

Economic motivations for the communist regime from Romania to improve political relations with United States

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Abstract: In the Cold War complex context, United States provided diplomatic and economic support to some countries from Eastern Bloc that were perceived as having some forms of autonomy from Soviet Union. The "Polish way to socialism", implemented by Władysław Gomułka in Poland, was rewarded, at the beginning, by substantial economic aids from Western Bloc. This example motivated Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the communist leader of Romania, to search for the United States' support in his policy of gaining more autonomy from Moscow. Gheorghiu-Dej's successor, Nicolae Ceaușescu, continued this policy and he obtained favorable trade agreements and substantial financial resources. In the end, the improvement of relations with United States had complex consequences for Romania.

Keywords: Economic tools of foreign policy; Cold War; Socialist Romania

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1. INTRODUCTION

From the ancient times, to fulfill their foreign policy's objectives, Governments used various forms of economic measures: preferential tariffs, lending, investment guarantees, embargoes, economic aid, punitive taxation etc. (e.g. Barber, 1979; Lindsay, 1986; Gilpin, 1987; Hufbauer et al., 1990; Meernik et al., 1998; Wright and Winters, 2010; Palmer and Morgan, 2011; Baldwin, 2020; Morgan et al., 2023). The efficacy of such instruments could be affected by some aspects specific to the involved countries:

- complementarity between the economic systems;
- particularities of the political systems;
- formal and informal structures which could influence the political decisions;
- the ideological orientation of Governments;
- roles and responsibilities of legislative and executive in the foreign policy;
- the role of public opinion etc. (e.g. Pape, 1997; Maggiotto and Wittkopf, 1981; Blanchard and Ripsman, 1999; Jackson, 2001; Marinov, 2005; Hersman, 2012).

A special case consisted in the economic warfare during the Cold War that opposed United States (with its allies grouped in the Western Bloc) and Soviet Union (with its satellites from Eastern Bloc) between 1945 and 1991 (in fact, the moment when Cold War started is still disputed). While the two superpowers were trying to avoid a military confrontation, the economic tools played a major role in attempts to undermine the enemy's spheres of

influence (e.g. Cowherd, 1949; Wolfson and Farrell, 1992; Zhang, 2001; Cooper, 2003). The economic warfare had some particularities that could be assigned to the personalities of ten US Presidents (Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, and Bush) and leaders of the Soviet Union (Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko, and Gorbachev) that succeeded between 1945 and 1991. The economic superiority of United States (US) was among the decisive factors of its victory in the Cold War and the promises of aids or of improvements in the bilateral trade proved, on many occasions, to be useful in obtaining concessions from the Eastern Bloc. In some phases of the Cold War, US tried to undermine Soviet Union control over its satellites, by offering economic advantages for those who showed a sort of autonomy in their foreign policies. For the leaders of these satellites, the economic concessions from the Western Bloc's countries were tempting, but they had to be cautious not to provoke their suzerain.

In this paper we approach the efforts of communist regime from Romania to obtain economic support from US. A strategy to conquer the benevolence of Western Bloc was initiated by Gheorghiu-Dej and it was continued by his successor, Ceausescu. From 1960 to 1985 there were notable achievements but also unfulfillments for their policies.

2. THE BEGINNING OF US ECONOMIC WARFARE AGAINST COMMUNISM

During the Second World War, the economic tools were largely used in the foreign policy of United States. Even before Pearl Harbor' attack, US imposed tough economic sanctions against Japan and offered, by the "Lend-Lease" policy, a substantial economic support to Great Britain and to Soviet Union. Since 1943, after the decisive victories of the Allies (United Nations) against the Axis' forces, several meetings among the leaders of the Big Three (Great Britain, United States, and Soviet Union) were organized to establish a post war order. However, they had different objectives: the president of United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, wished to gain support for the future organization of "United Nations", the prime minister of United Kingdom, Winston Churchill, wanted to preserve the British Empire, while the leader of Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin, intended to establish subordinate Governments in the Central and Eastern Europe (e.g. Djilas, 1969; Dallek, 1995; Clarke, 2010).

In the spring of 1944, the prospect of Red Army entrance in Balkans alarmed the British Government that started diplomatic negotiations with Soviet Union about delimitating the spheres of influence. The State Department of US expressed its opposition to such an arrangement that contradicted the principles of "Atlantic Chart", but Churchill obtained from Roosevelt a reluctant approval (e.g. Carlton, 2000; Roberts, 2006). In October 1944, during his visit to Moscow, Churchill proposed to Stalin a gentlemen's agreement about their "affairs in Balkans" which promised to Soviet Union a substantial influence in Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Hungary, in exchange for a predominant British influence in Greece (e.g. Resis, 1978; Siracusa, 1979; Churchill, 1986).

In February 1945, at Yalta Conference, where the Big Three leaders made important decisions for the post war order, Stalin had a strong position since Red Army had already entered in many countries from the Central and Eastern Europe. Besides that, while the nuclear bomb hadn't been tested yet, Roosevelt was worried about the predictions of high casualties associated to Japan's defeat and he wanted to secure Red Army's participation. In this context,

Churchill and Roosevelt had to be receptive to Stalin's argument that Soviet Union needed friendly Governments in the territories occupied by the Red Army. The "Declaration of Liberated Europe", issued during the Yalta Conference, promised free elections but, in practice, this concept proved to have multiple meanings (e.g. Stettinius Jr, 2017; Preston, 2020). In fact, after the end of Yalta Conference, Soviet Union began to install, in many occupied countries from the Central and Eastern Europe, Governments in which the local communists had strategic positions.

Since the beginning of their alliance, Roosevelt preferred a conciliatory style to solve the divergencies between he and Stalin. He believed that, after the war, Soviet Union's economy needs for support from US could make Stalin flexible. After Roosevelt's death, in April 1945, the new US president, Harry S. Truman, adopted a more combative approach, supported by the success, in July 1945, of a nuclear test. However, he was aware that public opinion from US could hardly accept a war, with the former ally, caused by the problems linked to the changes of regimes from Central and Eastern Europe. During Truman administration, US had some important disputes with Soviet Union, but none of them brought the two superpowers near to a declared war (e.g. Gaddis, 1974; Grogin, 2001; Geselbracht, 2019). Instead, the economic instruments were preferred. After Japan had been defeated, officials from US Army started to press for restrictions on the exports that could aid Soviet Union's military capacity (e.g. Yasuhara, 1991).

Despite some temporary concessions, Stalin persevered in installing obedient regimes in the countries occupied by the Red Army. At the beginning of 1946, the relations between US and Soviet Union continued to worsen, prefiguring the Cold War. In February, a speech of Stalin mentioned an inevitable future war with the capitalism system. This speech was interpreted by the American diplomat George Kennan in the so-called "long telegram", which formulated the strategy of "containment" against the spread of communist system (e.g. Schlesinger, 1967; Stephanson, 1989; Kennan, 2012). In March 1946, in a speech at Westminster College from Fulton (Missouri), Winston Churchill (not anymore Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, but the Leader of Opposition) warned that „an iron curtain has descended across the Continent”.

As the US public opinion became aware about the danger of communism spread, Truman's administration and influent members of the US Congress took into consideration significant restrictions in the trade with Soviet Union. The "Turkish Straits crisis" and the announcement of British Government that it would no longer support the authorities from Greece, in their fight against communist insurgents, worried US administration about the possibility that Soviet Union could gain other strategic positions in the Balkans. In this context, on March 12, 1947, President Truman addressed Congress asking approval for a consistent economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey. The „Truman Doctrine", as it was later known the policy to support enemies of Soviet Union, in the name of defending nations that were threatened by totalitarianism (although it was admitted the Government of Greece was a repressive one), was applied later in other regions (e.g. Paterson, 1988; Offner, 2002; Herring, 2008; Geselbracht, 2019).

Three months later, United States secretary of state, George Marshall announced a plan to provide substantial aid to countries from Western Europe, where in countries such

as Italy or France the economic problems threatened to favor communist parties. Formally, the Marshall Plan was also offered to countries from Central and Eastern Europe including Soviet Union (it would have been, however, very difficult to obtain the US Congress approval for any aid to Soviet Union). For the Soviet Union's satellites that experienced important economic difficulties, the US aid could have been a precious opportunity. However, under pressures from Soviet Union (Jan Masaryk, the Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia, who intended to accept the offer, was invited to Moscow for a tough discussion with Stalin), the Governments of these countries had to reject the Marshall Plan. Most of the communist leaders from these satellites were aware that, without Red Army's presence, their regimes could hardly survive (notable exceptions were Yugoslavia and Albania where the communists had played major roles in resistance against the occupation of Axis' armies and in the liberation of these countries). In the autumn of 1947, Stalin established The Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), with the announced objective to "organize the exchange of experiences among Communist Parties where necessary, to coordinate their activities on the basis of mutual agreement", in fact, with the purpose of strengthening the control on Soviet Union's satellites.

In 1948, when "Tito - Stalin split" occurred, Truman administration fructified an important opportunity to undermine the Soviet sphere of influence in Balkans (In Albania, Enver Hoxha remained loyal to Stalin and distanced from Tito). While Yugoslavia was threatened by an economic blockade and even by a military invasion from the Eastern Bloc (Soviet Union and its satellites), US provided economic and diplomatic assistance to the communist regime of Tito (e.g. Brands Jr, 1987; Lees, 1997). The conflict had important consequences for Eastern Bloc where Stalin purged many communist leaders suspected to be sympathetic with Tito's policy. In the next years, the satellites autonomy in domestic and foreign policies suffered severe restraints.

The Blockade of Berlin by the Soviet Union (June 1948 – May 1949) sharpened the tensions between East and West. To deal with the threat of Soviet expansion in Western Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed in 1949. Other events (a test of Soviet Union' first nuclear bomb, the victory of communists in Chinese civil war, divergences about Germany's future, the start of Korean War etc.) amplified the worries about Soviet threat. After long negotiations, US and its Western allies agreed about creating COCOM, an organization that coordinated the control on the exports of strategic goods and technologies to Soviet Union and its allies (e.g. Adler-Karlsson, 1968; Bertsch, 1983; Yasuhara, 1991; Jackson, 2001).

In 1953, with the election of Dwight Eisenhower as US President and Stalin's death, a new phase of the Cold War began. During the campaign for presidential election of 1952, Eisenhower criticized the passivity of Truman administration's strategy of "containment" and he promised more active actions to liberate the peoples of Eastern Europe from Soviet's occupation. In the first years of Eisenhower administration, the circumstances seemed to be favorable to such purpose. While Stalin's successors were entangled in a power struggle, their control over domestic and external situation loosen (in 1953 there were major uprisings at Plzeň, East Berlin and Vorkuta). They initiated economic reforms and they adopted a more flexible position in relation with US (e.g. Bialer, 1982; Gill, 2018). Diplomatic

negotiations led to an armistice in the Korean War and to agreements for the partition of Vietnam and for Austria's neutrality. However, as the Soviet Union's proposals regarding the future organization of Germany remained unsolved, the countries from Eastern Bloc established, in May 1955, the Warsaw Pact.

Eisenhower administration replied to the Soviet flexibility by relaxing restrictions on exports to the Eastern Bloc. In fact, such actions were also demanded by the US companies that complained that they were discriminated against their competitors from neutral countries that were allowed to do business with Soviet Union (Adler-Karlsson, 1972; Kaufman, 2019).

In February 1956, Nikita Khrushchev who had gained first position in the "collective leadership" of Soviet Union, started a De-Stalinization process at the 20th Congress of Party, with the so-called „On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences" report (also called the "Secret Speech", although in less than a year it became quite known in Soviet Union and abroad), in which he denounced the crimes of his predecessor. "Khrushchev Thaw", although marked by incoherences, included radical reforms of the soviet system. In the field of foreign policy Khrushchev hoped that by distancing from Stalin he could obtain a return of Yugoslavia in the Eastern Bloc and an attenuation of the Western countries economic sanctions (e.g. Khrushchev, 1959; Kennan, 1960; Sanchez-Sibony, 2014; Tompson, 2016).

Meanwhile, the "Secret Speech" had destabilizing consequences in Soviet Union and in its satellite countries. The De-Stalinization was perceived in Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic as offending the national pride and in March 1956 a violent riot occurred at Tbilisi. Three months later, almost 100000 people occupied the center of Polish town Poznań demanding better working conditions. To gain popular support for the "Polish United Workers' Party" (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza - PZPR), its leaders took into consideration the dismissal of National Defense Minister, Konstantin Rokossovsky (who was also a Marshal of Soviet Union) and the return in the Party's leadership of Władysław Gomułka who had been imprisoned, from 1951 to 1954, under the allegation of "rightist - nationalist deviation". Khrushchev, who perceived these intentions as an attempt of Poland to gain too much autonomy, came in a visit to Warsaw while the Soviet troops from Poland were put on alert.

Faced with the risk of a confrontation between Red Army and Polish troops, the Soviet and PZPR leaders started negotiations which were finalized with significant concessions from Khrushchev (Kramer, 1998; Persak, 2006). The "Polish October" was perceived abroad as a sign of weakness by Stalin's successors. It nourished hopes about an imminent liberation for the "captive nations" of Eastern Bloc. However, the US propaganda led to exaggerate expectations regarding the Western Bloc determination to act for "rollback of Communism" in Europe (e.g. Borhi, 1997; Bischof, 2006).

In Hungary, the De-Stalinization consequences, combined with economic difficulties, amplified the social tensions. In October 1956 there were protests which, after authorities failed to control them, evolved in a major uprising against the communist regime and the Soviet Union's occupation. Khrushchev policy to solve that problem was not quite coherent, oscillating from repression to the Red Army withdrawal from Budapest. Finally, the Soviet Union's leadership decided for a brutal crush of the revolt which caused thousands of victims. Despite its previous propaganda messages, Eisenhower administration didn't offer

a direct support to the Hungarian insurgents (the repression occurred during a peak of the Suez Crisis). It became obvious that US wouldn't risk a military conflict with Soviet Union to liberate the "captive nations" (Békés, 1997; Borhi, 1999; Gati, 2006; Crump, 2016; Fehér and Heller, 2022).

The "Hungary Uprising" was a turning point for the Cold War. In the next years Khrushchev slowed down the De-Stalinization while he eased the control over Soviet Union's satellites. Eisenhower administration moderated its propaganda anticommunist messages and it resorted to diplomatic negotiations for attenuating the tensions with Soviet Union (McAuliffe, 1981; Tudda, 2005; Osgood, 2006). The cultural exchanges were promoted, and in July 1959 Richard Nixon, the Vice President of United States, participated at the opening of American National Exhibition in Moscow. Khrushchev also visited US two months later.

Eisenhower administration had to return to the blamed strategy of "containment" and it used trade and aid as major instruments to combat communism that threatened to spread in some poor countries from the Caribbean and in the recently decolonized countries from Asia and Africa (McAuliffe, 1981; Kaufman, 2019). Regarding the Eastern Bloc, it took into consideration to undermine the Soviet Union's control over its satellites by supporting those from them that showed a sort of autonomy. It was the case of Poland where Władysław Gomułka, the General Secretary of PZPR, was perceived in the West as implementing a "Polish way to socialism" and he was rewarded, as in the case of Tito, with economic advantages (e.g. Wandycz, 1980; Stanecki, 2014).

3. GHEORGHIU-DEJ'S EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH WESTERN NATIONS

From June 1941 to August 1944, under the rule of Ion Antonescu, Romania was one of the Nazi Germany's allies in its war against Soviet Union. From spring of 1944 the Red Army troops began to enter in Romania's territory. In August 23, a *coup d'état* organized by King Michael I of Romania, by the representatives of Army and by the main political parties overthrew Ion Antonescu. On September 12, at Moscow, an agreement concerning an armistice was signed. This act established the jurisdiction of an "Allied Control Commission" over the Romanian Government. Although this commission was composed of representatives of the Big Three, de facto the Soviet members took the main decisions. In March 1945, under pressure of Soviet representatives, King Michael I of Romania was forced to accept a Government dominated, de facto, by communists. In December 1947, King Michael I abdicated, and Romanian People's Republic was established.

The leaders of Romanian communists (since 1948, Romanian Workers' Party or *Partidul Muncitoresc Român* - PMR) were aware that, due to their lack of popularity, they couldn't keep the power without Soviet Union's support. In these circumstances they complied without opposition with the role of puppet regime. The General Secretary of PMR, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, known for his implication in big strike of railway workers before the war, had to share the power with members of other factions from the party. With a mix of cunning, servility, and patience, he managed to Stalin's trust and to take down his rivals (e.g. Tismaneanu, 1995; Abraham, 2011; Giurescu, 2015).

In the years that followed Stalin's death, Gheorghiu-Dej took a careful attitude regarding the changes from Soviet Union's leadership (Kramer, 1999; Mavrodin, 2017). Encouraged by Soviet leaders, he acted to improve the diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia and US (e.g. Abraham, 2011; Stanciu, 2013). In the spring of 1956, he faced an attempt of being overthrown by two recent adepts of De-Stalinization (e.g. Tudor and Catanus, 2001). It is still unelucidated if the two members of PMR's leadership had been encouraged by Soviet leaders. However, they were defeated as the majority of Political Bureau remained loyal to Gheorghiu-Dej. His position has strengthened as the turbulences from Poland and Hungary convinced Khrushchev to maintain in Romania a leader able to preserve the stability. In 1958, after complex negotiations, the Romanian communist leaders obtained from their Soviet partners the Red Army withdrawal from their country.

At the end of 1950s, while Gheorghiu-Dej consolidated his authority over PMR, he also prepared for a more autonomous foreign policy. At the beginning of 1960s the PMR's plans on the development of hard industry generated some disagreements between Romania and Soviet Union. This plan came into contradiction with the new vision of Soviet leaders about industrialization (e.g. Betea and Bârlădeanu, 1997; Marin, 2000; Copilaș, 2010; Dumitriu and Stefanescu, 2016). Because he didn't receive the support he had expected from Soviet Union, Gheorghiu-Dej turned to Western Bloc. He was interested in buying, from these countries, machineries, and licenses of technologies that were useful for the program of industrialization.

However, there were difficulties in achieving them because such transactions were still restricted by COCOM. To surpass such obstacles, Gheorghiu-Dej decided a cautious improvement of the political relations with US. He was motivated by the example of Poland that, in 1960 received from US, along with substantial foreign aids, the most-favored-nation tariff treatment. In 1960 there were bilateral discussions about the boost of cultural exchanges. There was also a proposal to elevate the diplomatic missions to embassy status. The negotiations lasted for years and approached various subjects such as the settlement of outstanding financial problems or the cases of American-Romanian citizens who wanted to leave Romania (e.g. Harrington and Courtney, 1991; Betea and Maurer, 1995; Betea and Mănescu, 2001; Malița, 2015; Sandu, 2018).

In November 1960 John F. Kennedy, was elected President of the United States. In 1957, while he was US senator, Kennedy recommended a consistent help to Poland, arguing that it could motivate other Soviet Union's satellites to become more autonomous. During the presidential campaign he advocated for the improvement of trade relations with these countries. From the beginning, Kennedy administration was favorable to attenuate the restrictions on exports to Eastern Bloc, but its attempts met a strong opposition in US Congress. Later, the US president had to adopt a tougher position regarding Soviet Union and its satellites because of some events such as the defeat, at Bay of Pigs, of the anti-Castro insurgents, the poor results of Vienna Summit or the Berlin Wall construction. However, Kennedy was still interested in encouraging, by economic tools, the manifestations of autonomy among the Soviet Union's satellites (e.g. Adler-Karlsson, 1968; Hartley, 1971; Dobson, 1988; Magyarics, 1998).

Meanwhile, new tensions between Khrushchev and Gheorghiu-Dej occurred. In 1962, a proposal of Soviet Union regarding “planning coordination” on the Comecon level made PMR’s leaders suspicious that it could hide a threat to their projects of industrialization. Khrushchev’s responsibility in creating the Cuban Missile Crisis from October 1962 worried Gheorghiu-Dej. Other disagreement regarded the problem of Sino - Soviet split. Initially, Romanian leaders condemned, at Soviet instigation, the Chinese communists, but in time they adopted a neutral position offering their mediation (e.g. Betea and Maurer, 1995; Croitor, 2014).

In the disputes between Washington and Moscow about subjects such as Bay of Pigs incident, the Berlin Wall or the Cuban Missile Crisis, Romania, as an ally of Soviet Union, had to blame US. However, the information about tensions between Khrushchev and Gheorghiu-Dej raised the interest of Kennedy administration for Romania (e.g. Harrington and Courtney, 1991; Betea and Maurer, 1995; Toader, 2016). Besides that, starting with 1962, Romanian authorities began to liberate the political prisoners. The negotiations intensified and, in August 1963, the US Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman visited Romania and he talked with Gheorghiu-Dej. Two months later, the Romanian deputy foreign minister Mircea Malița was sent officially to Washington for the signing ceremony of Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. According to Malița (2015), Gheorghiu-Dej instructed him to meet in secret the influent Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Averell Harriman and to talk about industrial licenses. With this occasion, Harriman declared that *Percentages Agreement* from 1944 between Stalin and Churchill wasn’t supported by US. The improvement of relations between US and Romania was reflected in the evolution of bilateral trade. Since 1964, both exports and imports of Romania substantially increased in relations with US (Tab. 1).

Tab. 1. The evolutions of Romania’s trade with US (millions of lei) between 1958 and 1965

An	Exports	Imports
1958	3.9	4.1
1959	4.4	5.7
1960	3.8	37.8
1961	4.9	24.1
1962	7.8	12.8
1963	5.5	5.2
1964	11.1	31.2
1965	15.8	54.8

Source of data: Anuarul statistic al Republicii Socialiste România

In November 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated. The administration of his successor, President Lyndon B. Johnson, continued the policy of encouraging Romania’s autonomous policy. In April 1964 PMR issued a Declaration that proclaimed its autonomy from Soviet Union (Neagoe - Plesa, 2005; Tismăneanu, 2014). Six months later, Khrushchev was forced to retire, being replaced by another collective leadership. The death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, in March 1965, brought significant changes in the relations between US and Romania.

4. NICOLAE CEAUȘESCU AS A FAVORITE OF WESTERN DEMOCRACIES

Gheorghiu-Dej was succeeded, as leader of PMR, by Nicolae Ceaușescu who continued the policy of a substantial autonomy from Moscow. Advised by the prime minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer, who had contributed to the new course of Romania's foreign policy in the last years of Gheorghiu-Dej's regime, Ceaușescu acted to develop political and trade relation with Western Bloc (e.g. Betea and Maurer, 1995; Betea and Mănescu, 2001; Malița, 2015). In January 1967, Romania established diplomatic relations with West Germany.

The international context was marked, in the first years of Ceaușescu's regime, by the continuation of relative relaxation of the relations between the two superpowers that started after the Cuban Missile Crisis from 1962. In Soviet Union, between 1964 and 1970, Leonid Brezhnev gained the first position in the new collective leadership. In comparison with Khrushchev's approach in the foreign policy, Brezhnev was more rational and more conciliant. Faced with the aggravating tensions with China, Soviet Union was careful to not open a new crisis in the relations with US. However, Brezhnev was aware that preservation Soviet Union's spheres of influence in Europe was crucial for his political survival. In November 1968 he formulated the principle of limited sovereignty of socialist countries (later called the Brezhnev Doctrine) that justified interventions with purposes of saving the socialist rule (e.g. Hoffmann, 1987; Ouimet, 2003). Meanwhile, the problem of Indochina, inherited by President Johnson from his predecessors, dominated his foreign policy (e.g. Schwartz, 2003; Bischof, 2009). However, Johnson administration continued to stimulate, with economic concessions, the autonomous policies of Soviet Union's satellites.

In 1967 and 1968, two events contributed to a further improvement of the relations between Romania and US. After the Third Arab–Israeli War (the Six-Day War, from 5 to 10 June 1967), Bucharest didn't break off the diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv as Soviet Union and many of its satellites had done (in Poland, authorities launched a campaign against "Israeli imperialism"; as a result, the Western's sympathy for Gomułka's regime diminished). This decision, together with allowing the Romanian Jewish emigration, led to a special relation between Romania and Israel, a close ally of US (e.g. Rosen, 1991; Ioanid, 2021).

In August 1968, Ceaușescu didn't take part to Warsaw Pact's invasion of Czechoslovakia, and he even condemned it. In a public speech before tens of thousands of people, he warned that Romania would resist if confronted with a similar intervention. Until now, no consistent evidence regarding Soviet Union's intentions to invade Romania in August 1968 were founded (Opriș, 2008; Retegan, 2014). However, Ceaușescu's attitude brought him substantial popularity in Romania and his authority over PCR (*Partidul Comunist Român - Romanian Communist Party*, the new title of PMR from 1965) continuously increased in the next years.

In November 1968 the former Vice President Richard Nixon won the United States presidential election. Before that, in 1967, he had made a particular visit in Romania where he talked with Ceaușescu. The main purposes of Nixon's foreign policy were to improve relations with People's Republic of China, to diminish U.S. involvement in Vietnam War and to initiate a process of détente with Soviet Union (Hoff, 1996; Siniver, 2008). In 1972, Nixon visited China, a country with a communist regime having ideological disputes with Soviet Union.

In August 1969, Nixon returned in Bucharest, in the first visit of a US President in a socialist country. In a conversation between Nixon, his chief adviser Henry A. Kissinger, Ceaușescu and Maurer, the US representatives suggested they were interested in Romania's support for negotiations with North Vietnam and China. They promised to Romanians the attenuation of some export restrictions and the support for obtaining credits from US banking institutions (e.g. Harrington and Courtney, 1991; Malița, 2015; Pechlivanis, 2019). To a Nixon's question regarding Brezhnev Doctrine, Ceaușescu answered the principle of limited sovereignty couldn't be apply to Romania. When Ceaușescu demanded for Romania the most-favored-nation tariff treatment, Nixon assured of this help in this problem but he warned that it was needed the US Congress' approval.

Romania's leaders followed this advice and, in the next years, cultivated good relations with organizations that had significant influence in US Congress. There were efforts for proving to the officials from US that, in comparison with the period of Gheorghiu-Dej 's regime, the human rights situation improved substantially in Romania. After the Fourth Arab–Israeli War (Yom Kippur War), Bucharest offered support for negotiations between Egypt and Israel (e.g. Andrei and Betea, 2011; Malița, 2015; Pechlivanis, 2019). Sometimes, to obtain more sympathy from Western countries, Romanian diplomats offered an exaggerated image about the Soviet Union's pressure on their country. Meanwhile, in talking with the Soviet Union's leaders, Ceaușescu demanded favorable terms in commercial relations, arguing he preserved the socialist system stability in Romania (e.g. Andrei and Betea, 2011).

The period of Nixon and Ford administrations (in 1974, Nixon resigned because of the Watergate scandal and Vice President Gerald Ford replaced him) was an apogee for the relations between socialist Romania and US. In December 1973, at Nixon's invitation, Ceaușescu visited US and in August 1975 President Ford was guest in Romania. The new partnership with US brought significant economic advantages to Romania. In 1971, Bucharest was admitted to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Next year, Romania became member of the International Monetary Fund and of the World Bank. This position offered the opportunity to access major funds in favorable conditions. In 1975, Romania obtained the most favored nation clause from United States. In these circumstances, the trade between Romania and US experienced a significant increase (Tab. 2). Until 1982, Romania experienced trade deficits in the relations with US. For Romanian enterprises it was quite difficult to export on US markets where there were high quality demands. The imports were high, as Romania bought from US technologies and machineries.

Tab. 2. The evolutions of the Romania's trade with US (millions of lei) between 1966 and 1984

An	Exports	Imports
1966	27,6	160,4
1967	53,0	106,0
1968	39,8	114,5
1969	55,2	132,9
1970	80,5	358,6
1971	155,2	377,5

1972	191,0	413,4
1973	320,8	754,6
1974	351,1	737,7
1975	485,5	688,6
1976	944,1	1375,4
1977	1368,3	1427,4
1978	1726,7	2161,9
1979	1775,3	3096,3
1980	1857,1	4365,4
1981	8192,3	12840,7
1982	4930,8	3830,8
1983	10002,5	4504,5
1984	14969,2	5748,8

Source of data: Anuarul statistic al Republicii Socialiste România

In 1974, as the prime minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer retired, Ceaușescu's involvement in domestic and foreign policies increased. The important financial resources obtained by Romania from the Western countries and from the financial international institutions were used in risky projects of investment associated to a rapid industrialization. Unfortunately for Ceaușescu's plans, many of them didn't bring the rentability that was forecasted. They consumed high quantities of raw materials that Romania had to import. To obtain oil for Romanian refineries, Ceaușescu developed a special relation with Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the *Shahanshah* of Iran.

In April 1978, Jimmy Carter, who was US President between 1977 and 1981, invited Ceaușescu to visit again Washington. However, the context was soon dramatically changed. In Iran, the protests against the *Shahanshah* led to significant increases of oil price. In the 1970s Soviet Union supplied its faithful satellites with oil and other raw materials at low prices. Romania's attempts to obtain the same favorable terms proved to be very difficult. The overthrow of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, in 1979, amplified the difficulty of Romania's economy. In the same year, dependent on the oil supplied by Soviet Union, Ceaușescu couldn't afford to condemn Moscow's invasion of Afghanistan as tough as he had done with the invasion of Czechoslovakia. In the years of Carter Administration, the economic relations between US and China improved (in January 1979, the Chinese leader, Deng Xiaoping, visited US).

At beginning of the 1980s, the increase of interest rates for Romania's foreign debt provoked another shock to the national economy. According to Ștefan Andrei, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania from 1978 to 1985, Ceaușescu, who didn't understand the rules of credit operations, accused the Western Bloc and the financial international institutions of betraying him (e.g. Andrei and Betea, 2011). In Romania's media there appeared articles that condemned the financial international institutions. In the next years, Ceaușescu engaged Romania in an accelerated program of repaying the foreign debt that proved to be very painful for the population. The exports increased, while the imports were dramatically reduced (e.g. Dumitriu and Stefanescu, 2013; Țiu, 2014). The trade with US passed from deficits to surpluses.

In the first years of Reagan administration (1981 - 1989), the special relation between US and Romania continued despite some tensions. President Reagan adopted a tough

position in relation with Soviet Union, increasing the military expenditures, deploying missiles in Western Europe and launching the *Strategic Defense Initiative*. Ceaușescu, who proclaimed the World Peace as one of the main purposes of his foreign policy, criticized such actions. In September 1983, the Vice President of United States, George H.W. Bush visited Romania. As Ștefan Andrei storied, Ceaușescu reproached to Bush the too little economic reward from US for Romania's independent policy. He also refused an offer of advantageous credits from US banking institutions (e.g. Andrei and Betea, 2011).

Meanwhile, in Soviet Union the leadership experienced successive changes. Brezhnev, who died in 1982, was followed by Andropov (1982 - 1984) and Chernenko (1984 - 1985). The new leaders continued to penalize Romania's foreign policy, by offering oil and raw materials at higher prices in comparison with the terms offered for other satellites. However, despite Romania's economic difficulties, Ceaușescu defied, in 1984, the boycott organized by the Eastern Bloc against 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles.

Since 1985, Ceaușescu's relative independence from Moscow lost its utility for the Western countries, in the circumstances of the new policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* launched by Mikhail Gorbachev. In fact, the former favorite of the West was viewed as an impediment for the positive evolution of relations with Soviet Union, as he openly expressed his doubts about Gorbachev's program. The situation of human rights from Romania, that in the past was somehow ignored, became an important aspect of West's political and commercial relations with Bucharest. Between 1985 and 1988, Reagan administration repeatedly warned Ceaușescu that Romania could lose the most favored nation clause. In 1988, Bucharest voluntarily renounced to this privilege. In April 1989, Ceaușescu announced the integral repayment of Romania's foreign debt. However, eight months later, his regime was overthrown.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The improvement of political relations with US had complex consequences for Romania. Gheorghiu-Dej's decision to liberate the political prisoners could be, in part, motivated by the purpose of gaining popularity from Western countries. The independent foreign policy, sustained by economic support from US, had strong links with the national-communism initiation in Romania. Between 1965 and 1984, Romania's population could enjoy significant quantities of imported Western goods. The rapid industrialization, promoted by Ceaușescu, was possible because of the imported Western technologies and because of the substantial financial resources provided by Western countries and financial international institutions. The use of these financial resources, sometimes not quite efficient, contributed to the crisis of Romania's foreign debt.

Much of the success attributed to Ceaușescu in the foreign relations with US was, in fact, due to his predecessor. In a counterfactual history approach, it could be provocative to think what it would have happened if Gheorghiu-Dej had lived some years later and his cautionary policies were not replaced by impetuous and risky measures of Ceaușescu.

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