal of their troops from other countries. On April 21, Pravda gave the first signal.⁷⁴ This could possibly mean that it reflected the Kremlin leadership's general position, rather than only Khrushchev's personal view.

This position was reiterated in a Khrushchev interview for

⁷³ Extremely valuable in this respect were Eugene Hinterhoff, Disengagement, London, 1959 and Bruce Russett and Carlyne Cooper, Arms Control in Europe: Proposals and Political Constraints, Yale University, 1967 as well as the extensive interviews held in London and Washington during 1988 and 1989 with Malcolm Mackintosh.

⁷⁴ "Naturally, if the Western powers accepted Soviet proposals to withdraw their troops from territories of other countries and liquidate military bases, there would be no need for Soviet troops to remain on territories of Poland, the [East] German Democratic Republic, Hungary & Rumania." (The English text from Facts on File, April 18-April 24, 1957, p. 130)

CBS.⁷⁵ Including Romania on the potential bargain list, at the same time the West got "information" about her increased military value in the Soviet order of battle, could suggest that in April at least a preliminary understanding between Khrushchev and the military and possibly the Politburo was reached.⁷⁶

Khrushchev-Tito meeting in Bucharest (August, 1957)

According to Micunovic, the arrangements for the Khrushchev-Tito meeting in Bucharest were made after the Soviet leader was in full control in the Kremlin. The talks took place at Snagov, near Bucharest. Apart from official Soviet-Yugoslav discussions, the Romanian leaders, led by Gheorghiu-Dej, were present at the lunches and dinners together with the Soviet and Yugoslav delegations.⁷⁷

The Bucharest meeting would have been the most logical timing for Khrushchev to announce to both Tito and Gheorghiu-Dej that the USSR had decided to withdraw its troops from Romania and one Soviet division from Hungary, and even fixed a timetable for it. The decision was probably made shortly before Khrushchev left for Bucharest, possibly as a part of the preparation for the

⁷⁵ Scinteia, June 5, 1957. The interview was published on two pages: "Why couldn't the U.S. and other countries withdraw their troops from Germany, from the other countries of the West, namely from France, Italy, Turkey, Greece ... while we withdraw our troops from Eastern Germany, Poland, Hungary, Rumania."

⁷⁶ In his memoirs, Khrushchev stated that he repeatedly discussed this matter with the Soviet leadership.

⁷⁷ Micunovic, Moscow Diary, Op. Cit, p. 289-90

meeting with the Yugoslav leader.⁷⁸

Furthermore, a Soviet decision on troop reduction was announced on January 6, 1958. According to the announcement, Soviet armed forces were cut by 300,000, including 17,000 Soviet troops stationed in Hungary.⁷⁹ The fact is that in carrying out this reduction, USSR made no reference to any "common agreement" with Hungary. However, the May 1958 Warsaw Pact communique stated that "the Soviet Government, in agreement with the Hungarian Government, decided to reduce the Soviet troops stationed in Hungary during 1958 by one division."⁸⁰ (Italics added) Why did the Soviets use two different ways of formulating the same operation of troop reduction in Hungary? Why did they refer in the Moscow communique to the Soviet reduction (by one division) to be completed during 1958? Were there two consecutive Soviet troop reductions at a three months distance? British documents,

⁷⁸ The timing of Khrushchev's words: "In short, I decided we should reconsider the proposal Comrade Bodnaras had made. I raised the question in our leadership. We asked our Minister of Defense for his opinion.* He agreed fully, with my proposal, and we decided to go ahead." (Khrushchev Remembers, The Last Testament, Op. Cit. p.229) could refer only to the period after he was in full control. After the Hungarian crisis it was not easy for Khrushchev to get his proposals approved by the Politburo.

* By the footnote it is suggested that Malinowski, who replaced Zhukov in the fall of 1957, participated at the discussion mentioned by Khrushchev. There is no proof of this, nor any proof that Zhukov, who was already involved in Status-of-Forces Agreements, was not in the position of Minister of Defense when the discussion occurred in the Politburo.

⁷⁹ Keesing's, January 11-18, 1958, p. 15960.

⁸⁰ Keesing's, July 19-26, 1958, p. 16301.

declassified in 1989, as well as US documents confirmed that there was a Soviet troop withdrawal from Hungary prior to the Warsaw Pact meeting itself.⁸¹

Thus, British diplomatic reports from Budapest, stated that the withdrawal of Soviet troops from some areas in Hungary were already in effect at the end of February-early March, 1958. In addition, the report dated March 13, 1958 contains the assessments made by the British Military Attache in Hungary entirely supporting the fact that some withdrawals had in effect took place.⁸² At the same time there were no reports on a second withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. This led to the assumption that (a) the Warsaw Pact communique took in account the Soviet troop withdrawal from Hungary which was already completed and (b) that the decision on the troop withdrawal from

⁸¹ There are three British documents related to this subject: reports from February 28, March 7, and March 13, 1958 under the Foreign Office File FO 371/134871. All of them referred to withdrawals of Soviet troops from Hungary.

The same fact was reported by US Legation in Budapest on March 11, 1958 (RG 59, Decimal File 761.5/3-1158)

⁸² British Legation, Budapest to Northern Department, Foreign Office (1018), March 13, 1958, NH 10338/1, FO 371/134871, PRO. The dispatch mentioned that Soviet troops, as well as all the equipment, were withdrawn from part of Eastern Hungary, including Debrecen, Nyiregyhaza and Miskolc.

In this respect I disagree with some assumptions made in writings on Romania that the trip made by an official Romanian delegation formed by Stoica, Bodnaras and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bunaciu to the Middle and Far East in March 1958 has been an opportunity for Romania in presenting publicly its argument for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops. (Stephen Fisher-Galati, The New Romania, Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1967, p. 70) On the contrary it is more reasonable to assume that the Romanian delegation acted on the line of the decision already taken by Moscow, and knowing that the withdrawal process in the area had always started.

both Hungary and Romania was taken before January 1958, as a common action.

In the meantime, several other developments support this assumption on the timing of the final decision on troops withdrawal.

Soviet-Yugoslav relations. As previously mentioned, Khrushchev was interested not only in announcing the Soviet decision to the Romanians, but also in demonstrating to Tito that he, Khrushchev, as the new Soviet leader, was keeping his promises, knowing also that the withdrawal of Soviet troops from a country bordering Yugoslavia would be an impressive gesture of goodwill.

Khrushchev-Gheorghiu-Dej meeting. In his memoirs, Khrushchev refers to a second discussion, this time with Gheorghiu-Dej, about the presence of Soviet troops in Romania. According to existing records, such a discussion between Khrushchev and Gheorghiu-Dej could have taken place either in November 1956, when the Romanian delegation visited Moscow, in August 1957, when Khrushchev visited Bucharest for the meeting with Tito, or during the Warsaw Pact meeting in Moscow at the end of May when the withdrawal was announced. Gheorghiu-Dej did not attend the October Revolution celebration, on November 7, 1957, nor was he a member of the Romanian delegation which made a brief stop in Moscow in April 1958 after an Asian tour.⁸³ I would exclude that

⁸³ Robin Remington states that "from April 1957 to May 1958, high-level Soviet-Romanian leaders met only twice: at the November celebrations of the October Revolution and then briefly

in November 1956, when 200,000 Soviet troops were still in Hungary, and when the Romanian leadership, as other East European leaders, consented to the future stationing of Soviet troops, Gheorghiu-Dej would bring up the subject of their withdrawal in the manner described by Khrushchev in his memoir. I would fix the timing of this discussion in August 1957. And if it is admitted that a discussion on the subject of Soviet troop withdrawal took place at this time, it has to be admitted that it referred not only to past but mainly to future Soviet intention.

Romanian relations with Yugoslavia. There are several declassified diplomatic reports dating from this period mentioning the fact that Romania took a cautious course in the anti-Yugoslav campaign, and that the improvement in Romanian relations with Yugoslavia "seems likely to gain impetus."⁸⁴ In addition one of the main Yugoslav explanation concerning its interest in improving relations with Romania, was that Romania,

when a Rumanian delegation returned from an extended tour of Asia in April 1958." (Robin Alison Remington, The Warsaw Pact, Cases Studies in Communist Conflict Resolution, Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1969, p.61). However, Remington did not count Khrushchev's meeting with Romanian leaders in Bucharest in August 1957.

⁸⁴ British Legation, Bucharest to Foreign Office, 1033/57, July 10, 1957, NR 10392/12, FO 371/128912, PRO. US Ambassador to Belgrade, Riddleberger, signaled to Washington, a short time after Bucharest meeting took place that "Yugoslavia gave further evidence of its approval of Romanian policy toward Yugoslavia by publishing congratulatory editorials in Borba and Politika... Yugoslavia apparently reserves such editorial treatment for its friends as similar editorials were published on occasion Polish national holiday July 22, while none appeared on Czech national holiday, May 9." (Belgrade Embassy to Secretary of State, No. 299, August 22, 1957, RG 59, Decimal File 666.68/8-2257.)

almost alone among the states bordering on Yugoslavia, has no revisionist aspiration which could be utilized under proper circumstances by a third (great) power to encourage an attack on Yugoslavia.⁸⁵

Meanwhile, the fact that Bucharest was chosen as the place for the Soviet-Yugoslav meeting offered to Romania the possibility of acting from a special position; it emphasized--to use the words of a US diplomatic report from Bucharest--the "mediatory" role which appears to have been selected for it [Romania] in connection with the Soviet-Yugoslav relationship.⁸⁶ The Romanian attitude toward Yugoslavia, which did not entirely follow other East European countries' behavior, reflected, possibly, the Romanian regime's interest in preserving Yugoslavia's willingness to continue, as in the past, to support some Romanian long-range interests.

There is at the same time another important detail reported by US Minister Thayer in early October 1957 which to my knowledge never before surfaced. It refers to the fact that Yugoslavia had a regular and intimate contact in the Romanian Politburo and that this contact was General Bodnaras. The Yugoslav Ambassador to Bucharest confirmed to Thayer that Bodnaras "was a very old friend of Marshal Tito, dating back to [World War II] war's day." Moreover, shortly after Tito's visit to Bucharest to meet

⁸⁵ AmEmbassy Belgrade to The Department of State, no 439, February 1957, RG 59, Decimal File 666.68/2-1257 HBS.

⁸⁶ Bucharest Legation to Secretary of State, No. 81, August 4, 1957, RG 59, Decimal File 661.66/8-457.

Khrushchev, Bodnaras paid a sudden visit to Belgrade.⁸⁷ No doubt, a Tito-Bodnaras connection could possibly shed more light on the making of the Soviet decision to withdraw troops from Romania, as well as in many related matters.

The first wave of Romania's harsh internal measures. The Romanian regime took on two stages of harsh internal political measures with a view to tightening control in all areas of political, cultural and economic life. The first wave started only one week after the Tito-Khrushchev meeting in Bucharest; the second, very shortly after the withdrawal of Soviet troops, in 1958.⁸⁸

Relevant documents concerning the Khrushchev-Tito meeting in Bucharest were not available at the time this research was conducted, except for some isolated diplomatic reports on related topics from the British Archives that offer some thoughts and indirect estimates on the discussions in Romania. However, based on existing material, as well as on writings about Khrushchev, I consider that his policy in general, as well as at this particular moment, could not be estranged from the political

⁸⁷ Amlegation Bucharest to the Department of State, No.166, "Rumanian Liaison With Yugoslavia," October 8, 1957, RG 59, Decimal File 666.68/10-857 HBS

⁸⁸ The Romanian publication Buletinul Oficial (no. 324, 16th of July, 1957) published the amendments to certain provisions of the Penal Code. At the same time Scinteia (2 August 1957) launched an attack against the bourgeois influence. The first result of this wave of harsh measures was that the police and security had a totally free hand, and summary procedures replaced any existing legislation.

mood in Europe. This was again, as George Kennan pointed out, the period of attractiveness of the idea of a military and political neutralization of further portions of Europe, enhanced, from his point of view, by the successful example of Yugoslavia and Austria.⁸⁹

It is possible that the general political environment, as well as his talks with Tito, made Khrushchev determined to reemphasize publicly a few days after the meeting in Romania the new "extended" Moscow approach on military disengagement in Europe, referring again to Romania as a country from which the Soviets would be ready to withdraw its troops pending the US and Western countries' withdrawal of their forces from some European countries. This time Khrushchev repeated his statement made at the end of May, in his new position as Soviet leader.

Role of the Soviet Ambassador in Bucharest

An extensive interview with the former U.S. Charge in Bucharest, Emory Swank, offers an additional important suggestion to be included in the scenario of the Soviet decision, which could be named "the broker involvement."⁹⁰

According to Mr. Swank, since his appointment to Bucharest the Soviet Ambassador Yepishev acted as a powerful intermediary between Khrushchev and the Romanian leaders. Yepishev was

⁸⁹ George F. Kennan, Memoirs 1950-1963, New York: Pantheon Books, 1983, p.241.

⁹⁰ Interview with Emory Coblenz Swank, Washington, D.C., 1988.

probably one of the most influential Soviet diplomats after the War. Mr. Swank asserted that Yepishev was able not only to provide Khrushchev with his personal observations and with the necessary inside information, evaluation, and forecasts on Romanian developments in case the Soviet troops withdrew, but he also was in the best position to suggest to Moscow the rationale of such a withdrawal, its impact on Soviet political strategy, and certainly the best timing.

Being a "Khrushchev man" he either assisted or was informed by Khrushchev about the Romanian view on the troop withdrawal in August 1955. I would not exclude at all that he contributed to the building of Khrushchev's perception in that particular area. Yepishev was also able to get the right view of Khrushchev's intentions toward Romania and, at this point, to use his personal relationships with Gheorghiu-Dej, suggesting to the Romanian leader the most appropriate time and way to approach the Soviet leader.

Yepishev's role, emphasized by the former US Charge in Romania, has to be taken into account in outlining the Soviet decisionmaking process in withdrawing troops from Romania.

IMPACT OF THE SOVIET DECISION TO WITHDRAW

There was no official reaction to the Soviet troop withdrawal decision from the Western countries, including the United States, Great Britain, and the NATO organization as

such.⁹¹ John Foster Dulles's papers,⁹² and press conferences made no reference to it, with the exception of a short report on the Moscow CEMA and Warsaw Pact meetings, which was declassified at my request under the Freedom of Information Act, in May 1989,⁹³ and by a State Department airgram dated May 29, 1958, signed by Christian Herter, then Acting Secretary of State.⁹⁴

There were differences in the process of assessment of the Soviet decision to withdraw its troops from Romania. In Washington it was not thought to be an important Soviet move. Mr. Foy Kohler, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs explained to me that in the State Department, the Soviet troop withdrawal from Romania was seen as a minor

⁹¹ The US declassified records contain mainly the telegrams sent to the State Department by the diplomatic offices in Moscow, Bucharest, Budapest: Incoming Telegram, Moscow to Secretary of State, No. 2096, May 27, 1958, Central File 760.5/5-2753; Incoming Telegram, Budapest to Secretary of State, No. 540, May 27, 1958, Central File 661.64/5-2758; Incoming Telegram, Bucharest to Secretary of State, No. 652, May 27, 1958, Central File 661.66/5-2958; Western Journalists View Departure of Soviet Troops Contingent, Foreign Service Dispatch, AmLegation Bucharest to The Department of State, July 17, 1958, Central File 661.66/7-1758.

⁹² I refer to John Foster Dulles papers in custody at the Mudd Library in Princeton, as well as to his papers deposited at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

⁹³ Report on Communist Meetings in Moscow, May 27, 1958, Staff Research Group (Albert P. Toner and Christopher H. Russell): Records, 1956-1961, White House Office, Box 18, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

⁹⁴ Department of State to AmEmbassy Paris Topol, G 123, May 29, 1958, RG 59, Decimal File 760.5/5-2768.

action with no relevant impact.⁹⁵ Mr. Raymond Garthoff⁹⁶ who at that time was Special Assistant for Soviet bloc political-military affairs at the State Department, and Mr. Robert Bowie, former Assistant Secretary of State for Policy Planning, had similar opinions.⁹⁷ The move had such a minor impact that the former U.S. Army Attache at the US Legation in Bucharest, Colonel W.F. Northam, USA(ret) had no recollection at all of such an action.⁹⁸

The Foreign Office proceeded to a more detailed assessment of various factors leading to the decision and to its impact on both the Soviet course of action and on Romania.⁹⁹ However, in

⁹⁵ Interview with Mr. Foy Kohler, West Palm Beach, Florida, March 1989.

⁹⁶ Interview with Mr. Raymond Garthoff, Washington, D.C., April 1958 and March 1989.

⁹⁷ Interview with Mr. Robert Bowie, Washington, D.C., March 1988.

⁹⁸ Interview with Colonel W.F. Northam, Orlando, FL, October 1988.

⁹⁹ The British declassified records included: British Embassy, Moscow to Foreign Office, No. 701, May 28, 1958 (En Clair), FO 371/134563; Moscow to Foreign Office, No. 702, May 28, 1958, FO 371/134563; T. Brimelow to Sir William Hayter, News Department, "Announcement of Soviet Withdrawal from Romania and Hungary and Satellite Force Reductions, Off-the-record guidance for News Department," May 27, 1958, N1071/28, FO 371/134563; British Legation, Bucharest to Foreign Office, (1073/4/58), May 29, 1958, NR 10338/7, FO 371/135163, PRO; British Legation, Bucharest to Foreign Office, (1034/11/58), June 19, 1958, NR 10338/8, FO 371/135163; British Legation, Bucharest to Foreign Office, (1034/12/58), July 3, 1958, FO 371/135163.

In addition there are brief analyses in monthly reports: "Trends of Communist Policy-May 1958", "Trends of Communist Policy. January to June, 1958", "Trends of Communist Policy. May to November [1958]." FO 371/135244, PRO.

London, Moscow's act was considered as a genuine concern to reduce tension¹⁰⁰.

Several ideas come up repeatedly: (a) the absence of any military value; (b) the propaganda objectives; (c) the Soviet intention to achieve short-range and long-range objectives such as acceptance by the West of a status quo in Europe and the withdrawal of United States' forces from Europe.

The military value of the Soviet withdrawal

The problem of the eventuality of a Soviet troop withdrawal from some of the East European countries, first of all from Romania and Hungary did not confront Western diplomacy with a totally new issue. Long before such a move occurred, analyses were outlined examining and assessing the possible military value of such an action. Basically the conclusion focusses on three complementary issues: (a) Soviet withdrawal alone would be less important than a settlement which allows the satellites to pursue at least a neutral policy; (b) the geographical proximity of the Soviet Union to Romania meant that the Soviet forces deployed on Soviet territory represented a permanent threat; (c) any Soviet troop withdrawal would attempt to be related to a withdrawal of the United States from Europe.

Possibly, the Soviet Union tried again, as in the fall of 1957, to increase the bargaining value of Romania in view of its

¹⁰⁰ Foreign Office, Trends of Communist Policy - May 1958, p. 8, FO 371/135244.

intention of publicly announcing the withdrawal of its forces. The Foreign Office warned the Bucharest Legation about a report published by The Times (January 27, 1958) quoting Romanian sources that Soviet troops were regrouping and fresh Soviet units had arrived, bringing the total of Soviet troops in the country to five divisions. The report added that new Soviet naval bases had been completed in Romania.¹⁰¹ The British Minister in Bucharest, in his reply, mentioned not having evidence of an increase in Soviet forces.¹⁰² No other sources confirmed the story and its origin. However, there is a great resemblance to usual Soviet disinformation techniques and only the Soviets could have benefited from such an unexpected increase in the level of their forces in Romania.

After the Warsaw Pact announcement of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania, the problem of the military value of such a move surfaced again in diplomatic analyses both in London and Washington. The fundamental evaluation in this respect by the Foreign Office was the following:

The withdrawal of Soviet forces behind the Soviet frontier does not substantially change the situation.

¹⁰¹ Foreign Office to Bucharest legation, No. 20, January 28, 1958, FO 371/135153, PRO. On February 2, 1958 another newspaper, the Sunday Express, published the following information: "Secret reports received in London show that Russia is carrying out extensive troop movements in Rumania and along the frontier. British intelligence men believed that the Kremlin is afraid that Rumanian peasants may stage a rebellion similar to the Hungarian rising." (The newspaper clips were stapled with the previous report in the Foreign Office File)

¹⁰² British Legation, Bucharest to Foreign Office, No. 37, January 29, 1958, NR 1016/16, FO 371/ 135154, PRO.

They can be quickly moved back into Roumania and Hungary (Where four divisions in any case remain) should the need arise. The Hungarian uprising was put down with the help of forces sent from Soviet Union once it became clear that the Soviet garrison in Hungary could not deal with the situation unaided; and Khrushchev said that the Soviet Army would intervene again in the event of an uprising.¹⁰³

The Washington position was analogous. In a circular he signed, acting Secretary of State Christian Herter observed that "Soviet forces would be just across [the] Prout river in case of need."¹⁰⁴

I would like to add to this evaluation that in fact, on a geo-political scale, there was no withdrawal, due to what I think could be named a compensatory strategy. The simplest mathematical calculation shows that after withdrawing its troops from Romania, the total Soviet military deployed in the area still remained at a higher level than prior to the invasion of Hungary. The military balance between the Warsaw Pact and NATO was not altered and there was no decrease in Soviet forces deployed in Europe outside Soviet borders.

Another estimation, contained in a CIA report, states that the Soviet troop presence must be primarily related to the internal situation of the country in which they are deployed.

¹⁰³ Announcement of Soviet Troop Withdrawals from Roumania and Hungary and Satellite Force Reduction, Off-the-record guidance for News Department, T. Brimelow to Sir William Hayter, News Department, May 27, 1958, N 1071/28, FO 371/134563, PRO.

Similar opinions were also expressed on several occasions by British diplomats in Bucharest in their dispatches to the Foreign Office.

¹⁰⁴ Department of State to Amembassy, Paris Topol, May 29, 1958, RG 59, Decimal File 760.5/5-2768.

From that point of view, which I consider questionable, the report found that the presence of Russian troops in Romania became unnecessary, and at the same time there was a change in the Soviet policy, having abandoned negotiation with the West on the basis of quid pro quo policy.¹⁰⁵

Political and propaganda impact

The Soviet purpose in withdrawing its troops from Romania was very clearly expressed by Khrushchev in his statement at the Warsaw Pact meeting in Moscow:

This step of the Soviet Union can initiate the withdrawal of foreign troops from other states and clear the way for agreement on this score among all the sides concerned.¹⁰⁶

There was no doubt that the Soviet action was part of Moscow's long-standing campaign directed at obtaining at least a limited US withdrawal from Europe.¹⁰⁷ Paradoxically, it was out

¹⁰⁵ "Moscow correctly realized that the chances of a Romanian uprising were exceedingly small...It is surprising that the Kremlin waited till May 26, 1958, to make the move." (CIA, Situation Report Series, SRS-7 "Communism in Eastern Europe," 28 August 1958, p. 44. Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Records, 1952-61, NSC Series, Briefing Notes Subseries, Box 5, White House Office, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.)

¹⁰⁶ Speech of N.S.Khrushchev to Meeting of Political Consultative Committee of Warsaw Treaty Member-States, May 24, 1958, Daily Review of Soviet Press, Translations from the Soviet Press, Soviet Information Bureau, May 27, 1958, p.24.

¹⁰⁷ The initial Soviet proposals directed at the reduction of four-power troops stationed in Germany and the reduction of the Western troops stationed in NATO countries, as well as of the Soviet troops stationed in Warsaw Pact countries, was contained in the letter addressed by the Soviet Prime Minister on November 17, 1956 to the President of the United States.

of the question that Khrushchev counted seriously on impressing the Western powers by withdrawing Soviet troops from Romania. By examining the Soviet and East European media coverage during the period which followed the Warsaw Pact meeting in Moscow, it is possible to conclude that the Soviet decision was from the very beginning directed at creating a calculated effect on public opinion outside the Soviet bloc.¹⁰⁸

For the Romanian the facts look different. Diplomatic reports originating in Romania emphasized "popular cynicism," "skepticism," and "apathy" as basic reactions of public opinion to the withdrawal, as the majority perceived the development as one of only limited significance for them. During the farewell ceremonies of the Soviet troops, non-bloc diplomats or visitors were not allowed to travel to points affected by the Soviet troop withdrawal.¹⁰⁹ Diplomatic reports complained on the impossibility to observe the movements of Soviet troops. All the applications for permission to travel to Braila, Galati, Timisoara and Iasi

The United States got the correct perception that all periodically submitted USSR proposals on disarmament, had a basic purpose: "Withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Europe continues to be a primary Soviet objective." (Possible Withdrawal of Forces from Central Europe: A Further Study of the Balance of Power, Department of State, March 21, 1957, NSC 84-158, p.3)

¹⁰⁸ Among other objectives could be to enhance internal prestige and international standing of the Romanian regime.

¹⁰⁹ The US diplomatic dispatch on this subject named as such points Constanta, Galati, Braila, Focsani, Rimnicul Sarat, Timisoara, and Iasi. (Foreign Service Dispatch, Amlegation Bucharest to the Department of State, No 10, July 17, 1958, Central File 661.66/4-1758, RG 59)

(the railhead for Kiev) have been refused to Western Missions, and a tour to the Iron Gates and the Banat, which had been arranged by the Protocol Department of the Romanian Foreign Office, has been put off. Even some of the local newspapers (as the Timisoara one) did not reach the Western Embassies¹¹⁰. Limited western media coverage was allowed. The correspondents from the London Observer and the West German news agency DPA got permission to attend the farewell ceremony which took place at the Iasi railway station for a contingent of Soviet troops who arrived from Timisoara en route to the USSR. The principal comment of both correspondents on the ceremony was that it had clearly been state-managed and lacked spontaneity throughout.

The investigations of the Romanian media coverage, by both the central and the regional newspapers, combined with my professional involvement, lead me to conclude that every action during the whole process of the Soviet troops' farewell ceremonies was highly controlled and established in advance by the central apparatus of the Communist Party, being outlined in a very precise and detailed schedule. The main problems which confronted the Romanian authorities at that time were: (a) concern over possible anti-Soviet demonstrations, and (b) concern over a possible expression of "too much" enthusiasm because the Soviets were leaving the country. Thus the farewell ceremonies were supposed to be "friendly demonstrations," or "demonstrations

¹¹⁰ British Legation, Bucharest to T. Brimelow, Esq., O.B.E., Northern Department, Foreign Office (1034/11/58), June 19, 1958, NR 10338/8, FO 371/135163, PRO.

of the eternal Romanian-Soviet friendship," etc., reflecting a "solemn revolutionary attitude".

After the coverage of the Warsaw Pact meeting at the end of May, including the usual editorials which expressed the support of Romanian public opinion, a media campaign started on June 13 and ended on July 27, 1958 on the occasion of a big reception held at the Soviet Embassy in Bucharest. Every piece of information intended for publication on this matter, including photographs, was submitted for the approval of the Propaganda Section of the Romanian Communist Party, and on many occasions to Gheorghiu-Dej directly. However, the coverage of the departure of Soviet troops in provincial newspapers, because of their uniformity, reflected more directly the extremely cautious approach of the Romanian authorities on this issue.¹¹¹

The cautiousness of the Romanian regime was also a sort of

¹¹¹ I investigated in US Libraries all the provincial (regional) newspapers namely (Place of publication in parenthesis) Drum Nou (Brasov); Faalia (Cluj); Drumul Socialismului (Deva); Inainte (Craiova); Drapelul Rosu (Timisoara); Dobrogea Noua (Constanta); Flacara Iasului (Iasi); Viata Noua (Galati); Pentru Socialism (Baia Mare); Crisana (Oradea); Flacara Rosie (Resita); Steaua Rosie (Tirgul Mures); Secera si Ciocanul (Pitesti); Flamura Prahovei (Ploesti); Zori Noi (Suceava); Informatia Bucurestiului (Bucuresti.)

Except for the official announcement of the Warsaw Pact meeting, including the speech of the Romanian Prime Minister on that occasion, eight of sixteen regional newspapers did not publish any report or commentary related to the Soviet troop departure; Five of the newspapers published the same general commentary, which was written by Agerpress; None of the newspapers covered all the farewell ceremonies. The newspapers from the area where Soviet troops were deployed refer only to the local festivities (except the newspaper from Timisoara which also referred to the ceremonies in Constanta)

damage-limitation strategy. It was well known in the Bucharest media that, after the Hungarian uprising, the Soviets had at their disposal, at least in Romania, a network watching every written word, gauging the pulse of public opinion in order to detect any wrong signals endangering their position. This network was composed of a dozen Soviet media correspondents accredited in Bucharest. At the very top of this structure was the Soviet press attache, who was Yepishev's son-in-law.

Security Precautions

I presume that the same approach, the same damage limitation strategy, this time for different reasons and evidently reflecting its fundamental interests, was taken by the Romanian regime in order to prepare the post-withdrawal transition period, giving the necessary assurances that everything would be under control. This transition was inaugurated by the Romanian regime's adopting tighter measures of internal security and adding several exceptionally severe amendments to the Penal Code dealing with crimes against the State and with economic offenses, even introducing the death penalty for certain crimes.¹¹² As was

¹¹² The death sentence applied to Romanians having contacts with "foreigners" or for any act "which could cause the Romanian state to become involved in the declaration of neutrality or in the declaration of war." (Art. 187, Clause 1, Decree of 17 July, 1958). Articles 211 and 212 extended the death penalty to those who commit certain acts "in order to cause disorder in the State or to endanger its security" - a strange piece of drafting which could apply to any offense and to any category of the population. The daily newspapers did not publish the Decree.

In this respect a highly useful analysis is contained in Communism in Eastern Europe. Post-Stalin Development in the

pointed out in a British Legation dispatch, these amendments to the Penal Code were comparable to a series of similar measures adopted in the fall of 1957. It is essential for the understanding of the whole scenario of the Soviet troop withdrawal to interconnect the measures which had been taken by the Romanian regime in 1957 and 1958, in order to protect the Communist power structure.¹¹³

Impact on Romanian Foreign Policy

According to this research, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania represented the pivotal act leading to the emergence of a Romanian foreign policy different from the one Romania followed in the first a decade or more after World War II. Many comments and assessments of the Romanian regime's behavior made by western diplomats accredited in Bucharest, who spent long periods of time in Romania, suggest their feeling that behind Romania's strict following Soviet policy, here was no sense of conviction. The Romanian regime played the game, but not with any kind of genuine commitment.

In 1972 the former U.S. Minister to Romania, Robert Thayer

Satellite. Romania, published by the Central Intelligence Agency, (CIA/SRS-7), 28 August 1958, declassified in 1984. Some of the previous CIA situation reports referring to Romania were included.

¹¹³ "The removal of the Russian garrison faced the Roumanian Government with a problem of internal security which at the time we supposed they would meet by a demonstration of greater strictness not greater laxity." (British Legation, Bucharest to Foreign Office, (1021/90/58"S"), August 14, 1958, NR 1016/44, FO 371/135155, PRO.)

constructed a comprehensive analysis of some of the motivations of Romanian foreign policy during his tenure¹¹⁴. He mentioned, among others, the following:

I kept telling the State Department all the time, 'You've got to play with the Rumanian government in certain respects in order to do this, because they dislike the Soviets. They want to get out from under, but they need some help from us in the way of business, trade, other ways, because they're now completely dependent on the Soviets. You've got to give them a reason for independence before they'll do it.' We were able to help them, so as soon as the Soviet Army pulled out of Rumania, they became independent right away.¹¹⁵

To some extent similar observations were contained in British Legation analyses originating in the period after the withdrawal of Soviet troops.¹¹⁶

After the withdrawal of Soviet troops Romania started to follow a slightly nuanced policy, by opening larger avenues of cooperation with western countries, and even by pursuing at the United Nations, albeit at first in very few areas, a declaratory policy which was different from the USSR's and other Soviet bloc countries. Some disagreements with the Soviets became to be

¹¹⁴ Robert H. Thayer, Oral History Interview, 243, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 27-8

¹¹⁶ As for example in the dispatch: British Legation, Bucharest to Foreign Office, (1071/48/58), September 18, 1958, NR 1016/46, FO 371/135156, PRO, written by the British Minister, Allan Dudley: "I credit some at least of the Roumanian leaders with being genuine hard-bitten Communists, and also with being genuine nationalists and patriots in their own twisted way. They have the merit, moreover, in thier own eyes and perhaps in those of Moscow, of having been more consitent in their political line than the others. They are askeen as anyone to be recognised as independent, sovereign and worthy of respect."

acknowledged in the early 1960s. In his memoirs, Khrushchev gave an account of this fact and of some of the unexpected Romanian foreign policy behavior shortly after the withdrawal of Soviet troops.¹¹⁷ However, most of the Khrushchev examples refer to the period 1963-4 as well as after his removal from office. Shevchenko also cited some similar episodes between Khrushchev and the Romanian leaders which took place earlier, namely in September 1960¹¹⁸.

According to this research it occurred also a nuanced change in the Washington perception on Romania's policy and possibly that it was in the process to be articulated a new Romanian foreign policy. That assumption is based on the investigation of some of the US diplomatic and NSC records of the Eisenhower Administration¹¹⁹.

One of the most impressive, insufficiently investigated, and highly significant episodes, acknowledging the new Romanian attitude in this direction, represented the official Romanian attitude during the Cuban missile crisis. According to reports published in the Western press, during the 1962 Cuban missile

¹¹⁷ Khrushchev Remembers. The Last Testament, Op. Cit. pp. 231-4

¹¹⁸ Arkady N. Shevchenko, Breaking with Moscow, New York: Ballantine Books, 1985, pp. 125, 127.

¹¹⁹ As an example the document NSC 5811, U.S. Policy Toward the Soviet-Dominated Nations in Eastern Europe, May 9, 1958. The document, large portions of which were exempted from the declassifications, is mentioning that "The Rumanian regime is [therefore] exceptionally receptive to increased contacts with the West." (OSANSA, NSC Series, Policy Papers, p. 14, Box 25, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library).

crisis, Gheorghiu-Dej, then President of the Romanian State Council, had written to President Kennedy dissociating his country from Khrushchev's action and "asking that if a war situation developed over Cuba, the United States remember that Romania did not start it."¹²⁰ During my discussion with Robert Estabrook, the author of the report, he confirmed the authenticity of the article, referring to a Romanian diplomat in London as the source of his information. Following up the story, I got a confirmation from the former Undersecretary of State, Mr. George Ball¹²¹, that the Romanian message was not transmitted through the State Department, which leaves open the possibility that the Romanians used a direct channel, possibly a special emissary to the White House.

Thus the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania was a positive stimulant to Romania in trying to articulate a different foreign policy.

CONCLUSIONS

The decision of withdrawing Soviet troops from Romania was not a risky one. The Soviet troops in Romania did not carry out a major defense assignment, except as an instrument of potential pressure on the Yugoslavian borders. Khrushchev's initial plan

¹²⁰ Washington Post, March 21, 1965.

¹²¹ Interview with Mr. George Ball, Princeton, February 1988.

deserved the attention by the Soviet military, who were in the process of modernization and reconsideration of the military budget. It represented also, from a Soviet point of view, a part of the larger campaign directed at obtaining concessions from the West, and to reach their essential objective of the withdrawal of US troops from Europe by paying a very low price.

Indeed, by withdrawing troops from Romania at the same time several other objectives were addressed: (a) to carry out a propaganda-political gesture with little or no military significance; (b) to implement the correlated measures of cutting the Soviet military budget and (c) to reinforce Khrushchev's personal political position, offering credibility to his promises and demonstrating the peacefulness of Russia's intentions.

This plan suffered a serious setback with the Hungarian uprising. The idea in itself of withdrawing troops from an East European country lost its attractiveness, both for the Soviet military and for the Politburo. However, Khrushchev used to his favor the fact that as a precautionary measure, the Soviet military deployment in Hungary after the uprising remained much higher than before the Hungarian events occurred. To some extent this represented the missing link in Khrushchev's plan: to withdraw Soviet troops from Romania without reducing the total Soviet military presence in the area.