

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

ATOMIC POLITICS:

ROMANIA'S COLD WAR NUCLEAR ACQUISITION STRATEGY, 1962–1979

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Romania's Cold War acquisition of nuclear technology from Western suppliers during the period of détente. This first account of the Romanian nuclear programme is based on multi-archival research that relies extensively upon recently declassified documents from both sides of the former Iron Curtain. It complements supplier-centric explanations of nuclear assistance and restores agency to recipient countries, in this case Romania. The thesis argues that Romania was an 'international nuclear entrepreneur' which turned to the West for atomic assistance because Moscow delayed transfers of the technology that the leadership in Bucharest had requested. Romania then discovered that the Soviet policy of 'denial by postponement' contrasted with more positive attitudes in the West. Over this period, Romania managed to secure nuclear technology thanks to its ingenuity and its political entrepreneurship with the West. In particular, Romania obtained atomic assistance by offering its good offices to the United States during the Vietnam War and the Sino-American rapprochement, and by playing West European nuclear suppliers off against one another.

This thesis thus offers a new interpretation of how and why a country like Romania could gain the access it did to Western nuclear technology during these years, revealing lessons about nuclear acquisition strategy and non-proliferation more generally. It challenges the conventional view of atomic assistance, which holds that superpower nuclear suppliers provided nuclear assistance because of an ideology shared with recipient countries and because they felt pressured by international institutions. This historical analysis is based upon a new, multi-archival reading of primary sources, and contributes to a post-revisionist and more nuanced interpretation of the 'nuclear' dimension of the détente period in the Cold War by examining the remarkable agency of one smaller East European power.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- ACB – Ateliers et Chantiers de Bretagne
- AECL – Atomic Energy of Canada Limited
- AEI – Associated Electrical Industries
- AGR – Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor
- AMAE – Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, Romania
- AMR – Arhivele Militare Române, Romania
- ANIC – Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, Romania
- AOSP – Arkhivy politicheskikh obshchestvennykh organizatsiy, Republic of Moldova
- ASEA – Allmänna Svenska Elektriska AB
- BNX – British Nuclear Export Executive
- BoT – British Board of Trade
- CANDU – Canada Deuterium Uranium
- CC PCR – Comitetul Central al Partidului Comunist Român
- CC RCP – Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party
- CC PMR – Comitetul Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român
- CC RWP – Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party
- CCP – Chinese Communist Party
- CEA – Commissariat à l'énergie atomique
- CEGB – Central Electricity Generating Board
- CMEA – Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
- CNE – Nuclear Energy Committee
- CNSAS – Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, Romania
- CNST – National Council for Science and Technology
- CoCom – Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls
- CPSU – Communist Party of the Soviet Union
- CREST – CIA Records Search Tool

CSEN – State Committee for Nuclear Energy
DIE – Direcția de Informații Externe
ECGD – Export Credits Guarantee Department
EDF – Électricité de France
EEC – European Economic Community
ENDC – Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee
FRG – Federal Republic of Germany
FRUS – Foreign Relations of the United States
GDR – German Democratic Republic
GHH – Gutehoffnungshütte
HEU – highly enriched uranium
HMG – Her Majesty’s Government
IAEA – International Atomic Energy Agency
ICECHIM – Institutul Național de Cercetare-Dezvoltare pentru Chimie și Petrochimie
ICEFIZ – Institutul Central de Fizică
KWU – Kraftwerkunion
LAC – Library and Archives of Canada
LBJL – Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library
LOC – Library of Congress
LTBT – Limited Test Ban Treaty
LWR – Light Water Reactor
MAD – Mutually Assured Destruction
MAE – Ministère des Affaires étrangères
MAN – Ministry of National Defence
MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFN – Most Favoured Nation Clause
MLF – Multilateral Force
NARA – National Archives and Records Administration
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NCA – Nuclear Cooperation Agreement

NNWS – Non-nuclear-weapon states

NPM – Nixon Presidential Materials

NPP – Nuclear Power Plant

NPT – The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

NSG – Nuclear Suppliers Group

NWS – Nuclear-weapon states

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OSA – Open Society Archives

PA AA – Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes

PCC – Political Consultative Committee

PNE – Peaceful Nuclear Explosions

PRC – People’s Republic of China

PUREX – Plutonium Uranium Redox Extraction

RCP – Romanian Communist Party

RGANI – Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy arhiv noveyshey istorii

RNPL – Richard Nixon Presidential Library

RWP – Romanian Workers’ Party

SGHWR – Steam Generating Heavy Water Reactor

TNPG – The Nuclear Power Group

TRIGA – Training, Research, Isotopes, General Atomic

UK – United Kingdom

UKAEA – United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

UKNA – National Archives of the United Kingdom

US – United States

US AEC – United States Atomic Energy Commission

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

VVER – Vodo-Vodyanoi Energetichesky Reaktor

VWP – Vietnam Workers’ Party

INTRODUCTION

Nicolae Ceaușescu, the General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP), used to nurture the hope that by 2000, Romania would have an independent nuclear weapon.¹ Indeed, it was as late as 1992 when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) removed sensitive nuclear materials (a small quantity of plutonium-239) that the post-Ceaușescu leadership in Bucharest had still failed to declare, and Romania remains the only country in the world to have undergone a special inspection from the IAEA.² The story of the Romanian nuclear programme, its impact on the non-proliferation regime in particular and international politics in general, as well as its connection to the Cold War, lies at the core of this thesis, so tracing the development of the Romanian nuclear programme will involve a detailed analysis of Bucharest's efforts to acquire nuclear technology from international suppliers.

How was the Romanian nuclear programme possible? The main argument of this thesis is that Bucharest's ability to secure nuclear technology, and to use

¹ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale [National Central Historical Archives – henceforth ANIC], Comitetul Central al Partidului Comunist Român [Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party – CC PCR], Relații Externe [Foreign Relations], 79/1976, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and John S. Foster and A.M. Aikin, Atomic Energy Canada, Ltd., June 26, 1976, 10.

² Lewis A. Dunn, “The NPT: Assessing the Past, Building the Future,” in *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (July 2009), 144-172; John Carlson and Russell Leslie, *Special Inspections Revisited*, paper presented at INMM 2005 Symposium – Phoenix, USA, July 2005.

that technology to pursue a nuclear hedging strategy, resulted from its political and economic manoeuvring. The Romanians acquired sensitive Western nuclear equipment and materials because of their ‘political entrepreneurship’: they were in a position to offer needed political services to Western suppliers, and to play Western powers off against one another. The alternative strategies used by the leadership in Bucharest (i.e., persuading the Soviet Union to provide Romania with technology based on their shared ideology and putting institutional pressure on suppliers through the NPT and the IAEA) offered smaller yields or failed altogether, thus hindering Bucharest’s nuclear ambitions.

I chose to examine Romania’s nuclear acquisition strategies because they represent an understudied dimension of Bucharest’s foreign policy in particular, and of nuclear and Cold War history in general. No study has yet provided a comprehensive and detailed analysis of Romania’s participation in the global nuclear story. For over half a century, the Romanian nuclear programme has been shrouded in secrecy and the few testimonies released by protagonists have stirred great controversy among experts and the general public.³ Recently

³ Ion Mihai Pacepa, *Red Horizons: Chronicles of a Communist Spy Chief* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1987); “Băieţelul lui Ceauşescu, mort în faşă” [Ceauşescu’s Little Boy, Stillborn], in *Evenimentul Zilei*, December 10, 2002, available at: <http://www.evz.ro/articole/detalii-articol/513785/Baietelul-lui-Ceausescu-mort-in-fasa/>; “Adevărul despre arma nucleară şi banca mondială din România” [The Truth about the A-Bomb and the World Bank in Romania], in *Adevărul*, December 18, 2011, available at: http://adevarul.ro/news/societate/adevarul-despre-arma-nucleara-banca--mondiala-romania-1_50acb7e67c42d5a66388dd63/index.html .

declassified documents from the Romanian archives offer a first glimpse at what Ceaușescu himself thought he was doing and how he sought to achieve his goals.⁴ Studying Romania's Cold War nuclear programme offers the researcher the opportunity to add to the literature on the Cold War by integrating newly published documents and recently declassified materials from archives in Romania as well as from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Italy, France, and the former Soviet Union. Until recently, access to Romanian archives was restricted, leaving scholars reliant upon propaganda materials such as newspapers and official statements. Even after the declassification of RCP documents, Romania's foreign relations have rarely been studied through the prism of multi-archival research, limiting the extent to which the literature on communist Romania could be integrated into Cold War international history. A study of Romania's nuclear programme may now put Bucharest on the map of the global Cold War, both because the pursuit of nuclear technology anchored Romania in the international politics of the détente period and because of the importance of the nuclear dimension of Cold War international history.

This introduction has five parts. I start by formally presenting the key research questions and my hypotheses. Second, I outline the conceptual

⁴ When discussing broader issues, such as strategic thinking, this thesis will use the terms 'Bucharest' and 'Romania' interchangeably. Any references to Nicolae Ceaușescu mean that he played a direct role in the action or situation analysed.

framework I will develop. I start with the conventional wisdom on nuclear technology transfers, I analyse the gaps in it, and then I put forward the concepts that will help me explain Romania's ability to secure nuclear assistance from the West. The third part of this introduction consists of a literature review, in which I explain how the issues explored in this thesis have been seen as being important and how others have sought to address them. Fourth, I describe the methodology and sources used to substantiate my central claims. Finally, I provide a roadmap of the chapters for the reader.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The central questions of this thesis are: How was it possible for Romania, a member of the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), to obtain dual-use nuclear technology from Western nuclear suppliers during the Cold War years under examination, and thus pursue a nuclear hedging strategy? What does this tell us about the nature of the Cold War during the détente period? The broader contemporary puzzle this thesis engages with refers to the spread of nuclear technology worldwide. How and why do small states manage to obtain nuclear technology from the much more powerful nuclear suppliers?

My working hypothesis is that the dissemination of nuclear technology through state-to-state transfers has depended at least in part on the acquisition strategy adopted by the recipient state, the buyer. These technology transfers, in turn, may then determine whether a country will become a proliferator. This thesis defines nuclear technology transfers as the delivery from a supplier and receipt by a buyer of any equipment and nuclear materials used in either research or atomic energy production. This broad definition, which allows for the inclusion of both civilian and military technology in the analysis, stems from the manner in which this thesis understands nuclear proliferation, that is, as the horizontal spread of nuclear weapons. This thesis concurs with the view expressed by Wohlstetter that the military and civilian atoms are substantially identical.⁵ Moreover, it draws on Walsh's argument that nuclear decision-making is a continuum. Similarly, it agrees with Fuhrmann's observation that a state may acquire nuclear technology for peaceful reasons, but then switch to a military programme when international threats emerge.⁶ Hymans and Montgomery argue that international nuclear cooperation harms buyers' nuclear programmes and

⁵ Albert Wohlstetter, "Spreading the Bomb without Quite Breaking the Rules," in *Foreign Policy*, No. 25 (Winter 1976-1977), 93.

⁶ James J. Walsh, *Bombs Unbuilt: Power, Ideas, and Institutions in International Politics* (PhD Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Political Science, 2001), 9; Matthew Fuhrmann, *Atomic Assistance: How "Atoms for Peace" Programs Cause Nuclear Insecurity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 10.

stalls the spread of nuclear weapons.⁷ Contrary to their view, this thesis argues that nuclear technology transfers contribute to proliferation. Receiving facilities, materials, and expertise from abroad emboldens the leaders of recipient countries to consider the option of acquiring an atomic bomb. Although they may not embark on a military nuclear programme immediately after receiving assistance, they may start fearing the idea of tying their hands by forswearing nuclear weapons; in other words, they would want to hedge their bets.⁸

The Conceptual Framework

The Conventional Wisdom on Nuclear Technology Transfers

What is the orthodox view on nuclear technology transfers? Conventional wisdom focuses on two factors: ideology and norms/institutions. Ideology is generally defined as “a set of fundamental concepts systematically expressed by a large group of individuals.”⁹ Since the early days of the Cold War, scholars have seen the superpower confrontation as the manifestation of the irreconcilable doctrinal

⁷ Jacques E. C. Hymans, *Achieving Nuclear Ambitions: Scientists, Politicians, and Proliferation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Alexander Montgomery, “Stop Helping Me: When Nuclear Assistance Impedes Nuclear Programs,” in Adam N. Stulberg and Matthew Fuhrmann (eds.), *The Nuclear Renaissance and International Security* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013), 177-202.

⁸ On hedging, see Ariel Levite, “Never Say Never Again: Nuclear Reversal Revisited,” in *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Winter 2002/2003), 59-88.

⁹ Odd Arne Westad, “Bernath Lecture. The New International History of the Cold War: Three (Possible) Paradigms,” in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Fall 2000), 552.

differences between the United States and the USSR.¹⁰ For them, the Cold War was the result of a contest between liberal democracy and Marxism-Leninism.¹¹ This battle of ideas permeated the field of atomic energy. Each camp strove to demonstrate the superiority of its politico-socio-economic model, and nuclear technology, the epitome of modernization, represented a useful recruitment tool in the battle for hearts and minds. With respect to the Eastern bloc, Odd Arne Westad argues that “the future of socialism depended on the Soviet Union matching the technological achievements of the imperialist states.”¹²

The Soviet challenge to the US domination of the nuclear arena marked the first phase of the globalization of the atom, as Washington officially renounced its policy of denial by launching Atoms for Peace, for fear of losing its potential customers to the USSR.¹³ As the first nuclear power reactor became operational in the USSR in 1954, “there was a widespread sense that Moscow’s model of development could eventually overtake that of the United States.”¹⁴ In these

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Mark Kramer, “Ideology and the Cold War,” in *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25, Issue 4 (October 1999), 540.

¹² Westad, “The New International History of the Cold War,” 557.

¹³ Atoms for Peace was a programme launched by US President Dwight Eisenhower with the aim of promoting non-proliferation by offering the benefits of peaceful nuclear technology to those states that renounced nuclear weapons. Joseph F. Pilat, “Introduction,” in Joseph F. Pilat, *Atoms for Peace. A Future After Fifty Years?* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2007), 1.

¹⁴ Ibid. Sonja Schmid offers a compelling analysis of how East European countries used ideology to obtain nuclear assistance. Sonja Schmid, “‘Nuclear Colonization’?: Soviet Technopolitics in the Second World,” in Gabrielle Hecht, *Entangled Geographies: Empire and Technologies in the Global Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 125-154.

circumstances, recipient countries in Eastern Europe obtained nuclear technology because the USSR sought to boost the economies and national security of their ideological allies.¹⁵ In other words, Eastern bloc countries secured nuclear technology from the USSR by appealing to ideological solidarity. This hypothesis makes one expect that Soviet nuclear assistance to Eastern Europe and China would have endured, given that these countries adhered to Marxist-Leninist principles. Why, then, did Moscow cut off nuclear technology transfers to China and slow down its ‘Peaceful Atom’ programme for Eastern Europe in the late 1950s? The realist argument – that the USSR realized its “military and political interests are best served if the spread of nuclear weapons to other states is prevented,” because this maintained Moscow’s power position – showcases the weaknesses of the ideology hypothesis.¹⁶

This point about suppliers’ concern with non-proliferation brings us to the second core argument in the conventional narrative – stemming the nuclear tide by making atomic energy accessible to all states. The institutional hypothesis argues that recipient countries obtained atomic assistance because suppliers wanted to eliminate the risk of having these countries develop atomic arsenals covertly. Temptation is eliminated by removing the ‘forbidden fruit’ nature of

¹⁵ George Ginsburgs, “Soviet Atomic Energy Agreements,” in *International Organization*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter, 1961), 51.

¹⁶ William C. Potter, “The Soviet Union and Nuclear Proliferation,” in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Autumn 1985), 468.

nuclear technology. Access to nuclear technology and materials was conditioned on the acceptance of international inspections. These ideas stood at the centre of US President Dwight Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace proposal.¹⁷ Both the US and the USSR intended their nuclear assistance programmes as arms control platforms.¹⁸ This dimension of the superpowers' non-proliferation policy materialized into Article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which recipient countries sought to exploit.¹⁹ The international institutional framework through which Article IV (on the peaceful applications of nuclear technology) is implemented consists of the IAEA.²⁰ Buyers obtain nuclear technology by using institutional levers to put pressure on suppliers. They invoke this third pillar of the non-proliferation regime, which obliges recipient countries to renounce the A-bomb in exchange for the peaceful uses of the atom.²¹ The assumption that tying recipient countries to their suppliers and integrating potential proliferants into the global economy would dissuade them from pursuing

¹⁷ Richard G. Hewlett and Jack M. Holl, *Atoms for Peace and War, 1953-1961: Eisenhower and the Atomic Energy Commission* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1989), 209-270, 305-325, 439.

¹⁸ The argument that "non-proliferation became a shared goal of two bitter Cold War enemies, the United States and the Soviet Union" is made in Francis J. Gavin, "Nuclear proliferation and non-proliferation during the Cold War," in Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn Leffler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Vol. II. Crises and Détente* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 396-397.

¹⁹ Benjamin N. Schiff, *International Nuclear Technology Transfer. Dilemmas of Dissemination and Control* (London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1984), 6.

²⁰ George Quester, "The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency," in *International Organization*, Vol. 24, Issue 2 (Spring 1970), 163.

²¹ Maria Rost Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms: Why States Choose Nuclear Restraint* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 90-91.

nuclear weapons rests at the core of neo-liberal institutionalism.²² This hypothesis makes one expect not only that NPT signatories would be rewarded for their adherence to non-proliferation norms, but that they would also forgo nuclearization. Why, then, did countries like Iraq, South Korea, and Romania seek atomic weapons while still formally adhering to the NPT? Also, why did recipient countries fail to prevent suppliers from going beyond the IAEA framework to institute stricter nuclear export policies through the Nuclear Suppliers Group? Realist theories help offer an explanation: power politics trumped norms and institutional pressures.²³

Frenemies and Nuclear Assistance

Matthew Kroenig and Matthew Fuhrmann put forward politico-strategic theories of nuclear assistance.²⁴ The point of agreement between their two approaches is that countries provide nuclear assistance to strengthen alliances and to forge partnerships with ‘enemies of enemies’. Kroenig’s and Fuhrmann’s analyses are based on a Waltian understanding of alignments, which divides relations between

²² Etel Solingen, *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

²³ Bradley A. Thayer, “The Causes of Nuclear Proliferation and the Utility of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime,” in *Security Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1995), 465.

²⁴ Matthew Kroenig, “Exporting the Bomb: Why States Provide Sensitive Nuclear Assistance,” in *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 103, Issue 1 (February 2009), 113-133; Idem, *Exporting the Bomb. Technology Transfer and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Fuhrmann, *Atomic Assistance*; Idem, “Taking a Walk on the Supply Side,” in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (April 2009), 181-208; Idem, “Spreading Temptation: Proliferation and Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation Agreements,” in *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2009), 7-41.

states into either ‘balancing against’ or ‘bandwagoning with.’²⁵ For this reason, neither Kroenig nor Fuhrmann can identify a third category of assistance: that between ‘frenemies’, as described below. These actors, which are ‘friends of foes’, may emerge during periods of détente. Glenn H. Snyder defines détente generally as an arrangement in which opponents agree to a reduction in tension but remain primarily adversaries.²⁶

During Cold War détente, some alliances underwent fundamental changes as small and medium powers gained more room for manoeuvre and as the two superpowers colluded to defend their political and military interests. As Francis J. Gavin notes in *Nuclear Statecraft* about Washington-Bonn relations, US strategy in Europe “reveals that the Cold War was not simply a bipolar struggle and that balancing went on both within and between ‘alliances.’”²⁷ The US and the USSR collaborated on a number of issues, such as arms control and non-proliferation, while continuing their competition on other matters, such as the battle for hearts and minds in the Third World.²⁸ At the same time, both Washington and Moscow experienced tense relations with some of their allies.

²⁵ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 17-21, 27-32.

²⁶ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliances in a Multipolar International System* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 10.

²⁷ Francis J. Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America’s Atomic Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 32.

²⁸ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 194-197.

However, only rarely did these animosities escalate to open conflict. Therefore, instead of seeing these countries as enemies, we should regard them as ambivalent allies, or frenemies. A concept borrowed from psychology, ‘frenemy’ helps describe complicated state-to-state relationships, such as over-competitiveness despite being in a formal alliance, attempts to deter, sabotage, or undermine partners or allies, or voicing public criticism so as to secure reassurances from the country being vilified.²⁹ Un-comradely behaviour does not prevent frenemies from carrying on with their exchanges and interactions, however, because this type of relationship rests on a ‘transactional’ friendship. This thesis argues that ambivalent allies, or frenemies, obtain nuclear assistance from suppliers in exchange for short-term political and economic gains.

Argument

The history of Romania’s negotiations for nuclear technology suggests that ideology and international institutions as instruments of pressure on nuclear suppliers were a less than effective means to a successful transfer of nuclear technology. Romania’s track record suggests rather that political entrepreneurship, which entails a combination of political and economic levers, proved to be a more successful acquisition strategy.

²⁹ On frenemies, see: Briahna Bigelow Bushman and Julianne Holt-Lunstad, “Understanding Social Relationship Maintenance Among Friends: Why We Don’t End Those Frustrating Friendships,” in *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 28, Issue 6 (2009), 749-778.

The history of Bucharest's early efforts to acquire nuclear technology from the Soviet Union shows that appealing to a shared ideology yielded poor results. Bucharest repeatedly pointed out to Moscow that it was its communist duty to supply nuclear reactors and deploy nuclear-tipped missiles on Romanian territory. Perhaps the brand of national communism the RCP sported since the early 1960s diminished Bucharest's chances of getting the technology and weaponry it wanted. Eventually, when Moscow finally agreed to supply Romania with a nuclear reactor in the late 1960s, it did not do so because of any sudden and dramatic realignment of Bucharest's ideological stance. Instead, the leadership in the Kremlin realized that the only means by which they could delay the Romanians from going down the path towards the A-bomb was to offer them a Soviet reactor.

The Romanian nuclear programme also shows that the international institutional framework brought little benefit for the leadership in Bucharest. The monopoly on atomic weapons by the nuclear powers, enshrined in the NPT, made non-nuclear-weapon states (which the literature refers to as NNWS) like Romania, feel entitled to a wide range of technologies and know-how under the aegis of peaceful uses of atomic energy. After putting up prolonged opposition to the NPT, Bucharest tried to use its endorsement of the treaty to obtain Washington's approval for transferring nuclear technology to Romania. The top

echelons in the US, however, did not act upon the obligations they incurred under Article IV of the NPT. American decision-makers knew it was not in their interest to boost Bucharest's ability to build an atomic weapon, not least since a nuclear-armed Romania would frustrate US strategic objectives. The US was also aware that it would not incur any penalties for withholding assistance, other than a dent in its international reputation. The IAEA was responsible for facilitating access to the peaceful applications of nuclear technology, but it could not take suppliers to court for refusing to share their secrets. Bucharest gained a great deal from the training, funds, and contacts facilitated by the IAEA, but it did not acquire any sensitive facility through this international institution.

Romania's pursuit of nuclear technology suggests that the effectiveness of the 'political services for nuclear technology' quid pro quo depends on how useful the buyer can render itself to the supplier. The buyer's ability to offer politically valuable services to the supplier is a function of both the centrality of the issue with which the supplier needs help and the availability of equally well-positioned service providers. The buyer needs to identify to what extent the policy-making process in the supplier state depends on the issue at stake. For instance, as we shall see, Romania achieved important breakthroughs in its pursuit of Western nuclear technology by making itself indispensable to the United States in the 1968 peace negotiations with North Vietnam and in the opening to the People's

Republic of China in 1970 and 1971. A great deal of America's military, economic, diplomatic, and political capital was channelled towards the resolution of the Vietnam War and the normalization of relations with China, given their tremendous effect on the US economy and Washington's political standing in the international arena. As a result, Washington greatly valued Romania's good offices. Political manoeuvring is even more effective if the buyer is the only one in a position to offer the services in question. Bucharest, therefore, had a tremendous advantage compared to other mediators the US relied on: Romania not only had excellent ties to Hanoi and Beijing, but it also worked closely with Moscow. Offering a timely service no other country could offer on the topic that affects all other major political decisions gives a buyer access to top decision-makers in the supplier state and allows it to apply pressure towards the successful transfer of technology.

Bucharest's nuclear strategy also illustrates that the success of what I call the 'economic lever' depends on the state of the nuclear industry in each supplier country, as well as on the number of suppliers interested in the deal in question. When the nuclear industry in the supplier country is not making a profit or faces technical difficulties, the buyer has a better chance of securing an advantageous deal for itself. If a supplier reckons that the survival of its nuclear industry depends on a particular contract with a foreign buyer, it will do its best to defeat

its competitors and win the bid. Romania targeted Canada because the Canadian nuclear industry was, in the words of officials in Ottawa, ‘desperate’ for contracts abroad as a means to generate revenue for the newly restructured Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL). In addition, buyers generally secure a more advantageous nuclear deal if they inflate the sense of competition between suppliers. Thomas Christensen calls this principle ‘Tertius Gaudens’.³⁰ It asserts that when two or more suppliers are in competition, each trying to maximize its own gains, another party will often emerge to collect the spoils. Bucharest, for instance, skilfully exploited Anglo-French rivalry and, later on, competition between European and North American nuclear suppliers in order to drive down the price of the nuclear technology it wanted, to secure better loans for the purchase of this equipment, and to decrease the efficiency of safeguards that had to be applied to the Romanian nuclear programme. Western nuclear suppliers, in desperate need of exports to stay afloat, adopted laxer terms for the exports agreements signed with Bucharest and, in so doing, turned a blind eye to Romania’s publicly stated nuclear ambitions. Therefore, by preying on an almost ruined supplier, and by playing suppliers off against each other, a buyer can degrade nuclear transfer safety standards.

³⁰ Thomas J. Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith. Alliance Politics and Problems of Coercive Diplomacy in Asia* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 198.

Literature Review

My intellectual curiosity lies in why some nuclear recipients managed to secure better deals from suppliers than their position in the international system appeared to afford them. These recipients were mostly countries in the third wave of proliferators: developing, non-OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Libya, North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Romania, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, and Yugoslavia.³¹ They adopted nuclear acquisition strategies that enabled them to punch above their weight.³² The scant scholarship on Romania's nuclear programme stands in sharp contrast with the growing literature on these other countries.³³ Until recently, primary sources on Romania's

³¹ William Walker and Måns Lönnroth, *Nuclear Power Struggles. Industrial Competition and Proliferation Control* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 36-37.

³² On the power exerted by small actors see: Robert O. Keohane, "The Big Influence of Small Allies," in *Foreign Policy*, No. 2 (Spring 1971), 161-182; Michael I. Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London: Frank Cass, 1990).

³³ Sara Tanis and Bennet Ramberg, "Argentina," in William C. Potter (ed.), *International Nuclear Trade and Nonproliferation. The Challenge of the Emerging Suppliers* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1990), 95-109; Mariana Montez Carpes, *A política nuclear brasileira no contexto das relações internacionais contemporâneas. Domínio tecnológico como estratégia de inserção internacional* [The Brazilian nuclear policy in the context of contemporary international relations. Technological dominance as an international insertion strategy] (Master's Dissertation, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Department of Political Science, 2006); Maria Rost Rublee, "Egypt's Nuclear Weapons Program: Lessons Learned," in *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2006), 555-567; George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999); Jayita Sarkar, *Franco-Indian nuclear relations and U.S. nonproliferation efforts during the Cold War, 1948-1978* (PhD Dissertation, Graduate Institute Geneva, Department of International History and Politics, 2014); Daniel Poneman, *Nuclear*

nuclear technology acquisitions remained inaccessible. Whereas other scholars have looked at the transfer of Canadian nuclear technology to Romania (mostly based on oral histories), the work on the Soviet Union, Britain, the United States, France, and the NPT is new.³⁴ So this thesis relates to two strands of scholarship: the historiography on the Cold War on the one hand, and nuclear and strategic studies on the other hand.

International History

With respect to the contribution this thesis makes to the field of Cold War international history, my research looks at an understudied yet important phenomenon during the post-war period, namely the acquisition of nuclear technology by Romania in the 1960s and 1970s. This thesis engages with the existing literature on Cold War history in three ways: first, it answers the call

Power in the Developing World (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), especially the chapter on Argentina, Iran, and Indonesia; Avner Cohen, *The Worst-Kept Secret: Israel's Bargain with the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Målfrid Braut-Hegghammer, "Libya's Nuclear Turnaround: Perspectives from Tripoli," in *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (2008), 55-72; Samina Ahmed, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program: Turning Points and Nuclear Choices," in *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999), 101-126; Se Young Jang, "South Korea's Nuclear Ambitions and the NPT: How Canada Pushed Seoul to Ratify the Treaty," conference paper presented at the 12th Annual International Graduate Student Conference on the Cold War, Santa Barbara, CA, April 11-13, 2014; Anna-Mart van Wyk, "South Africa's Nuclear Programme and the Cold War," in *History Compass*, Vol. 8, Issue 7 (July 2010), 562-572. Anna-Mart van Wyk, "Apartheid's Atomic Bomb: Cold War Perspectives," in *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (2010), 100-120; George H. Quester, "Taiwan," in Potter (ed.), *International Nuclear Trade*, 359-378; William C. Potter, Djuro Miljanic, and Ivo Slaus, "Tito's Nuclear Legacy," in *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (March 2000), 63-70.

³⁴ Duane Bratt, *The Politics of CANDU Exports* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Duane Bratt, "CANDU or Candon't: Competing Values behind Canada's Nuclear Sales," in *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Spring/Summer 1998), 1; Fuhrmann, *Atomic Assistance*, 115-117.

made by Anne Deighton to integrate Eastern bloc primary sources into the historiography of détente in Europe.³⁵ Second, it speaks to the issue raised by Odd Arne Westad that technology offers an area of investigation which could help reformulate our views of the Cold War.³⁶ And third, it adds to our understanding of Romania's foreign policy during the Cold War. Therefore, this first history of foreign (particularly Western) nuclear technology transfers to Romania fills a gap in the historical record on East-West trade, adds nuance to our understanding of détente as an important phase in the history of nuclear globalization, and explains the connection between Bucharest's views of the atomic bomb and its broader strategic thinking.

³⁵ Anne Deighton, "Ostpolitik or Westpolitik? British foreign policy, 1968-1975," in *International Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (October 1998), 901. For further scholarship on European détente, see Oliver Bange and Gottfried Niedhart (eds.), *Helsinki 1975 and the Transformation of Europe* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008); Frédéric Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey, Piers Ludlow, and Leopoldo Nuti (eds.), *Europe and the End of the Cold War: A Reappraisal* (London: Routledge, 2008); Richard Davy, "Helsinki Myths: Setting the Record Straight on the Final Act of the CSCE, 1975," in *Cold War History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2009), 1-22; Wilfried Loth, *Overcoming the Cold War: A History of Détente, 1951-1991* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Angela Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente. How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE* (Oxford: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2009); Idem, "The Main Task of the European Political Cooperation: Fostering Détente in Europe," in Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *Perforating the Iron Curtain. European Détente, Transatlantic Relations, and the Cold War, 1965-1985* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2010), 122-141; Idem, "Détente, Entente, or Linkage." *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2009), 703-722; Idem, "Untying Cold War Knots: The EEC and Eastern Europe in the Long 1970s," in *Cold War History*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2014), 153-173; John van Oudenaren, *European Détente: The Soviet Union and the West since 1953* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *Perforating the Iron Curtain. European Détente, Transatlantic Relations, and the Cold War, 1965-1985* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2010); Andreas Wenger, Vojtech Mastny, and Christian Nuenlist (eds.), *Origins of the European Security System. The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965-1975* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2008).

³⁶ Odd Arne Westad, *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* (London, Frank Cass, 2000), 3-11.

With respect to the historiography on Europe's place in the Cold War during the 1960s and 1970s, as more primary sources have become available worldwide, the nature and evolution of détente in Europe have been under close scrutiny. Deighton's call for a pan-European investigation of the changes that swept Europe during the period of détente is part and parcel of the post-revisionist trend in Cold War historiography whose aim is to venture "to the Balkans, Scandinavia, the Middle East, Iran, China and elsewhere" to examine the Cold War interests of actors other than the superpowers.³⁷ With the opening of archives in Eastern Europe, it is now possible to offer a much more nuanced understanding of Europe's role in the post-war world. There is still no consensus on what this specific process entailed. As Henry A. Kissinger remarked, Europeans on the two sides of the Iron Curtain reacted differently to the changes in the international system that occurred during this period, but they had one thing in common: a general resentment of being treated as pawns by the US and the USSR.³⁸ The Europeans' increasing assertiveness, Hanhimäki points out,

³⁷ Deighton, "Ostpolitik or Westpolitik?," 901; Westad, *Reviewing the Cold War*, 3-11. For analyses of 'regional' actors pursuing their own interests, see: Anne Deighton, *The Impossible Peace: Britain, the Division of Germany, and the Origins of the Cold War* (New York: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1990); Louise L'Estrange Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War: The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), especially chapters 1 and 2 for an Iranian perspective on the Azerbaijan crisis.

³⁸ Jussi Hanhimäki, "Détente in Europe, 1962-1975," in Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn Leffler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Vol. II. Crises and Détente* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 198. Britain and France were struggling to manage the decline of their international positions, and tried to re-assert themselves as leaders of the Old Continent by using the leverage the Eastern bloc provided. Deighton, "Ostpolitik or Westpolitik?," 893-901; Georges-Henri Soutou, "The linkage between European integration and détente: The Contrasting

suggests that there was much more fluidity and bargaining within the blocs than previously assumed, which is why these countries could engage in this open-ended process with its military, economic, and human security dimensions.³⁹ This thesis seeks to add to our understanding of détente in Europe through an in-depth analysis of the intense East-West exchanges of the late 1960s and 1970s, which reveal the Iron Curtain to have been much more porous than previously assumed.

As for the contribution of this thesis to New Cold War international history, it corroborates the argument at the heart of the Nuclear Proliferation International History Project (coordinated by Leopoldo Nuti and Christian

Approaches of de Gaulle and Pompidou, 1965 to 1974,” in N. Piers Ludlow (ed.), *European integration and the Cold War: Ostpolitik-Westpolitik, 1965-1973* (Routledge: London, 2007), 12. The Federal Republic of Germany sought to normalize relations with the socialist bloc (especially with the German Democratic Republic) and promote its interests by acknowledging the consequences of the Second World War. Carole Fink and Bernd Schaefer, “Ostpolitik and the World, 1969-1974,” in Carole Fink and Bernd Schaefer, *Ostpolitik, 1969-1974. European and Global Responses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2. The USSR saw it as a chance to attract economic and political investment from Western Europe while maintaining the “most advantageous international position since 1945.” Vladislav M. Zubok, “The Soviet Union and Détente of the 1970s,” *Cold War History*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2008), 434. For Moscow’s allies in Eastern Europe, détente offered enticing opportunities but also posed difficult problems. For example, while the Poles tried to use détente to influence the Warsaw Pact’s policies towards West Germany in ways that advanced Polish national interests, the German Democratic Republic found itself under pressure to make a series of changes in its foreign policy and in its position towards the Federal Republic of Germany. East Germany shifted from “an offensive to a defensive strategy, from an aggressive rhetoric to détente-compatible official language, from delimitation to more and more communication, contacts, and cooperation.” Wanda Jarzabek, “Polish Reactions to the West German Ostpolitik and the East-West Détente,” in Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *Perforating the Iron Curtain. European Détente, Transatlantic Relations, and the Cold War, 1965-1985* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2010), 35-40; Oliver Bange, “The GDR in the Era of Détente: Conflicting Perceptions and Strategies, 1965-1975,” in Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *Perforating the Iron Curtain. European Détente, Transatlantic Relations, and the Cold War, 1965-1985* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2010), 57.

³⁹ Hanhimäki, “Détente in Europe, 1962-1975,” in Westad and Leffler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Vol. II. Crises and Détente*, 200, 217.

Ostermann) that nuclear history is international history. No state has ever pursued a nuclear programme (civilian or military) in complete isolation from the international system. External assistance was a key factor for even the most marginalized states, such as South Africa, North Korea, Israel, and Romania.⁴⁰ Westad points out that “at the beginning of the Cold War, nuclear technology stood at the core of the conflict.”⁴¹ The technical difficulties the Soviets faced, combined with the US domination of the research reactor market, resulted in a tremendous lead for the American nuclear industry (85% of the nuclear power plant market). After the United States had proved that the tremendous energy released by splitting the atom could be harnessed for energy production, other countries, including the United Kingdom, France, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), and Sweden, started building their civilian nuclear industries.⁴² Having developed economically viable technologies in the second half of the 1960s and the 1970s, these countries became the driving force behind the spread of

⁴⁰ On South Africa and Israel, see: Or Rabinowitz, *Bargaining on Nuclear Tests: Washington and its Cold War Deals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 74, 108. On North Korea, see: Balazs Szalontai and Sergey Radchenko, “North Korea’s Efforts to Acquire Nuclear Technology and Nuclear Weapons: Evidence from Russian and Hungarian Archives,” Working Paper no. 53, (Washington, D.C.: Cold War International History Project, 2006).

⁴¹ Westad, “The New International History of the Cold War,” 557.

⁴² Charles K. Ebinger, *International Politics of Nuclear Energy* (London: Sage Publications, 1978), 18; Maurice Vaisse, *La France et l’Atome* [France and the Atom] (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 1994); Margaret Gowing assisted by Lorna Arnold, *Independence and Deterrence: Britain and Atomic Energy, 1945-1952* (London: Macmillan, 1974), Vol. 1 Policy Making, 331-333; Thomas Jonter, “Sweden and the Bomb. The Swedish Plans to Acquire Nuclear Weapons, 1945-1972,” SKI Report 01:33, available at:

http://www.iaea.org/inis/collection/NCLCollectionStore/_Public/32/056/32056064.pdf;

nuclear equipment and expertise. During the period of détente, the dissemination of nuclear technology accelerated tremendously, as more and more countries (especially in the developing world) came to see nuclear energy as a cheap and reliable solution to their dependence on fossil fuels.

Nuclear fission could serve to build a weapon so powerful that no army in the world could survive its deployment.⁴³ Like much of Cold War history, nuclear history has been dominated by the study of the US-USSR nuclear arms race, leaving little room for the exploration of the intentions and capabilities of small, developing countries.⁴⁴ Obviously, small states posed less of an existential threat to international security than American or Soviet nuclear stockpiles. However, some developing countries craved the prestige of membership in the nuclear club and therefore exploited the opportunities provided by the changes brought about by the period of détente to obtain nuclear technology. Romania offers a clear example of how a small power capitalized on the weaknesses of the emerging nuclear trade regime to develop its own nuclear programme. During the period of

⁴³ Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution. Statecraft and the Meaning of Armageddon* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 6.

⁴⁴ Shane J. Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid: The Quest for American Atomic Supremacy from World War II to the Present* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Joseph Cirincione, *Bomb Scare: The History and Future of Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Lawrence Wittner, *Confronting the Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Michael J. Brenner, *Nuclear Power and Nonproliferation: The Remaking of U.S. Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); J. Samuel Walker, "Nuclear Power and Nonproliferation: The Controversy over Nuclear Exports, 1974-1980," in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2001); David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: the Soviet Union and atomic energy, 1939-1956* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1994).

détente, the road to nuclear proliferation was paved with good intentions, especially in the case of nuclear technology transfers from Western countries to the developing world.⁴⁵ Starting in the 1960s, the West, particularly the United States, believed that openness and engagement could mitigate the ideological confrontation with the East.⁴⁶ Policy-makers in Washington embarked on a pathbreaking mission, hoping to diminish the nuclear threat posed by countries in the communist camp by bringing them to the negotiations table. Through its policy of differentiation, the United States sought to reward those communist countries which seemed independent of the Soviet Union, such as Yugoslavia and Romania. Bucharest's pursuit of Western nuclear technology reinforced the 'maverick satellite' image it was trying to project. What the Americans did not know was that Romania's opening to the West stemmed from Moscow's refusal to share its nuclear technology, because of the proliferation risk that Bucharest posed. The West Europeans gladly jumped at the opportunities the Romanian market offered to the powerful nuclear lobbies in countries such as the United Kingdom, France, the FRG, Sweden, Switzerland, and Italy. By combining all these different threads of history, the study of how Romania developed its nuclear programme sheds light not only on US nuclear assistance strategy but also on

⁴⁵ Poneman, *Nuclear Power*, 26-28.

⁴⁶ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment. A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 272-306; Hanhimäki, "Détente in Europe, 1962-1975," in Westad and Leffler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Vol. II. Crises and Détente*, 207.

Moscow's non-proliferation policy, on Western Europe's stance on nuclear trade and non-proliferation, and on the judgements that all supplier countries made between sustaining their diplomatic alliances versus pursuing their national economic interests. Romania's quest for nuclear technology is an integral part of the international history of nuclear proliferation.

With respect to the literature on Bucharest's role in the Cold War, the ongoing debate revolves around the notion of 'independence'. Romania is portrayed either as a 'maverick satellite' or as a 'Trojan Horse' for the Soviet Union. The proponents of the 'maverick satellite' narrative explain Bucharest's foreign policy initiatives with reference to the Romanian-Soviet split.⁴⁷ This strand of literature holds that Romania's role was that of a counterforce within the Eastern bloc, balancing against the Soviet Union by seeking warm relations with the West. The supporters of the 'Trojan Horse' argument assert that Romania's independent foreign policy was essentially one of deceit. They portray

⁴⁷ Joseph Harrington, and Bruce J. Courtney, *Tweaking the Nose of the Russians: Fifty Years of American-Romanian Relations, 1940-1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Dennis Deletant and Mihail Ionescu, *Romania and the Warsaw Pact: 1955-1989*, Working Paper no. 43 (Washington, D.C.: Cold War International History Project, April 2004); Mircea Munteanu, "Communication Breakdown? Romania and the Sino-American Rapprochement," in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (September 2009), 615-631; Idem, "When the Levee Breaks: The Impact of the Sino-Soviet Split and the Invasion of Czechoslovakia on Romanian-Soviet Relations, 1967-1970," in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter 2010), 43-61; Idem, "Over the Hills and Far Away. Romania's Attempts to Mediate the Start of U.S.-North Vietnamese Negotiations, 1967-1968," in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Summer 2012), 64-96; Larry L. Watts, *With Friends Like These... The Soviet Bloc's Clandestine War Against Romania* (Bucharest: Military Publishing House, 2010).

Ceaușescu as Moscow's most faithful servant, funnelling all the intelligence and technology he acquired from the West to the Soviet Union, thus working to undermine the capitalist bloc.⁴⁸

This thesis shows that both of these narratives offer too narrow an interpretation of Romanian foreign policy. The 'maverick satellite' theory cannot explain instances where Romania and the Soviet Union cooperated, while the 'Trojan Horse' argument cannot account for Romania's occasional unwillingness to play Moscow's game. Moreover, neither theory can account for why cooperation or confrontation in Romania's relations with the superpowers occurred when they did. A few renowned scholars challenge these conventional narratives. Vladimir Tismăneanu, for instance, argues that "although there were crises in Romanian-Soviet relations, they never reached the point of an open clash."⁴⁹ Dennis Deletant, exploring the extent of Soviet pressures on Bucharest, proposes a more refined view of Romania's position within the Warsaw Pact, namely one of limited autonomy.⁵⁰ Building on these analyses, this thesis argues

⁴⁸ Ion Mihai Pacepa, *Red Horizons: Chronicles of a Communist Spy Chief* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publications, 1987); David B. Funderburk, *Pinstripes and Reds: An American Ambassador Caught between the State Department and the Romanian Communists, 1981-1985* (Washington, DC: Selous Foundation Press, 1987); Lavinia Betea, Cristina Diac, Florin-Răzvan Mihai, and Ilarion Țiu, *21 august 1968. Apoteoza lui Ceaușescu* [August 21, 1968. Ceaușescu's Apotheosis] (Bucharest: Polirom, 2009).

⁴⁹ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons. The History of the Romanian Communist Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 188.

⁵⁰ Dennis Deletant, "'Taunting the Bear:' Romania and the Warsaw Pact, 1963-1989," in *Cold War History*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (November 2007), 495-507.

that Romania was a ‘frenemy’ towards both the US and the USSR. To ensure the survival of his regime, Ceaușescu deployed a whole range of skills which would qualify him as a successful ‘political entrepreneur’: making himself useful to the two superpowers by offering concrete political services to both Moscow and Washington; playing more powerful actors off against each another; and circumventing the obstacles posed by the nuclear trade regulator (the IAEA).

Nuclear Studies

The second contribution of this thesis is the new conceptual tools it offers, namely the levers used to acquire nuclear technology: ideological, political, economic, and institutional. The history of Romania’s nuclear acquisitions holds significant untapped potential for our understanding of how nuclear buyers go about acquiring nuclear technology. Both theorists and historians have focused on the development of atomic weapons, but they have yet to examine comprehensively the connection between nuclear acquisition strategies, technology transfers, and nuclear proliferation. The reasons for which countries want nuclear weapons have long eclipsed most other questions related to nuclear proliferation.⁵¹ Yet questions about *how* states manage to obtain nuclear technology are equally important.

⁵¹ The most influential studies on the causes for nuclear proliferation are: Scott D. Sagan, “Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb,” in *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1996/1997), 54-86; Sonali Singh and Christopher R. Way, “The Correlates of Nuclear Proliferation: A Quantitative Test,” in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 48, No. 6 (2004), 859-885; Jacques E. C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Solingen, *Nuclear Logics*.

Unfortunately, the strategies nuclear buyers use to acquire the aforementioned equipment and knowledge have remained poorly understood. Explaining how states gain access to foreign nuclear technology poses an acute challenge.

My thesis builds on some of the most important conceptual frameworks in the supply-demand debate on the dynamics in nuclear proliferation. First, this thesis draws on Gavin's conclusion that for the United States, nuclear weapons were not always a goal in themselves, but a bargaining chip to solve other pressing issues.⁵² Drawing on Gavin's findings, this thesis will argue that the Romanians identified Washington's interest in getting the Vietnam War resolved and Nixon's keenness on normalizing relations with China to push through the nuclear deal Bucharest was interested in.

Second, this thesis builds on Walker and Lönnroth's finding that during the nuclear revolution of the late 1960s and 1970s, nuclear suppliers "fell over themselves to offer the most favourable terms, backing the reactors with lavish financial aid."⁵³ The main implication of this argument for nuclear acquisition strategies is that buyers would try to capitalize on this competition between suppliers to get a better deal – as the *Tertius Gaudens* principle would suggest.

⁵² Francis J. Gavin, "Nuclear Nixon: Ironies, Puzzles, and the Triumph of Realpolitik," in Fredrik Logevall, Andrew Preston (eds.), *Nixon in the World. American Foreign Relations, 1969-1977* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 127.

⁵³ Walker and Lönnroth, *Nuclear Power Struggles*, 11.

The conclusion this thesis will reach from its analysis of Romania's economic manoeuvring is that Romania managed to obtain nuclear technology by playing off the West Europeans against each other, and this concurs with Walker and Lönnroth's finding.

Third, this thesis builds on Braut-Hegghammer's 'nuclear entrepreneurs' conceptual framework.⁵⁴ Braut-Hegghammer examines how entrepreneurial alliances (a coalition of nuclear scientists and top decision-makers) determine the outcome of a nuclear weapons programme. Although her analysis takes into account the impact of the external environment on an entrepreneurial alliance's ability to push a nuclear weapons programme forward, the term 'nuclear entrepreneur' primarily reflects the tactics that nuclear scientists employ domestically. This thesis takes Braut-Hegghammer's concept further, looking at the strategies used by top decision-makers in the country seeking to buy nuclear technology, in relation to their counterparts in the international nuclear trade arena. This thesis defines as 'political entrepreneurs' those political actors which can offer political services and can play nuclear suppliers against one another.

This thesis challenges conceptual frameworks about nuclear proliferation on both sides of the supply-demand debate. Political scientists, analysing large-

⁵⁴ Målfrid Braut-Hegghammer, *Nuclear Entrepreneurs: Drivers of Nuclear Proliferation* (PhD Thesis, London School of Economics and Politics, Department of International Relations, 2009).

N samples, have examined the causes for which nuclear powers help non-nuclear states with nuclear technology. As mentioned above, the main causes they identified include the existence of a common threat, shared democratic values, or the desire to make bigger profits.⁵⁵ Knowing why suppliers provide other countries with nuclear technology is vital, but it does not give the full picture of a technology transfer. For instance, while the economic rationale for transferring nuclear technology is a useful premise for the conceptual framework around nuclear acquisition strategies, it does not say anything about how buyers capitalize on the rivalry between nuclear suppliers to secure the technology they want. Focusing exclusively on nuclear suppliers creates the false impression that they dictate the rules of the game single-handedly, with buyers being mere spectators of a transaction in which they have no power. Recipient countries are not necessarily passive subjects. Although it is true that nuclear suppliers wield great influence, especially because the most powerful suppliers are also nuclear-weapon states (NWS), buyers may be skilful negotiators, able to secure advantageous deals for themselves. Although the scholarship on individual nuclear weapons programmes and on the reasons for which states choose to pursue nuclear weapons has grown exponentially over the last few decades, no work has so far looked at which nuclear acquisition strategy is more conducive to nuclear

⁵⁵ Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb*; Fuhrmann, *Atomic Assistance*; Idem, "Taking a Walk on the Supply Side," 181-208; Idem, "Spreading Temptation," 7-41.

technology transfers, and subsequently to the possible development of nuclear weapons. So we do not completely understand why states fail or succeed in their pursuit of nuclear technology and how these trajectories can be influenced. Exploring the determinants of success or failure in the efforts of specific states to acquire nuclear technology enriches our wider understanding of the drivers behind atomic assistance and nuclear proliferation.

Methods and Sources

There is an ongoing debate about how to study nuclear proliferation, with political scientists advocating the use of statistics while historians promote in-depth multi-archival research.⁵⁶ Each side underlines the advantages its own method offers while stressing the deficiencies of other methods. Political scientists take pride in being “more rigorous and scientific.”⁵⁷ The large datasets and sophisticated models they work with allow them to make generalizations about the events or factors they are studying, which, they point out, historians cannot do. Political scientists themselves recognize that their toolset suffers from non-negligible shortcomings, such as coding and selection effects, to mention just a

⁵⁶ H-Diplo/ISSF Forum on “What We Talk About When We Talk About Nuclear Weapons,” June 15, 2014, available at: <http://issforum.org/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-Forum-2.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Francis J. Gavin, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Nuclear Weapons: A Review Essay,” June 15, 2014, 31, available at: <http://issforum.org/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-Forum-2.pdf>.

couple.⁵⁸ Qualitative research has its own strengths: it can unpack the causal mechanisms, offer context through archival data, account for nuances and complexity, and include instances that resist being coded as either ‘black’ or ‘white’.

Motivated by what Marc Trachtenberg calls “the historic sensibility”, this thesis relies on qualitative methods, namely multi-archival and multi-lingual research to answer the question posed at the beginning of this section.⁵⁹ I chose to provide an in-depth historical analysis (which nonetheless engages with the theoretical literature) because the Romanian nuclear programme offers an important and representative example of a successful acquisition strategy.⁶⁰ Romania was the only country in the Warsaw Pact that managed to acquire Western nuclear technology. Its uniqueness calls for a focused analysis. Moreover, there is no account of Romania’s nuclear acquisitions during the Cold War, since primary sources have not been available until now. With the declassification of the Romanian archives, new opportunities arise for the scholar. Moreover, the gradual release of government documents in the US, the UK, Canada, France,

⁵⁸ Philip A. Schrodt, “Seven Deadly Sins of Contemporary Quantitative Political Analysis,” in *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (March 2014), 287-300.

⁵⁹ Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 154.

⁶⁰ On the issue of important and representative cases, see H-Diplo/ISSF Forum on “What We Talk About When We Talk About Nuclear Weapons,” June 15, 2014, available at: <http://issforum.org/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-Forum-2.pdf>.

Italy, and the former Soviet Union complements the perspective offered by Romanian sources. This explains the absence of a comparative analysis with other East European countries in this thesis, which, as fascinating as it may be, would be a second-stage exercise, conducted only when the archival records for these countries have been fully mined.

The validity of the arguments this thesis puts forward will be established by interpreting these primary sources, whose variety adds to its originality. Through the analysis of American, Soviet, Canadian, British, French, Italian, and German archival documents, I reveal more about the motivations of nuclear suppliers on both sides of the Iron Curtain with respect to selling nuclear technology to Bucharest. By focusing on Romanian documents, I explain how Romania manoeuvred to obtain the technology it wanted. Reports and diplomatic traffic both from Romanian agencies in foreign countries and from foreign embassies and delegations in Bucharest allow me to ascertain how effective Romania's tactics were. Finally, internal reports of governmental agencies in partner countries reveal how suppliers responded to the incentives Bucharest embedded in its nuclear acquisition strategies.

Published Documents

Since the fall of communism in Romania, several collections of documents from the 1960s and 1970s have been published. The Romanian Ministry of Foreign

Affairs Archives (AMAE) and the National Council for Study of State Security Archives (CNSAS) are the two institutions most active in promoting archival openness, having released collections on Romania's relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, on Romania's reaction to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and on the organization of the State Security service (Securitate), including details about its foreign branch.⁶¹ I also rely on the document collections published by the US Department of State, the National Security Archive, the Cold War International History Project, the Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security, and the Romanian Diplomatic Institute.

Archives

I conducted extensive research in the files of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (CC PCR). The most relevant documents belong to the following departments of the CC PCR: Chancellery, Foreign Relations, Economic, and Political-Organizational Sections. I have also conducted research in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives (AMAE), examining correspondence between Bucharest and Romanian embassies in Moscow,

⁶¹ Claudiu Florian, Dumitru Preda, and Ottmar Trașcă (eds.), *Romania-Republica Federală Germania. Începutul Relațiilor Diplomatice, 1966-1967* [Romania-Federal Republic of Germany. The Beginning of Diplomatic Relations, 1966-1967] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2009); Dumitru Preda and Cristian Popișteanu, *1968. Primăvara de la Praga. Documente diplomatice ianuarie 1968-aprilie 1969* [1968. Prague Spring. Diplomatic documents from January 1968 to April 1969] (Bucharest: Editura MondoMedia, 2009); Florica Dobre (ed.), *Securitatea. Structuri-cadre, Obiective și Metode* [The Romanian State Security: Structures-Cadres, Objectives and Methods], (CNSAS, Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2006, 2 volumes).

Washington, Paris, London, Bonn, Stockholm, Ottawa, Geneva, Prague, Beijing, Hanoi, and Pyongyang. In addition, I have examined the archives of the State Security service, which contain detailed reports about the development of Romania's nuclear programme.

American archival materials relevant to this thesis are held in several repositories, including the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in College Park, Maryland, various presidential libraries, and the Library of Congress. I conducted research on Central Intelligence Agency documents, the records of the Department of State (Record Group 59, divided into Central Foreign Policy Files and Subject Numeric Files for the period 1964–1973), the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, the Nixon Presidential Materials (White House Files, National Security Files), the Gerald Ford Presidential Library, the Library of Congress (Vannevar Bush Papers, Averell Harriman Papers, and Glenn Seaborg Papers), and the National Security Archive.

British archival materials relevant to this thesis are held in the British National Archives in Kew, London. I conducted research on the documents of the Office of the Prime Minister, the files of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the records of the Cabinet Office, the UK Atomic Energy Authority, and the Board of Trade.

I also conducted research in France, at the Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (Foreign Ministry Archives); in Italy, at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato (Central State Archives); and in the Republic of Moldova, at the Arkhivly politicheskikh obshchestvennykh organizatsiy (Archives of Socio-Political Organizations). In addition, I received sets of documents from the Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy arhiv noveyshey istorii (Russian State Archive for Contemporary History) from Mark Kramer; from the Canadian National Archives from Mauro Elli; and from the Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (Political Archive of the Foreign Office, Germany) from Krzysiek Olszewski.

Oral Histories

My thesis uses elite interviews with former policy-makers and diplomats, which I identified from the aforementioned archival documents. I conducted interviews with Robert Chesworth, the main negotiator for Gulf Corporation (currently General Atomics), and with various officials in the Romanian nuclear establishment.

While elite interviews can be unreliable, given that respondents tend to forget the exact details or seek to bolster their reputation by presenting their actions in a positive light, they nonetheless make a positive contribution to my research. Interviews allowed me to gather information about these policy-makers' personality traits, mannerisms, and psychological predispositions. Thus, I learned

a great deal about the intentions and perceptions of the parties involved in the negotiations I am interested in. In addition, interviews enabled me to make additions to data found in the archives or fill in the gaps created by the incremental nature of the declassification process in the countries covered in my research. They also provided me with insights on aspects which official documents rarely take note of, such as atmospherics, perceptions, and bureaucratic politics.

Roadmap of the Thesis

This thesis has an introduction, eight chapters, and a conclusion. The intricate nature of the negotiations and their frequent overlap demanded a thematic approach, along the four levers I mentioned in the conceptual framework. *Chapter One* (The Domestic Context of Romanian Nuclear Policy Decision-Making) looks at the decision-making process in Romania's nuclear programme, identifying the main structures and actors, their beliefs, and the interactions amongst them. It argues that the bureaucratized structure of the Romanian Communist Party created good, although not ideal, conditions for the pursuit of a nuclear hedging strategy.

Chapter Two (Romania's Nuclear Cooperation with the Soviet Union in the 1950s) and *Chapter Three* (Romania and the Negotiations around the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, 1965–1968) explain why Romania

turned to the West. *Chapter Two* examines Romania's nuclear cooperation with the Soviet Union during the second half of the 1950s. Bucharest sought to use ideology (the political doctrine it shared with the USSR, i.e., communism) to make Moscow share its nuclear secrets with Romania. When the Soviets declined to supply Romania with nuclear reactors, the RCP leadership decided to turn to the West for nuclear technology.

Chapter Three documents how Bucharest failed to impose its nuclear agenda on its partners and allies, within the bilateral and multilateral arrangements where the fate of the NPT was being decided. Romania wanted to secure nuclear technology by exploiting the 'peaceful uses of nuclear energy' pillar of the treaty, but it also wanted to keep the nuclear weapon option in its pocket. Moscow successfully thwarted Romania's efforts to torpedo the NPT, applying pressure through promises of nuclear assistance.

Chapter Four (Peace for Atoms I. The Packers Channel in the Vietnam War and the American-Romanian Nuclear Cooperation Agreement, 1964–1969) discusses how Bucharest successfully capitalized on its political services during the Vietnam War to seal a nuclear cooperation agreement with the US and to win Washington's support for its subsequent deals with Western suppliers, especially Canada.

Chapter Five (Tertius Gaudens I. Exploiting the Anglo-French Rivalry to Obtain the HELEN Reactor, 1963–1968) focuses on how Romania secured nuclear technology from the UK by playing suppliers against one another.

Chapter Six (Interlude. Romania’s Nuclear Cooperation with the Soviet Union in the 1960s) returns to bilateral Romanian-Soviet relations and explains why Romania put its negotiations with Western suppliers on hold in 1970. The Soviet Union, which Bucharest had continued to lobby for nuclear technology throughout the entire 1960s, finally agreed to supply an atomic reactor, hoping to steer Romania away from the path to the A-bomb. Thinking that the Romanians would not honour their part of the deal (i.e., providing ideological support for Moscow in the Sino-Soviet split and forswearing nuclear weapons), the USSR adopted a ‘denial by postponement’ approach towards nuclear exports to Romania.

Chapter Seven (Peace for Atoms II. The Sino-American Rapprochement and the TRIGA Research Reactor from the United States, 1969–1971) examines how Romania secured the agreement of the United States government to transfer a nuclear research reactor from General Atomic. Romania achieved its goal by serving as a communications channel during the Sino-American rapprochement.

Chapter Eight (Tertius Gaudens II. The Purchase of a Nuclear Power Plant from Canada and of a Radiochemistry Laboratory from France, 1973–1979)

looks at the economic levers utilized in negotiations with West European suppliers after 1973. This chapter shows how the Romanians once again used the tactic of playing suppliers off against one another, this time to secure a nuclear power plant from Canada and a radiochemistry laboratory (essential for the production of plutonium-239) from the French.

Finally, the *Conclusion* summarizes the key findings and arguments of the thesis. It also assesses how they fit into the literature on European détente, Cold War international and nuclear history, and Romania's role in the Cold War, as well as how they fit into the supply-demand debate on nuclear proliferation.

Chapter One: The Domestic Context of Romanian Nuclear Policy Decision-Making

This chapter investigates the decision-making environment and the process of constructing the Romanian nuclear programme, concentrating on the main structures and actors, as well as on their ideas and beliefs. So far, no study has dealt exclusively with this matter, primarily because of the inaccessibility of primary sources. However, with the declassification of Romanian Communist Party, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and State Security (Securitate) archives, such an endeavour becomes more feasible.

This chapter seeks to explain where and with whom decision-making power lay. It does so by examining the connection between Romania's domestic framework and nuclear proliferation. By implication, this chapter argues that the nuclear dimension was central to Romania's wider foreign policy concerns. In contrast to recent studies conducted by Jacques Hymans and Alexander Montgomery on atomic assistance and the spread of nuclear weapons, this section argues that exchanges and interactions with foreign suppliers actually bolstered the Romanian nuclear programme. Hymans and Montgomery, who look at the organizational and political contexts of atomic weapons projects, maintain that

international cooperation harms the nuclear military programmes of neo-patrimonial states because exchanges with the international scientific community make scientific and technical workers much more difficult to control and facilitate brain drain to the developed world.¹ Hymans mentions the exception to his rule: the Chinese nuclear programme. China's success can be explained by two key factors: the outstanding organizational skills of its head, Nie Rongzhen, and the brief yet significant drift towards Weberian legal-rationalism.² I argue that in the case of Romania's nuclear programme, just as in China's case, nationalism and the secret police outweighed the deleterious effects of international cooperation.

Structures

This section gives a fuller examination of the decision-making structures at play in Romania's pursuit of foreign nuclear technology, to set the institutional stage for my empirical, narrative chapters. With respect to the pursuit of foreign nuclear technology, power rested with the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP) and its successor, the Romanian Communist Party, and in particular with their

¹ Hymans borrows his key concepts 'legal-rational states' and 'neo-patrimonial states' from Max Weber. The defining characteristics of legal-rational states are legality and the centralization and efficient management of administrative tasks (bureaucracy). On the contrary, neo-patrimonial regimes rely on absolute power, subjective control, and personalist networks. Hymans, *Achieving Nuclear Ambitions*, 26; Montgomery, "Stop Helping Me," 177-202.

² Hymans, *Achieving Nuclear Ambitions*, 122, 133, 136, 140.

leaderships. Hymans's organizational theory of nuclear proliferation suggests that neo-patrimonial or sultanistic regimes suffer from severe management pathologies.³ Lack of legitimacy and deprofessionalization plague these countries' decision-making processes.⁴ Both of these problems appear to have beset communist Romania.⁵ However, Hymans's theory can explain only the first two decades of the RCP's rule, as in the mid-1960s the communist leadership boosted its legitimacy by resorting to nationalism, and its professionalization by attracting intellectuals to its side.

³ Jacques E. C. Hymans, "Assessing North Korean Intentions and Capacities: A New Approach," in *Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 8, Issue 2, 260.

⁴ *Idem*, 274. The FPA literature identifies a whole series of weaknesses that decision-making processes can suffer from: 'groupthink', stovepiping, bureaucratic infighting, and 'standard operating procedures' (SOP). With respect to small group dynamics, as Charles F. Hermann suggests, the distribution of power within the group and the roles played by its members impact group processes, which in turn may affect foreign policy choice. As far as 'groupthink' is concerned, Janis defines it as the result of a desire to maintain group consensus and personal acceptance by the group and argues that in most cases, this form of small group dynamics negatively affects the quality of decision-making. As for organizational process and bureaucratic politics, from Max Weber's *The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations* to Graham Allison and Morton Halperin's "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications," many scholars have emphasized how the making of foreign policy can be hampered by large organized governmental groups, who put their survival at the top of their list of priorities. Organizations and bureaucracies regard their 'survival' as a function of their relative influence vis-à-vis other institutions, measured in terms of budget and personnel morale. To maximize their relative strength, organizations and bureaucracies will develop standard operating procedures, which stifle innovation and flexibility. These problems can afflict democracies and totalitarian regimes alike. Charles F. Hermann, "Decision Structure and Process Influences on Foreign Policy," in Maurice A. East, S.A. Salmore, and Charles F. Herman (eds.), *Why Nations Act* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1978), 69-102; Irving Janis, *Groupthink* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982), 2-17; Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations* (New York: Free Press, 1964), 12-64; Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications," in Raymond Tanter and Richard H. Ullman (eds.), *Theory and Policy in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 40-80.

⁵ Alla Alekseevna Yaz'kova, "Krakh zolotoy epokhi Chaushesku" ["The Collapse of the Ceaușescu Golden Era"] in *Voprosy Istorii*, No. 9-10 (1991), 15, 20.

It is possible to say that the RCP had developed something of an inferiority complex because it owed its installation in power to the Red Army.⁶ Not only did it lack popular support, but it also had not followed the Marxist-Leninist recipe for class struggle and the victory of the proletariat, as there was no country-wide revolution of the population against the fascists.⁷ The attack launched by Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), on Joseph Stalin, to whom the leadership in Bucharest owed its power position, spelled trouble for the Romanians. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the General Secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party, managed to stay in power by putting the blame for past mistakes on the Muscovite faction of the party,

⁶ The RCP leadership was also aware of its inferior ideological credentials, which lagged behind those of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for the simple fact that the RCP emerged much later than the CPSU. Once, Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, reminded the Romanians that without the Red Army, the RCP leadership would not be able to hold on to power. ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 9/1965, Minutes of conversation between Ion Gheorghe Maurer and Anastas Mikoyan, March 25, 1965, 27; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 72/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, May 10, 1966, 52; Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, *Vremya, lyudi, vlast' – Vospominaniya* [Time, People, Power – Memoirs] (Moscow: Moskovskie novosti, 1999), Vol. 3, 304-305.

⁷ Instead of obliterating the bourgeoisie, whose epitome was the monarchy, the RCP collaborated with King Michael I and formed a national-unity government. To dodge charges of collusion with the Fascists, the RCP leadership invoked the interwar negotiations around a non-aggression pact, which had materialized in the 1936 Gentlemen's Agreement between Nicolae Titulescu and Maxim Litvinov. This mutual assistance convention, Ceaușescu claimed, provided the groundwork for the anti-Fascist insurrection and showed that Bucharest was never Moscow's enemy. The Soviets remained sceptical about Ceaușescu's arguments and reminded the RCP leadership that Romania fought alongside Hitler. ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 72/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, May 10, 1966, 11, 52; ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie [Chancellery], 39/1963, Protocol No. 15 of the CC RWP Politburo Meeting, July 18, 1963, 21-52; Khrushchev, *Vremya, lyudi, vlast'*, Vol. 3, 297-300.

which consisted of Ana Pauker, Teohari Georgescu, and Vasile Luca.⁸ His deep commitment to Stalinism was to put him on a collision course with Khrushchev.⁹ The resulting dispute with Moscow posed the grave risk of isolation, or even worse, of a leadership change.¹⁰ However, Gheorghiu-Dej turned the brawl with Khrushchev into an advantage: he bolstered his domestic popularity by portraying his attacks on the Soviet First Secretary as a defence of Romanian independence and sovereignty.¹¹ This manoeuvre put Romania on the path to national-communism, to which the CPSU privately conceded.¹² Playing the anti-

⁸ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Fantoma lui Gheorghiu-Dej* [The Spectre of Gheorghiu-Dej] (Bucharest: Editura Univers, 1995), 43-46, 110-116; Idem, *Arheologia terorii* [The Archaeology of Terror] (Bucharest: Editura Allfa, 1996), 41-51, 176-181; Yaz'kova, "Krakh zolotoy epokhi Chaushesku," 19; Khrushchev, *Vremya, lyudi, vlast'*, Vol. 3, 301-303.

⁹ Khrushchev, *Vremya, lyudi, vlast'*, Vol. 3, 303, 309.

¹⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 19/1963, Protocol of the Romanian Workers' Party Meeting Politburo, May 8, 1963, 5-10; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 71/1966, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraș and Zhou Enlai, May 12, 1966, 22.

¹¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 39/1963, Protocol No. 15 of the CC RWP Politburo Meeting, July 18, 1963, 21-52.

¹² The term "national communism" had been popularized by Milovan Đilas, Josip Broz Tito's right-hand man during the Partisan Resistance and in the first few years of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. Tito's nationalism, manifested in his refusal to recognize Moscow as the centre of command for Yugoslavia's internal affairs, led to his excommunication from the Communist Information Bureau. As far as Romania is concerned, both in the archival record and in the secondary literature, "national communism" has been used interchangeably with "communist nationalism." The Central European members of the Soviet bloc (in particular, the Poles, East Germans, and Czechoslovaks) had levelled charges of "nationalism" against the Romanians since the early 1960s. As far as Moscow's acquiescence is concerned, at the meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU of May 26, 1964, the Soviet leadership stated that "all countries may have to go the way of communist nationalism," mentioning in brackets that this was the course on which Romania and China had embarked. This concession is particularly important given that it comes right after Romania released its April 1964 Declaration of Independence. Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy arhiv noveyshey istorii [Russian State Archive for Contemporary History - henceforth RGANI], fond 3, opis 16, delo 948, listy 32-34, Protocol no. 145. May 26, 1964 Meeting, published in Aleksandr Fursenko (ed.), *Prezidium TsK KPSS, 1954-1964. Chernovye protokol'nye zapisi zasedanii. Stenogrammy* [The Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU. Draft records of the meetings. Transcripts] (Moscow: Rosspen, 2003), Vol 1, 825; Yaz'kova, "Krakh zolotoy epokhi Chaushesku," 19; Vladimir Tismăneanu,

Soviet card paid off: it buoyed the Romanian population, diverting its attention from the illegitimacy of the regime to the external enemy – Moscow.¹³

National-communism buttressed Romania's nuclear programme both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, it provided the party leadership with a large pool of supporters, managers, and workers to choose from. The RCP grew from a paltry 500–1000 people at the end of the Second World War to 1.5 million members in 1966 and 3.8 million members in 1989.¹⁴ Qualitatively, nationalism helped the RCP leadership recruit the best and the brightest, thus allowing it to overcome the deprofessionalization issue. In the 1940s and 1950s, an atmosphere of distrust had prevailed within the party, as members suspected each other of having collaborated with the Siguranță (the secret police during the time of the monarchy).¹⁵ Repeated purges, meant to uproot the reactionaries, had replaced experienced bureaucrats with unskilled workers and peasants. Thanks to national-communism, the RCP succeeded in co-opting the intelligentsia,

Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2003), 18-36, 133-135.

¹³ Khrushchev notes in his memoirs: "It was only natural that there should have been some resentment on their part left over from the war and the first years after the war. The Romanians and Hungarians had been dragged into the war against us by Hitler. Therefore, our army, as it pursued the retreating Hitlerite invaders back into Germany, had attacked and defeated these other countries as well." Khrushchev, *Vremya, lyudi, vlast'*, Vol. 2, 345-346.

¹⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 70/1966, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraș and Pham Van Dong, May 7, 1966, 68; Yaz'kova, "Krakh zolotoy epokhi Chaushesku," 15.

¹⁵ Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948-1965* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 1999), 84; Idem, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania 1965-1989* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), 21.

traditionally a hotbed of dissent.¹⁶ While workers and peasants formed the bulk of the party base (72%), the RCP leadership managed to attract intellectuals (i.e., people with high-tech and scientific training) to managerial positions.¹⁷

Occasionally, these educated professionals found themselves competing with Politburo princelings. Three cases of high-level nepotism seem to corroborate Hymans's point about how patronage granted to relatives crippled the Romanian nuclear programme: the prominent position occupied by Ceauşescu's wife, Elena Ceauşescu, in the political and scientific environment; the involvement of Ceauşescu's elder son, Valentin, with the Central Institute of Physics (ICEFIZ); and the grooming of Ceauşescu's younger son, Nicu, for the position of General Secretary. Elena Ceauşescu, a former textile worker whose formal education stopped when she was 14 years old, climbed the academic and political ladder thanks to her husband's position.¹⁸ She did not have a BSc but managed to get a PhD in Chemistry under the supervision of Professor Ioan Ursu, who served as the second head of the Romanian nuclear programme.¹⁹ In 1965, when Ceauşescu

¹⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 70/1966, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraş and Pham Van Dong, May 7, 1966, 68.

¹⁷ Idem, 71.

¹⁸ Yaz'kova, "Krakh zolotoy epokhi Chaushesku," 19; "Repeat after me," in *Nature*, August 15, 2012, No. 488, 253, available at: <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v488/n7411/full/488253a.html>

¹⁹ Open Society Archives [OSA], 53-6-20, Rene de Flers, "Biographical Sketches of the Ceauşescu Clan," RAD Background Report/135, available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20090603045842/http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/300/8/3/text/53-6-20.shtml>

became General Secretary, his wife rose to the position of director of the National Institute for Research and Development in Chemistry and Petrochemistry (ICECHIM), another institute related to the atomic programme. Her ascent to power, which culminated with her election to the Executive Political Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, gave her enormous influence over Romania's efforts to acquire nuclear technology from abroad.²⁰ Her ties to Professor Ioan Ursu allowed her and her husband to keep a close eye on the development of the nuclear programme.²¹

If Elena Ceaușescu had almost absolute power with virtually no knowledge, her elder son, Valentin, had some knowledge without much power. Having studied at Imperial College London, Valentin became a researcher in nuclear physics at the ICEFIZ.²² His education could have given his father a better angle into the inner workings of the Romanian nuclear community, but their relationship became strained after Valentin's marriage to Iordana Borilă, the daughter of one of Ceaușescu's rivals. Ceaușescu's two sons could not have

²⁰ National Archives and Records Administration [henceforth NARA], Access to Archives Database [AAD], Central Foreign Policy Files [CFPF], Record Group 59 [RG 59], Telegram from the US Embassy to Bucharest to the Secretary of State, May 24, 1974; Hymans, *Achieving Nuclear Ambitions*, 67.

²¹ "Repeat after me," in *Nature*, August 15, 2012, No. 488, 253, available at: <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v488/n7411/full/488253a.html>

²² Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității [National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives - henceforth CNSAS], 11522 Vol. 16/D13490 Vol. 16, part II, Report from the Central Physics Institute regarding ICEFIZ Employees with Top Secret Security Clearances, June 8, 1989.

been more different. While Valentin kept a low profile and stood away from public life, Nicu took an early interest in politics and rose all the way to the Executive Committee of the RCP. His appointment as Ceaușescu's successor in the 1980s earned the regime in Romania the reputation of 'dynastic communism' à la North Korea.²³ This mixture of family influence and informal procedures contrasts sharply with the bureaucratized Party structure.

Nepotism seems to have paved the way to despotism. Concentrating power into his and his family's hands became Ceaușescu's top priority. Thus, by March 28, 1974, Romania had reinstated the office of President at the top of the political hierarchy, although the nation had little in common with the presidential republics of the time.²⁴ The symbols and pomp of the Presidency, embodied in grandiose ceremonies and the use of a presidential sceptre, resembled the practices employed by monarchies.²⁵ The merger of the General Secretary position with that of head of state allowed Ceaușescu to exert unrivalled influence in Romanian politics. The erosion of the collective leadership principle and the emergence of Ceaușescu's personality cult, however, did not mean that policy debates ceased

²³ Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania, *Raport Final* [Final Report] (Bucharest: Administratia Prezidențială, 2006), 113.

²⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 341/1974, Memorandum of conversation of the Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Romanian Communist Party, March 28, 1974, 5-7.

²⁵ Presidential Commission, *Raport Final*, 113.

to exist.²⁶ The Politburo of the Central Committee remained the key decision-making forum, where the most influential figures in the party confronted ideas about the strengths and weaknesses of possible courses of action. It was through these consultations that the Secretariat and the Politburo determined the path to be taken on key politico-socio-economic matters, including the nuclear programme.²⁷

Politicians naturally relied on scientists and experts for specialist knowledge and policy recommendations.²⁸ The State Committee for Nuclear Energy (CSEN), a sub-unit of the National Council for Science and Technology (CNST), provided the nuclear expertise the RCP needed. Established in 1955 to manage the nuclear programme created with the assistance of the Soviet Union, CSEN coordinated the funding and organization and controlled the activity of no

²⁶ On Ceaușescu's cult of personality, see: Aurel Braun, *Ceaușescu: the problems of power* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1979); Robert Govender, *Nicolae Ceaușescu and the Romanian road to socialism* (London: United Printers and Publishers, 1982); Mary Ellen Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu: a study in political leadership* (Boulder, CO; London: Lynne Rienner, 1989); Mark Almond, *The rise and fall of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu* (London: Chapmans, 1992); Anneli Ute Gabanyi, *The Ceaușescu Cult: Propaganda and Power Policy in Communist Romania* (Bucharest: The Romanian Cultural Foundation Publishing House, 2000); Manuela Marin, *Originea și evoluția cultului personalității lui Nicolae Ceaușescu, 1965-1989* [The Origins and Evolution of Nicolae Ceaușescu's Personality Cult, 1965-1989] (Alba Iulia: Editura Altip, 2008).

²⁷ The members of these two bodies were elected at the party congress, held every five years. ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 70/1966, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraș and Pham Van Dong, May 7, 1966, 69-70.

²⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 147/1967, Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, 17 October 1967, 35-40, 103-126; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 79/1976, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu, John S. Foster, and A. M. Aikin, June 26, 1976, 8-9.

less than 450 institutes, centres, plants, and laboratories focusing on atomic energy.²⁹ CSEN's tasks were twofold: first, to analyse, distil, and put in layman's terms the technical language related to atomic energy; and second, to present the party leadership with policy recommendations.³⁰ CSEN was also responsible for the implementation of the party's decisions regarding nuclear acquisitions. CSEN representatives joined employees from other governmental agencies, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Electricity, and the Ministry of Foreign Trade, on their trips abroad to negotiate nuclear technology deals. Occasionally, the top CSEN leadership accompanied Ceaușescu at his meetings with foreign leaders, to advise him on how to proceed with nuclear transfers.

The implementation of policy-makers' decisions was left to governmental agencies and ministries, which had to operate in an environment shaped by the party bureaucracy and the security apparatus. According to Hymans's model, one of the reasons dictatorships fail in their nuclear undertakings is the climate of fear in which scientists and technical workers have to carry out their tasks.³¹ The Romanian secret police has gone down in history as one of the most brutal

²⁹ Alexandru-Murad Mironov, "Comitetul de Stat pentru Energia Nucleară," [The State Committee for Nuclear Energy] in *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, Issue 3-4, 2009, 268; ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Economică [Economic Section], 47/1973, Memo regarding transportation policy at units within the State Committee for Nuclear Energy, December 18, 1973, 80-82.

³⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 147/1967, Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, October 17, 1967, 35-40.

³¹ Hymans, *Achieving Nuclear Ambitions*, 57, 67.

security services in the world. Hymans' model seems to accurately predict that the reign of terror obstructed and harmed Bucharest's quest for nuclear technology. He correctly assumes that the secret police monitored and controlled the scientific community on behalf of the political leadership.

Ceaușescu made the total submission of the national security apparatus one of his top priorities. He first focused on subduing the Ministry of National Defence (MAN), whose ranks, according to the RCP, were seething with reactionary forces.³² Ceaușescu got to know the MAN inside out, as he was Deputy Minister between 1950 and 1954 and head of the Superior Political Direction of the Romanian Army.³³ Nationalism, once again, was used to deal with counterrevolutionary elements. The anti-Soviet sentiment Ceaușescu cultivated amongst the Romanian masses after the August 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia greased the wheels for the shift in Romania's military doctrine to

³² ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 25/1965, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Andrei Grechko, June 16, 1965; ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 11/1946, Minutes of conversation at the Central Committee Plenum, January 25-28, 1946, cited in Liviu Pleșa, "Implicarea militarilor în mișcarea de rezistență armată. Cazul maiorului Nicolae Dabija," [The involvement of the military in the armed resistance. The case of Major Nicolae Dabija] National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, available at: http://www.cnsas.ro/documente/istoria_comunism/studii_articole/activitati_plan_intern/Maior%20Dabija.pdf.

³³ Arhivele Militare Române [Romanian Military Archives - henceforth AMR], fondul Direcția Secretariat [Secretariat Division], 17/1950, General order no. 12 from the Minister of National Defence regarding the appointments of Major General Leontin Sălăjan, Nicolae Ceaușescu, and William Suder as ministers of the Ministry of National Defence, March 22, 1950.

“the struggle of the entire people.”³⁴ To this end, he ordered the creation of the Patriotic Guards. Portrayed as the ultimate proof of Romania’s resilience and willingness to fight until the last breath against foreign invasion, the Patriotic Guards remained in place until the demise of the communist regime, functioning as an environment for the indoctrination of workers, peasants, and intellectuals, and thus freeing some of the RCP’s human resources.³⁵ Given the absolute control he exerted over the military, Ceaușescu thought it was safe to let the Ministry of National Defence have a say in the nuclear programme.³⁶ His intuition proved correct in 1984, when a former Minister of National Defence, Gen. Ioan Ioniță, pleaded with the Bucharest Military Garrison to organize a coup against Ceaușescu, to no avail.³⁷ The sense of loyalty instilled in the armed forces helped Ceaușescu control both the nuclear programme and Romanian society more broadly.

As far as the Security Services were concerned, in 1967 Ceaușescu restructured the Ministry of Interior, removing the state security agencies from

³⁴ Ivan Volgyes, *The Political Reliability of the Warsaw Pact Armies. The Southern Tier* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Press Policy Studies, 1982), 44-45.

³⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, Organizatorică [Organizational Section], 53/1968, Note from the Organizational Section of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party about internal affairs after the intervention in Czechoslovakia, August 26, 1968, 1-4.

³⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Economică, 22/1975, Note regarding the creation of the coordinating team for the construction of nuclear power plants in Romania, August 9, 1975, 9-10.

³⁷ Yaz’kova, “Krakh zolotoy epokhi Chaushesku,” 22.

within its command.³⁸ He then placed the newly created State Security Department (Securitate) under the control of a council comprising nine members and held accountable to the Central Committee of the RCP and the Council of Ministers, so that he could order the Securitate to compile compromising “dossiers” about his Central Committee colleagues’ past activities if required.³⁹ However, this reshuffling did not go as planned, as the Security Services started to gather intelligence on Ceaușescu himself. Outraged at the discovery of reports on his own health and anxieties, such as his fear of needles, Ceaușescu unleashed yet another purge and carried out another institutional reshuffling. In 1973, he fused the Security Services back into its original department with the Ministry of Interior and placed it under the sole tutelage of the Central Committee. He expelled Ion Stănescu from the leadership of the Ministry of Interior and from the RCP and replaced him with Emil Bobu, one of his most faithful aides.⁴⁰ Ceaușescu tried to prohibit party members from becoming informers, but the pull of the Security Services was too strong: many lower-ranking party members continued to work as informants for the next two decades, because doing so often

³⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 127/1967, Memorandum from the Council of Ministers to Nicolae Ceaușescu on the organizational structure of the State Security Department, September 1967, 40-45.

³⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 110/1967, Minutes of conversation of the meeting of the Permanent Presidium Concerning the Reorganization of the Ministry of Interior, July 14, 1967, 2-4, 42-45; Yaz’kova, “Krakh zolotoy epokhi Chaushesku,” 15.

⁴⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 48/1973, Minutes of conversation of the Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, March 17, 1973, 5-8, 20.

served as a launchpad to significantly more prominent careers.⁴¹ Personal interests overruled the national interest, in spite of Ceaușescu's assiduous efforts to instill a strict sense of discipline in his subordinates.

The nascent oversight now performed by the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers reflected a change in the way the Romanian polity functioned, one of the changes that is unaccounted for in Hymans's model. Ceaușescu realized that the security apparatus no longer needed unrestrained powers because his national-communism had earned him the support of the masses.⁴² Gheorghiu-Dej's mass terror had alienated the population, spurred internal opposition, and attracted international condemnation. Ceaușescu harvested the fruit of Gheorghiu-Dej's tactics by repudiating them.⁴³ Ceaușescu denounced Gheorghiu-Dej's abuses, although he never embarked on a democratizing path.⁴⁴ Instead of terror and torture, Ceaușescu's regime relied on fear-instilling mass surveillance.⁴⁵ The task of spying on both Romanian citizens

⁴¹ Elis Neagoe-Pleșa and Liviu Pleșa, "Introductory Study," in Florica Dobre (ed.), *Securitatea. Structuri-cadre, Obiective și Metode*, [The Security Police. Cadres, Objectives and Methods] (CNSAS, Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedia, 2006), Vol. II, xvi.

⁴² Lavinia Stan and Rodica Milena Zaharia, "Romania's Intelligence Service: Bridge Between East and West?" in *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 54 (January/February 2007), 4.

⁴³ Denis Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania 1965-1989* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), 78.

⁴⁴ Andrei M. Aleksandrov-Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva: Vospominaniia diplomata, sovetnika A. A. Gromyko, pomoshchnika L. I. Brezhneva, Iu. V. A. Andropova, K. U. Chernenko i M. S. Gorbacheva* [From Kollontai to Gorbachev. The memoirs of a diplomat, adviser to Andrei Gromyko, assistant to Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri V. Andropov, Konstantin Chernenko, and Mikhail Gorbachev] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1994), 159.

⁴⁵ Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate*, 68-106.

and foreigners was performed simultaneously by various departments in the national intelligence apparatus, including the Foreign Intelligence Directorate (DIE), border troops, police forces, regional passport bureaus, the national press agency, and the national tourism bureau.⁴⁶ As far as nuclear matters were concerned, the Securitate's main sub-units (i.e., Domestic Intelligence, Foreign Intelligence, Counterintelligence, Technical Intelligence, and Secret Services) compiled thick dossiers containing information on the personal preferences, flaws, weaknesses, affairs, and political views of all those involved in the atomic programme.⁴⁷ The Securitate seeped into every nook and cranny of Romanian government.

The negative effects of the police state extended to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), which was, perhaps naturally, a key player in the negotiations for nuclear technology. In the late 1940s and 1950s, the purges ordered by the party leadership accentuated the oppressiveness felt by Romanian diplomats. The poor managerial practices associated with neo-patrimonial regimes affected the MFA as well, as Hymans's model predicts. The ministry was cast in the Soviet mould. At Moscow's orders, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs underwent

⁴⁶ Dobre, *Securitatea*, Vol. II, 364-374.

⁴⁷ CNSAS, D11491/Vol. 123, Measures undertaken for Operation THE ATOM, April 18, 1981, 1-10.

extensive purges that targeted not only diplomats but also administrative staff.⁴⁸ The appointment of Ana Pauker, the ‘Iron Lady’ of Romanian communist politics, as Foreign Minister marked the complete takeover of the ministry by communists.⁴⁹ Her devotion to the “Kremlin’s ever changing and contradictory policies” and methods meant that the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be restructured and remodelled to assist the Soviet Union in its foreign endeavours.⁵⁰ Ruxandra Ivan examines how the Romanian Workers’ Party subjugated the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵¹ First, she argues, the nomenclature, defined as the list of positions available in the party and state apparatus, became one and the same with the people who occupied these positions.⁵² This phenomenon, she then argues, led to a second mechanism through which the party kept the MFA under its thumb: the complete identification between party and state. Personalization of public offices created fertile ground not only for the

⁴⁸ Dinu C. Giurescu, Rudolf Dinu, and Laurențiu Constantiniu, “O istorie ilustrată a diplomației românești, 1862-1947” [An Illustrated History of Romanian Diplomacy, 1862-1947] in *Monitorul Oficial*, 2011, 308-309 cited in Adrian Vițalaru, “Impunerea controlului comunist asupra Ministerului Afacerilor Străine, 1944-1948” [“Methods and Practices of Imposing Communist Control over the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1944-1948”], in *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, Issue 1-2, 2013, 63.

⁴⁹ Robert Levy, *Ana Pauker: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 70-71; Vițalaru, “Impunerea controlului,” 79.

⁵⁰ Levy, *Ana Pauker*, 61.

⁵¹ Ruxandra Ivan, “Elite de partid, elite de stat. Cazul Ministerului de Externe, 1946-1953” [“Party Elites, State Elites. The Case of the Foreign Ministry, 1946-1953”] in *Anuarul Institutului de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România*, Vol. 2 (2007), 65.

⁵² Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, *Nomenclatura Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român* [The Nomenclature of the Romanian Workers Party] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006), 66, cited in Ivan, “Elite de partid,” 65.

cultivation of a personality cult around the leader but also for his acolytes' thirst for power. Party membership enabled the top echelons of political power to pursue their interests with little oversight from other organizations, under the pretext of acting in Romania's interest. Ivan's third argument is that the Romanian foreign policy elite did not respond to the needs of the MFA, but rather to the demands of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, and more specifically the Cadres Section and the Foreign Relations Section. The Central Committee appointed only those whom it regarded as 'trustworthy people' with healthy social and political roots – in other words, those from peasant or working-class backgrounds. Ivan points out that during the early communist period, the Romanian diplomatic corps suffered from a high degree of deprofessionalization.⁵³ This shortcoming was the result of the party's political control over the diplomatic corps, a feature the Romanian authorities had imported from the Soviet Union.⁵⁴ In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs learned from its Soviet counterpart an important lesson about the intelligence functions of diplomats. The task of the MFA was to provide the leadership in Bucharest with a competitive advantage in its negotiations with other countries

⁵³ Ivan, "Elite de partid," 65.

⁵⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 41/1956, Report on the fact-finding mission at the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, undertaken by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs delegation, September 3-17, 1956, 2-33.

by offering DIE's spies official cover. To fulfil this duty, the MFA worked very closely with the state security apparatus.

The pervasiveness of the security apparatus worked to the advantage of the Romanian nuclear programme. Hymans's model does not deal with the foreign intelligence function of the security apparatus, which is why it fails to see how espionage can benefit the nuclear programmes of neo-patrimonial regimes. In addition to constant domestic surveillance, the Securitate also performed intelligence planning, collection, analysis, processing, and dissemination on foreign affairs. Effective intelligence enabled the leadership in Bucharest to punch above its weight in the international system. Some of the most famous cases of cooperation between the MFA and DIE involve Mihai Caraman, who worked undercover at the Romanian Embassy in Paris. Caraman ran a spy ring within NATO, which was at that time still headquartered in Paris. Between 1958 and 1969, Caraman stole approximately 12,000 pages of secret and top secret documents, which he "carried home in sacks."⁵⁵ His strategically located agents

⁵⁵ In 1965, the Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (DST) found out about the Caraman network but they allowed it to continue its work until 1969, when the French finally expelled him and several other people in the embassy. He very much regretted he could not stay in France a bit longer, to receive the Legion of Honour for special achievements. It was actually the KGB that decorated him for his service. He had funnelled the stolen documents to the KGB and then to Bucharest, with the Foreign Intelligence Directorate in the know about his liaison with Moscow. CNSAS, FC/587 (Mihai Caraman), Ministry of the Interior, State Security Department, Précis regarding the activity of Col. Caraman Mihai, [undated], microfilm. Pierre Accoce and Jean-Daniel Pouget, *Le réseau Caraman. 13 Roumains font trembler l'OTAN* [The Caraman Network. The 13 Romanians that Made NATO Tremble] (Paris: Fayard, 1972), 34-98.

within NATO included Robert van der Vielle, who was in charge of the top secret documents department; Francis Rousilhe, the head of the translations department; and Imre Nahit, the head of the financial department.⁵⁶ The intelligence Caraman gathered from Nahit included reports on NATO budgets and infrastructure, from which the KGB and DIE could have inferred NATO's nuclear warfare plans.⁵⁷

The fear of being obliterated in a war between the two superpowers was an important factor in the Romanians' thinking about nuclear weapons, as we shall see in subsequent chapters. Having access to the West's plans reinforced Ceaușescu's views of the capitalist bloc as bent on waging war against the communist bloc.⁵⁸ The intelligence Caraman provided thus fed into the planning phase of the decision-making process, prompting the RCP leadership to order an intensification of industrial espionage, political sabotage, and penetration of the West. In 1969, DIE deployed 1140 spies abroad, most of them working undercover

⁵⁶ Archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service, Fund D, Folder 11200, Vol. 37, Report Regarding the Activity of Major General Mihai Caraman, Ministry of the Interior, Department of State Security, Top Secret, June 22, 1979, 2-5, published in Mihai Pelin, *Un Veac the Spionaj, Contraspionaj si Politie Politica* [A Century of Espionage, Counterespionage and Political Police] (Bucharest: Editura Elion, 2003).

⁵⁷ Accoce and Pouget, *Le réseau Caraman*, 100-164.

⁵⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 25/1965, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Marshal A.A. Grechko, June 16, 1965, 3; ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 11/1966, Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, February 2, 1966, 4-9; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 14/1967, Minutes of conversation between the delegations of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Romanian Communist Party, March 17, 1967, 7.

in embassies, consulates, and economic delegations in Turkey, West Germany, the UK, France, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden, Austria, Israel, Canada, and the US.⁵⁹ In the mid-1970s, at the height of Bucharest's quest for Western nuclear technology, the Foreign Intelligence Directorate escalated its counterintelligence operations even further.⁶⁰ To cope with the additional tasks entailed by this offensive, the head of the Foreign Intelligence Directorate, General Nicolae Doicaru, ordered that the most sensitive positions in Romania's diplomatic missions (i.e., ambassadors, heads of mission, and consuls) be occupied by undercover intelligence officers.⁶¹ DIE penetrated and dominated the Foreign Ministry. However, it was thanks to DIE's pervasiveness that the RCP leadership had access to all-source, up-to-date intelligence to outmanoeuvre its foreign partners. The oppressive and invasive nature of the Romanian security apparatus actually boosted Romania's international presence and ensured the success of its nuclear acquisition strategy.

⁵⁹ CNSAS, 80 Vol.3, Part II, Note from the Council for State Security on espionage in capitalist countries, January 28, 1969, Top Secret.

⁶⁰ CNSAS, 11366/Vol. 21, The Modus Operandi of the US Intelligence Services, 1970-1981, 42-67.

⁶¹ CNSAS, 9949 Vol. 4/D13283 Vol. 4, The Meeting with the heads of central units, inspectors, and party secretaries within the Interior Ministry, Report to Nicolae Ceaușescu regarding the performance of the Interior Ministry in 1974, [undated], 15.

Personalities

Where the structure of the political system grants the individual a dominant position, political leadership can make a tremendous difference, especially in conditions of high stress and high uncertainty.⁶² Jacques Hymans identifies leaders' conceptions of national identity as the locus for the decision to pursue a nuclear weapon.⁶³ His approach parallels the Foreign Policy Analysis literature, which examines the role of individual characteristics of leaders in shaping foreign policy, starting from the assumption that "a compelling explanation of foreign policy cannot treat the decider exogenously."⁶⁴ Alexander George's idea of 'operational codes', entailing the identification of a leader's core beliefs about the inevitability of conflict in the world and about his or her ability to change the course of events and/or the examination of his or her decisional style and preferred means of pursuing goals, allows for a systematic investigation of the effects of leader personality on foreign policy.⁶⁵

⁶² Harold Lasswell, *Psychology and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), 13-35; Idem, *Power and Personality* (New York: Norton, 1948), 23-41.

⁶³ Jacques E. C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation. Identity, Emotions and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16-46.

⁶⁴ Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley Jr., and James N. Rosenau (eds.), *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 4.

⁶⁵ Alexander George, "The Operational Code: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," in *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 13, Issue 2 (1969), 190-222.

With specific reference to Ceaușescu's style of conducting foreign policy, Vladimir Tismăneanu provides one of the most valuable accounts of how beliefs and personalities shaped decisions in the field of foreign affairs.⁶⁶ Tismăneanu shows that individuals and their ideology mattered in the Romanian foreign policy decision-making process because, as in most dictatorships, much power was concentrated in the hands of the top party bosses. This centralization of power appears to have allowed Ceaușescu and his closest aides to have immense influence over Romanian policy. Ceaușescu identified himself with the Communist Party and with the Romanian state, in the same way as Mao identified himself with the revolution in the People's Republic of China.⁶⁷ This cult of personality meant that the national interest was subsumed into Ceaușescu's personal desire to consolidate and maintain his grip on power and to ensure the survival of his regime.

What of the man Ceaușescu himself? Poverty and family violence pushed the 11-year old Ceaușescu from his small village in the south of Romania into the capital city, where he became the apprentice of a shoemaker who introduced him to the then-illegal Communist Party.⁶⁸ His involvement in the Communist Party got him imprisoned during World War II; although his incarceration deprived

⁶⁶ Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 130-145.

⁶⁷ Presidential Commission, *Raport Final*, 106; Sergey Radchenko, "The Sino-Soviet Split," in Westad and Leffler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, 2010, Vol. 2, 361.

⁶⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Cadre [Cadres Section], C/2050, File of Nicolae Ceaușescu, 2, 13-14.

him of the firsthand war experience that some of his later colleagues on the Central Committee possessed, he had the tremendous luck to share his prison cell with Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, who took him under his wing.⁶⁹ With the communists' ascent to power in 1947, Ceaușescu began his prodigious political career, first as the minister of agriculture, then as the deputy minister of the armed forces.⁷⁰ Despite his modest background, Ceaușescu regarded himself as particularly well suited to play a dominant role in domestic and international matters. His foreign affairs education amounted to special training courses in the late 1940s at the Frunze Military Academy in Moscow, where he learned some Russian. That experience was enough to whet his appetite for international politics.⁷¹

After joining the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party thanks to Gheorghiu-Dej's personal intervention, Ceaușescu became deeply involved in foreign policy issues, focusing on Bucharest's ties to Moscow, taking part in Romania's mediation efforts in the Sino-Soviet split, and visiting Pyongyang and Belgrade.⁷² At that time, however, Bucharest rarely established relations with countries outside the international communist movement, which precluded Ceaușescu from acquiring the global statesman status he yearned for.

⁶⁹Idem, 2, 3, 13-14; Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate*, 68.

⁷⁰ Yaz'kova, "Krakh zolotoy epokhi Chaushesku," 18.

⁷¹ Presidential Commission, *Raport Final*, 31.

⁷² Ibid.

Luck struck when Gheorghiu-Dej, now General Secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party, issued the 'Declaration of Independence' of April 1964. The declaration asserted that Romania's foreign policy would be based on the principles of respect for national sovereignty, mutually advantageous relations, non-interference in internal affairs, and peaceful coexistence.⁷³ After his ascent to power as General Secretary following Gheorghiu-Dej's death, Ceaușescu extracted a great deal of domestic and international political capital by repeating this mantra, making Romanians and foreigners alike think he was 'the prodigal son' of the democratic world, a reform-minded leader, and a maverick vis-à-vis Moscow.⁷⁴

Gheorghiu-Dej died in March 1965, and Ceaușescu, the compromise candidate, managed to assume the leadership of the party that same month.⁷⁵

After securing the position of General Secretary of the Central Committee,

⁷³ This independence-infused rhetoric borrowed heavily from the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, enshrined in the Panchsheel Treaty signed between China and India in 1954. Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 42. As far as the Soviet involvement in the development of this doctrine is concerned, in an interview with Liviu Țârău, Vladimir Bukovsky, the famous Russian dissident, declared that he saw the document in the Soviet Archives after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which summarizes the discussions between the leadership of the Romanian Workers' Party and the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Quoted in Liviu C. Țârău, *Între Washington și Moscova: politicile de securitate națională ale SUA și URSS și impactul lor asupra României, 1945-1965* [Between Washington and Moscow: The National Security Strategies of the United States and Soviet Union and their Impact on Romania, 1945-1965] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Tribuna, 2005), 490 n 671.

⁷⁴ *Foreign Relations of the United States* [FRUS] 1964-1968, Vol. XVII, Eastern Europe, Minutes of the Meeting of the Export Control Review Board, April 1, 1965, 405-413; CIA Records Search Tool [CREST], Rumania: The Maverick Satellite, October 1968, CIA-RDP78-03061A000400030017-8, 10; Yaz'kova, "Krakh zolotoy epokhi Chaushesku," 20.

⁷⁵ Neagoe-Pleșa and Pleșa, "Introductory Study," in Dobre, *Securitatea*, Vol. II, v-vii.

Ceaușescu quickly moved to condemn the power abuses of his predecessor so as to consolidate his grip on power by purging his rival, the head of the Security Services, Alexandru Drăghici.⁷⁶ From the very beginning of his time at the helm of power, Ceaușescu displayed an idiosyncratic blend of a hefty ideological commitment to communism, combined with pragmatism.⁷⁷ The Romanian leadership repeatedly reaffirmed its strict abidance by Marxist-Leninist principles and recognized the ‘primus inter pares’ role of the USSR.⁷⁸ Nonetheless, the Romanians occasionally lashed out at Moscow, primarily because, it seems, Bucharest was jealous of the attention Moscow gave other East European countries (primarily the German Democratic Republic and Poland), and also because Ceaușescu knew he could score points at home for his apparent anti-Russian stance.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 62/1968, Minutes of conversation between Ion Murg, Vasile Păcureț at the Romanian Embassy in Moscow and I. Petrov, Soviet State Security Committee, May 7, 1968, 1-2; Neagoe-Pleșa and Pleșa, “Introductory Study,” in Dobre, *Securitatea*, Vol. II, v-vii; Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate*, 79.

⁷⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 1/1965, Minutes of conversation between Romanian Ambassador Mihail Roșianu and Soviet Ambassador G. A. Denisov, April 23, 1965, 12-13; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 72/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, May 10, 1966, 35,177-178.

⁷⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 9/1965, Minutes of conversation between Ion Gheorghe Maurer and Anastas Mikoyan, March 25, 1965, 27.

⁷⁹ On Moscow’s preferential treatment for other East European countries, see: Khrushchev, *Vremya, lyudi, vlast’*, Vol. 3, 168-248; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 36/1964, Minutes of conversation between the Romanian Workers’ Party delegation led by Ion Gheorghe Maurer and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union delegation led by Nikita Khrushchev, July 16, 1964, 203; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 71/1966, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraș and Zhou Enlai, May 12, 1966, 26.

Ceașescu's relationship with the Kremlin remains one of the most intriguing aspects of his rule and, as later chapters will show, one of the most important factors shaping decision-making in the Romanian nuclear programme. In 1960, Romania asked the Soviet Union to provide it with nuclear power plants.⁸⁰ The Soviets rebuffed the request. Andrei M. Aleksandrov-Agentov, the foreign policy adviser of Leonid Brezhnev, recounts how Ceașescu irritated the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union with his extravagant demands, ambition, arrogance, and insolence.⁸¹ Arvīds Pelše, the Chairman of the Party Control Committee of the Central Committee of the CPSU, who found himself in the unenviable position of negotiating nuclear assistance with Ceașescu, complained about the Romanian leader's haggling tactics: "Ceașescu reminds me of a Shtetl Jew. But he is not a Jew, he is a typical Gypsy."⁸² Brezhnev and the other Soviet leaders restrained themselves and did not let emotions get the better of them. Their main concern was not to aggravate relations within the Warsaw Pact. Actually, Ceașescu's obstructionism gave him privileged access to the top Soviet leadership. Aleksandrov-Agentov remembers how at meetings of the leaders of Warsaw Pact member states, Ceașescu would always strike a dissonant note. Whenever the

⁸⁰ Ionuț Purica, "Ionel I. Purica," in *Revista Energie Nucleară*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 2010, 10.

⁸¹ Aleksandrov-Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva*, 158.

⁸² Ibid; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 113/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceașescu and Arvīds Pelše, September 7, 1966, 12.

other participants unanimously agreed, Ceaușescu would object, requesting a private meeting with Brezhnev. “Under the Allies’ dirty looks, Brezhnev usually agreed to such a procedure” and “generally conceded” to Ceaușescu’s requests.⁸³ Bilateralism and coordination behind closed doors allowed Ceaușescu to wield more influence on the Soviet leadership than multilateral settings, such as the Warsaw Pact or Council for Mutual Economic Assistance meetings, permitted.

At times, this covert Romanian-Soviet collaboration came at the expense of the same Westerners who provided Bucharest with much-needed advanced technology, loans, and diplomatic capital, as Bucharest did not stop retransferring the equipment and know-how it received from the capitalist bloc.⁸⁴ However, thanks to the use of selective secrecy, Ceaușescu could maintain his reputation as the ‘de Gaulle of the East’ and, by doing so, boost his domestic legitimacy and manage to eliminate his rivals in the Romanian Communist Party.

⁸³ Aleksandrov-Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva*, 159.

⁸⁴ This practice started during Stalin’s rule, and continued under Khrushchev and Brezhnev. ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 28/1946, Minutes of conversation between the leadership of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Soviet Union (Joseph Stalin, Vyacheslav Molotov, Georgi Malenkov), and the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party (Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Teohari Georgescu), April 2-3, 1946; Khrushchev, *Vremya, lyudi, vlast’*, Vol. 2, 197; ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 80/1965, Minutes of conversation between Chivu Stoica and Reza Radmanesh, President of the Tudeh Central Committee Politburo, June 9, 1965, 22; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 20/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid F. Il’ichev, March 18, 1966, 10; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 72/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, May 10, 1966, 6; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 25/1969, Minutes of conversation between the Romanian party and state delegation led by Nicolae Ceaușescu and the Soviet party and state delegation led by Leonid Brezhnev, May 16, 1969, 30-32.

These purges were followed by the emergence of a cult of personality, which stoked up his international global leadership ambitions even more. (Ceașescu regarded himself as Tito's successor within the Non-Aligned Movement). Yet it can be argued that Ceașescu's fear of superpower collusion and his erratic efforts to counter Moscow's and Washington's attempts to rein in troublesome small powers like Romania point to his own deep insecurities.⁸⁵ Despite the many opportunities for self-assertion offered by the relaxation of tensions brought about by the period of détente, Ceașescu sometimes failed to overcome the constraints of the international system. As we shall see, this in turn prevented him from bringing to fruition some of his most cherished projects, such as building a nuclear bomb.

Ceașescu's inner circle included several prominent members of Gheorghiu-Dej's 'old guard': Chivu Stoica, Emil Bodnăraș, and Ion Gheorghe Maurer, who helped him seize power in 1965.⁸⁶ Stoica, a worker for the Romanian

⁸⁵ The Romanian leadership became aware that the US asked the USSR to help stem nuclear proliferation as early as 1957. If in the late 1950s, the Soviets refused Washington's proposals, during the détente period, the Soviets' willingness to cooperate with the Americans to deprive small and medium powers of their freedom of manoeuvre worried the Romanians. ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 19/1957, Minutes of conversation between Andrei Gromyko and John Foster Dulles, October 5, 1957, 18-36; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 14/1967, Minutes of conversation between the delegations of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Romanian Communist Party, March 17, 1967, 7; Yaz'kova, "Krakh zolotoy epokhi Chaushesku," 19.

⁸⁶ Yaz'kova, "Krakh zolotoy epokhi Chaushesku," 19. Ceașescu's close circle of aides in the nuclear acquisition programme also included Corneliu Mănescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs (1961-1972), George Macovescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs (1972-1978), Ion Stănescu, Head of the State Security Council (1968-1972), General Nicolae Doicaru, Head of the Foreign Intelligence

Railways, was Prime Minister between 1955 and 1961 and became President of the State Council and Secretary of the Central Committee in 1967. While Stoica's position in foreign policy was rather marginal, Maurer and Bodnăraş served as Ceauşescu's right-hand men.⁸⁷

Maurer, an attorney by training, was the ultimate operator. Even Nikita Khrushchev, who rarely saw eye to eye with the Romanian leadership, praised him for his politeness and good manners, mentioning that “it was always a pleasure to do business with him.”⁸⁸ Maurer's salesmanship came in handy in the negotiations for nuclear technology, especially when he became Prime Minister in 1961.⁸⁹ As the second-in-command, he travelled extensively, representing Romania at many high-level international meetings and occasionally serving as Ceauşescu's special envoy to Beijing, Hanoi, and Washington.⁹⁰

Bodnăraş remains one of the most enigmatic figures of the Romanian communist regime. After graduating as valedictorian from the Military Academy in Timișoara and later from the Special Artillery Officer Academy in Bucharest, in 1932 he clandestinely crossed the border into the Soviet Union and joined the

Directorate (1959-1978), and Ion Mihai Pacepa, Deputy Head of the Foreign Intelligence Directorate (1966-1972) and National Security Advisor (1972-1978).

⁸⁷ Presidential Commission *Raport Final*, 2006, 650-651.

⁸⁸ Khrushchev, *Vremya, lyudi, vlast'*, Vol. 3, 313.

⁸⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Cadre, M/1735, File of Ion Gheorghe Maurer, March 27, 1965, 5.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*; Presidential Commission, *Raport Final*, 655-656.

GPU (Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravlenie, or State Political Directorate), the forerunner of the KGB.⁹¹ He returned to Romania in 1935 to gather intelligence for the Soviets, but he was exposed and ended up in prison until November 1942.⁹² After the communist regime was installed in Bucharest, he headed the Party Secret Police and the Intelligence Services (1945–1947), the Ministry of Defence (1947–1955), and the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications (1956–1959).⁹³ As Minister of Defence, he regularly sent promising Romanian communists, including Nicolae Ceaușescu, to Moscow to attend courses at various Soviet military schools. As Minister of Transportation, he allowed Soviet tanks to pass through Romanian territory on their way to Budapest, where they put an end to the Hungarian Revolution of October and November 1956. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej also appointed him as First Vice-President (1955–1957) and then Vice-President of the Council of Ministers (1957–1967), two symbolic positions in the state apparatus.⁹⁴ As Ceaușescu was consolidating his grip on power, he relied heavily on Bodnăraș, especially for various diplomatic initiatives, such as the Romanian mediation between the US

⁹¹ Yaz'kova claims that Ceaușescu tried to blackmail Bodnăraș with reports about his links to the Chief of the Soviet security and secret police apparatus (NKVD), Lavrentiy Beria. Yaz'kova, "Kraakh zolotoy epokhi Chaushesku," 15; ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Cadre, B/1930, File of Emil Bodnăraș, June 12, 1961, 2; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 36/1964, Discussions between the two delegations after the official talks ended on July 7, 1964, 208; Presidential Commission, *Raport Final*, 647.

⁹² ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Cadre, B/1930, File of Emil Bodnăraș, June 12, 1961, 2.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Presidential Commission, *Raport Final*, 648-649.

and North Vietnam. In 1965, Ceaușescu appointed Bodnăraș as Vice-President of the State Council and kept him as a close confidant until Bodnăraș's death in 1976. His various roles have intrigued many historians, particularly because of his close association with the Soviet intelligence services. Bodnăraș remained in close contact with Moscow even after Ceaușescu proclaimed his alleged independence from the USSR, and he continued to exert a tremendous influence on domestic and foreign policy.

The most prominent figures in the Romanian nuclear programme were Dr Horia Hulubei, Dr Ionel Purica, and Dr Ioan Ursu. Their stories challenge Hymans's assumption that international nuclear assistance undermines the nuclear programmes of neo-patrimonial regimes by offering scientists and technical workers an escape from tyranny. Dr Horia Hulubei provides the most compelling example of how nationalism prevents brain drain. According to Hymans's theory, experience abroad as extensive as that of Dr Hulubei would trigger dissatisfaction with Romanian economic and scientific backwardness and ultimately lead to dissent and contestation. Hulubei first left Romania during the interwar period, on a scholarship from the French government. He worked under the supervision of Jean Baptiste Perrin, a Nobel Laureate in Physics (1926) at the Sorbonne. Dr Hulubei defended his doctoral dissertation in front of a

commission chaired by double–Nobel Laureate Marie Curie.⁹⁵ He disputed with the French chemist Marguerite Perey the discovery of the highly radioactive element francium (which Hulubei named ‘moldavium’, after his native region, Moldova).⁹⁶ His cutting-edge research on a wide variety of topics, from photoelectricity and fundamental particles to nuclear reactors, nuclear physics, and radioactive isotopes, earned him the position of Directeur de Recherches within the French National Scientific Research Centre. Hymans’s model predicts that such recognition and effective integration would have persuaded Dr Hulubei to settle in France. On the contrary, even during his time in Paris, he remained deeply involved in scientific research in Romania, spending six months of every year in his native country. When he decided to return home for good, the newly installed communist regime put him under house arrest, accusing him of being a supporter of the Antonescu regime.⁹⁷ Frédéric Joliot-Curie, France’s first High Commissioner for Atomic Energy, intervened and had Hulubei released. Instead of fleeing, as Hymans’s model would predict, Hulubei stayed and headed Romania’s nuclear programme until his retirement in 1969.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Petre T. Frangopol, “Horia Hulubei,” in *Revista de politica științei și scientometrie – serie nouă*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (September 2012), 179.

⁹⁶ Laurence S. Foster, “Helvetium and Moldavium, elements 85 and 87?,” in *Journal of Chemical Education*, Vol. 17, Issue 10 (1940), 498.

⁹⁷ Adina Berciu-Drăghicescu and Ovidiu Bozgan, *O istorie a Universității din București, 1864-2004* [A History of the University of Bucharest, 1864-2004] (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2004), 336.

⁹⁸ Frangopol, “Horia Hulubei,” 181-182.

Under Hulubei's supervision, Romanian scientists not only assimilated foreign technology from both sides of the Iron Curtain but also devised their own prototypes and patented their own inventions. For instance, Dr Ioan Ursu, Hulubei's successor and the head of Romania's nuclear programme until 1977, developed a novel technique for the isotopic enrichment of uranium through magnetic resonance.⁹⁹ Additional advances such as Dr Ionel Purica's research reactor prototype at Măgurele, the betatron (a cyclic particle accelerator developed by Dr Hulubei's team), and a procedure invented by Romanian chemists for producing heavy water, also contradict Montgomery's assumptions about the disruptiveness of nuclear technology imports for the recipient country.¹⁰⁰ Nuclear technology transfers did not pose problems for Romanian nuclear scientists and technical workers because they had received the best training available, in the USSR, the US, the UK, France, Switzerland, and West Germany. For instance, to learn how to operate the VVR-2000 research reactor that the USSR agreed to provide Romania in 1955, Dr Ionel Purica, one of Hulubei's closest aides and a member of Romania's early scientific corps,

⁹⁹ Ioan Ursu, *Magnitnyy rezonans v soyedineniy urana* [Magnetic resonance in uranium compounds] (Moscow: Energoatomizdat, 1983); Alexandru Calboreanu, "Ioan Ursu, 1928-2007. Obituary" in *Europhysics News*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2007), 13.

¹⁰⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri [Presidency of the Council of Ministers – PCM], 180/1962, Reports on Cyclic Particle Accelerator – Betatron at the Atomic Physics Institute, April 21, 1962, 13-16; ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 147/1967, Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, 17 October 1967, 95-96; ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Economică, 23/1970, Romania's Nuclear Power Plant Acquisition Programme, February 2, 1970, 39-41.

underwent training in Moscow in the mid-1950s.¹⁰¹ But even during these stints at research institutions abroad, Romanian scientists were more than mere recipients of foreign know-how; they made important discoveries and innovations that added to the host country's scientific base and prestige. For example, Purica's contributions secured him membership in the most authoritative scientific circles and were incorporated in the programmes developed by the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research at Dubna, USSR, and the European Council for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Switzerland.¹⁰² Instead of failing to assimilate the advanced technology transferred from developed countries, Romania's nuclear scientists became proficient at using it and even managed to innovate through reverse-engineering it.

Conclusion

How does the Romanian nuclear programme sit with Hymans's and Montgomery's models of the ineptitude of neo-patrimonial regimes in the nuclear arena? Can these models explain the trajectory of the Romanian nuclear programme? This section has examined the most important internal and external influences on the decision-making process in both the Romanian nuclear

¹⁰¹ Purica, "Ionel I. Purica," 9-10.

¹⁰² Ibid.

programme and Bucharest's foreign policy more broadly. It has provided the context in which Romania's negotiations for nuclear technology took place. Its main findings point to the fact that incompetence and mismanagement caused neither the end of the acquisition phase nor the abandonment of the nuclear programme. Despite the many problems generated by the state of fear induced by the Romanian state security apparatus, the particularities of the communist regime in Romania seem to have benefitted the nuclear programme. Secrecy, duplication, fear, and ambition benefit a sensitive undertaking such as the pursuit of a nuclear hedging strategy. It appears that Romania resembled China much more than Hymans recognizes, a phenomenon which will be explored in more detail in Chapters Three and Six.

Chapter Two: Ideology: Romania's Nuclear Cooperation with the Soviet Union in the 1950s

In this chapter, I argue that the ideological alliance between the USSR and Romania helped Bucharest establish its nuclear programme. Thus, ideology generated the initial, permissive environment for Romania's ambitions in this area, although, as this chapter will show, it was not to remain the driver for Romanian policies as the period under consideration unfolded. Through the Soviet equivalent of Atoms for Peace, Romania obtained a nuclear research reactor, a cyclotron, training, and materials.¹ The Romanians then eyed more advanced technology (i.e., nuclear power reactors and Soviet nuclear warheads, under Soviet command), which Moscow had given to the more developed countries in the Eastern bloc (Czechoslovakia, Poland, and East Germany). The Soviets refused to grant Romania this level of nuclear technology because of the ideological differences between the unreformed Romanian Workers' Party and the

¹ Soglasheniye ob okazanii soyuzom SSR pomoshchi Rumynskoy Narodnoy Respublike v del razvitiya issledovaniy po fizike atomnogo yadra i ispol'zovaniya atomnoy energii dlya nuzhd narodnogo khozyaystva [Agreement on the provision of assistance from the USSR to the People's Republic of Romania in the development of research in nuclear physics and atomic energy for the needs of the national economy], April 22, 1955, published in *Sbornik deistvuyushchikh dogovorov, soglashenii i konventsii, zaklyuchennykh SSSR s inostrannymi gosudarstvami* [Collection of Existing Treaties, Agreements and Conventions Concluded by the USSR with Foreign States], Volumes XVII and XVIII (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoy Literatury, 1960), 119-122.

Communist Party of the Soviet Union under First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev, preferring instead to provide nuclear assistance to the Central Europeans and to non-aligned countries. Deeply offended by this lack of support, Bucharest snubbed plans for closer integration within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, because the division of labour envisaged would have made Romania the breadbasket, literally, of the Soviet bloc and this went against Gheorghiu-Dej's industrialization plans. Romania's "nationalistic tendencies" also account in part for Moscow's decision not to deploy nuclear warheads on Romania's territory, as Khrushchev had doubts about Bucharest's reliability as an ally. The Soviets' double refusal (in both the military and the civilian realms) explains Bucharest's decision to turn to the West.

“An Ideal Colony”

Romania's efforts to acquire nuclear technology dated back to the early days of its communist regime. Well before the North Atlantic Treaty Organization came into being and instituted an embargo on Western sensitive technologies to Eastern Europe, two Romanian special envoys, named 'Cătuneanu' and 'Ionescu', requested radioisotopes (radioactive cobalt) from the United States's Oak Ridge Isotopes Division, for medical purposes. The US Atomic Energy Commission (US

AEC) rejected this request, as at that time the United States was denying any country access to nuclear materials.² Therefore, in the early years of the Cold War, Romania was left with only one potential supplier for any nuclear materials: the Soviet Union. The UK and France were not yet in a position to offer much atomic assistance since their national nuclear programmes had barely begun.³

The acquisition strategy Romania applied was to pressurise Moscow by appealing to bloc and ideological solidarity, or, in other words, to the idea that a communist country had a duty to help other communist countries. Sonja Schmid defines this technique, which was also used by other East European countries, as a variation of “invoking Soviet ‘generosity’ and deploring Soviet ‘exploitation.’”⁴

The initial phase of Romania’s nuclear programme was marked by the dual politico-economic purposes which nuclear technology transfers served in the Eastern bloc: as Schmid shows in her study of nuclear technology transfers in the Second World, “East Europeans hoped that nuclear power would decrease their dependence on Soviet oil and gas while the Soviets saw nuclear technology as a

² Library of Congress [henceforth LOC], Manuscript Division, Vannevar Bush Papers, folder Carnegie Institution of Washington, box 21, Letter from Robert Tumbleson to George T. Rose, June 30, 1948; Walker and Lönnroth, *Nuclear Power Struggles*, 6.

³ Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence*, Vol. 1 Policy Making, 236, 331.

⁴ Schmid, “‘Nuclear Colonization’?,” 128.

means to strengthen inner-bloc ties and to further demarcate their sphere of influence.”⁵

Yet in the early years and insofar as nuclear matters were concerned, Moscow was more willing to take than to give: in reality, nuclear assistance flowed from the satellites towards the centre and not vice versa. Romania was, like much of Eastern Europe, the epitome of “an ideal colony.”⁶ The relationship between Moscow and Bucharest was characterized by what Schmid calls “ruthless exploitation and relocation of assets.”⁷ Romania was expected to supply the Soviet Union with the resources it needed because this assistance contributed to the advancement of communism and to the defeat of capitalism.⁸ Uranium deposits in northwestern Transylvania caught the attention of the Soviets, as noted by Nikita Khrushchev in his memoirs. Romania, Khrushchev remembers, paid for the economic assistance it received from the USSR with uranium ore, which, he claims, Moscow bought at world prices.⁹ Khrushchev was implying that

⁵ Idem, 133.

⁶ Hugh Seton-Watson, *The New Imperialism* (London: Bodley Head, 1962), 95-96 quoted in Schmid, “‘Nuclear Colonization’?,” 128.

⁷ Schmid, “‘Nuclear Colonization’?,” 127.

⁸ Romanian scientists too were expected to toe the Soviet line. Ideological solidarity with the Soviet Union, the foundation of the Soviet-Romanian nuclear cooperation programme, required extolling Moscow’s contribution to Romania’s nuclear programme and criticizing the Western imperialists.

“K soveshchaniyu ekspertov v Zheneve” [At the expert meeting in Geneva], in *Pravda*, June 27, 1958, No. 178 (14572), 5; “Neotlozhnaya zadacha sovremennosti” [The urgent task of our time], in *Izvestia*, May 7, 1959, No. 107 (13034), 4; “Ostanovit’ atomnykh man’yakov!” [Stop atomic maniacs!] in *Pravda*, June 3, 1962, No. 156 (16012), 3.

⁹ Khrushchev, *Vremya, lyudi, vlast’*, Vol. 3, 303.

with the dismantlement of Sovromcuart, a Soviet-Romanian joint company which before Stalin's death represented the main mechanism for exploiting Romanian uranium ore, Bucharest's grievances ought to have disappeared.¹⁰ The atomic bombs the Soviets produced using Romanian uranium served the banner of world communism, so the leadership in Bucharest had even less reason to complain.¹¹

The initial workforce for the Sovromcuart uranium mines at Băița-Bihor consisted of 15,000 political prisoners.¹² After most of them died from radiation poisoning, they were replaced with local villagers. Khrushchev's assertion about the fairness of the payments made by the Soviet Union to Romania is contested by George A. Modelski, one of the first experts on East European nuclear energy programmes. Modelski argues that "without giving anything in return, the USSR nevertheless benefitted greatly from the resources of Eastern Europe."¹³

Moreover, the Soviets also co-opted Romanian scientists into their nuclear weapons programme. In 1966, in a discussion with British officials, Dr Horia Hulubei, the father of Romania's nuclear programme, confessed that during the 1950s, Romanian scientists had participated in the development of Soviet nuclear weapons: "The Romanians had done certain research on behalf of the Soviet

¹⁰ Idem, 307.

¹¹ Idem, 303.

¹² Florian Banu, "Uraniu românesc pentru 'marele frate'" in *Dosarele Istoriei*, no. 9 (2005), 29.

¹³ George A. Modelski, *Atomic Energy in the Communist Bloc* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 124.

Union in connection with their nuclear weapons programme. It was a period he [Hulubei] personally regretted.”¹⁴ While the historical record unfortunately does not offer more details on this aspect of Soviet-Romanian nuclear cooperation, it is a remarkable finding for two reasons.¹⁵ First, it goes against the conventional narrative that in the 1950s, Moscow shrouded its nuclear programme in a thick veil of secrecy, “hidden not only from the Soviet people and the West but also from the other Communist governments and their specialists.”¹⁶ Second, it points to the possible origin of Romania’s appetite for nuclear weapons. It is highly unlikely that the Romanian communist leadership overlooked the added value that these researchers’ expertise could bring to Romania’s own nuclear programme.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the USSR, just like the US, did its very best to keep the A-bomb out of other countries’ hands. But once the Soviets detonated their own nuclear weapon, the ensuing rivalry between the two superpowers marked a shift in the nuclear trade policies of both Washington and Moscow. As Walker and Lönnroth point out, the Americans “officially reversed

¹⁴ UK National Archives [henceforth UKNA], FO 625/13, Minutes of conversation between J.A. Birch and Dr Horia Hulubei, 12 October 1966.

¹⁵ However, scientific exchanges were quite common. It is known that some top Romanian nuclear scientists, such as Dr Ionel Purica, went to Moscow for training on how to operate the VVR fission nuclear research reactor. Dr Ionel Purica was one of the founders of Romania’s nuclear programme. He started working at the Romanian Institute of Atomic Physics in 1955, alongside Hulubei. Purica, “Ionel I. Purica,” 9-10.

¹⁶ Modelski, *Atomic Energy in the Communist Bloc*, 124.

[their] policy of denial in December 1953” because they realized that “a general policy of denial in nuclear trade could do little to slow the pace of Soviet nuclear development.”¹⁷ Decision-makers in Washington feared that the American atomic industry would start losing its lead if countries rejected by the US turned to the USSR for technology transfers.¹⁸ The launch of the Soviet-Chinese nuclear assistance programme and the scientific cooperation agreements Moscow signed with its Eastern European satellites validated these concerns.

The 1955 Watershed

January 18, 1955, marked a turning point in the history of atomic energy in Eastern Europe. The new Soviet leadership installed in the Kremlin after Stalin’s death in March 1953 agreed not only “to offer vital nuclear supplies to several Soviet-bloc countries but also, in effect, to launch an area-wide atomic programme.”¹⁹ The declaration of January 18, 1955, provided for construction of research reactors, particle accelerators, and radiochemical laboratories; for training of scientists and engineers to collaborate on specific problems and on the development of instruments; for discussion of research plans and projects on

¹⁷ Walker and Lönnroth, *Nuclear Power Struggles*, 8.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Modelski, *Atomic Energy in the Communist Bloc*, 125-126.

peaceful uses of atomic energy; and for the exchange of experience in the production of radioactive isotopes.²⁰

There are at least three reasons behind this U-turn in the Soviet attitude towards nuclear proliferation. First, the Soviet initiative was a response to the Atoms for Peace proposals made by US President Dwight Eisenhower in December 1953, which called for the creation of an International Atomic Energy Agency under the aegis of the United Nations. This agency would be in charge of “impounding, storage, and protection of the fissionable and other materials”; it would also “devise methods whereby this fissionable material would be allocated to serve the peaceful pursuits of mankind.”²¹ In a mirror-image of the aforementioned logic which prevailed in Washington, the Soviets feared that if their East European satellites did not receive nuclear assistance from Moscow, they would seek it elsewhere, possibly from Washington, under the auspices of the institution that Eisenhower had put forward.²² Second, the Soviet Union found itself under increasing pressure from its Eastern bloc raw materials suppliers, who were demanding the termination of uranium ore exports. This was because Moscow’s satellites realized that if raw materials were processed locally

²⁰ “Ispol’zovat’ atomnuyu energiyu v mirnykh tselyakh” [Use Nuclear Energy for Peaceful Purposes], in *Pravda*, January 18, 1955, No. 18 (13316), 4; David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb. The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 351.

²¹ Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb*, 349.

²² Modelski, *Atomic Energy in the Communist Bloc*, 126.

and exported as semi-finished or finished products, they would be more profitable.²³ Last, East European leaders applied pressure on the USSR to share its technology and know-how because they also recognized that nuclear energy was “an innovative technology that promised accelerated economic growth and social development; strategic considerations regarding their countries’ energy policies followed suit.”²⁴

This change in the Soviet attitude to nuclear cooperation laid the foundation for Romania’s atomic energy programme. In exchange for uranium ore, which Romania had been supplying since the late 1940s, the USSR now offered Romania an experimental atomic pile, a cyclotron, and the necessary fissionable material.²⁵ The technical details of the Soviet-Romanian Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (NCA) were to be determined by the appropriate administrative bodies; however, the issue of compensation touched sensitive political nerves. The Soviets proposed a long-term repayment scheme, with yearly

²³ Idem, 127. Romania continued to provide the USSR with uranium ore through the first half of the 1960s. Recently declassified documents from the Romanian Archives reveal the scale of Romanian-Soviet cooperation in uranium ore. Between 1951 and 1965 Romania delivered 19,000 tons of uranium to the Soviet Union. Romania was left with only 6700 tons of mined uranium, 13,300 prospective tons and 20,000 potential tons of ore. ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 44/1970, Minutes of the Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, April 6, 1970, 15-16.

²⁴ Schmid, “Nuclear Colonization?,” 130-131.

²⁵ At the time the Nuclear Cooperation Agreement was signed on April 22, 1955, Romania was still delivering uranium ore to the USSR. Ginsburgs, “Soviet Atomic Energy Agreements,” 50; Liu Yanqiong and Liu Jifeng, “Analysis of Soviet Technology Transfer in the Development of China’s Nuclear Weapons,” in *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (April 2009), 75.

instalments to be paid in goods. This arrangement only added to Bucharest's economic woes. Romania already had an unfavourable balance of trade with the USSR, with the difference between imports and exports amounting to 400 million roubles in 1956. On October 2, 1956, Chivu Stoica, the President of the Romanian Council of Ministers (a position equivalent to Prime Minister), wrote to his Soviet counterpart, Nikolai Bulganin, imploring the USSR to supply Romania with 300,000 tons of wheat and to give Bucharest a four-year extension to redress the balance of trade. Stoica tried to force the Soviets' hand by pointing out that plummeting living standards could result in widespread dissatisfaction, a thinly veiled allusion to the violent workers' demonstration which had rocked Poznań in June 1956. The Poles, emboldened by the de-Stalinization process Khrushchev had launched in February 1956, called into question the logic of following the Soviet developmental model to a T, provoking anxiety in Moscow about growing instability and rebellion.²⁶ Such a phenomenon, Chivu's letter implied, could occur in Romania as well.²⁷ The Soviets accommodated Bucharest's demands, but the episode revealed to the Kremlin the risks of providing nuclear assistance to

²⁶ Leszek W. Gluchowski, "Poland, 1956: Khrushchev, Gomulka and the 'Polish' October," in *Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) Bulletin*, Issue 5 (Spring 1995), 50; Mark Kramer, "The Soviet Union and the 1956 Crises in Hungary and Poland: Reassessments and New Findings," in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (April 1998), 168, 177-178; Anne Deighton, "'A Different 1956': British Responses to the Polish Events, June-November 1956," in *Cold War History*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (2006), 460.

²⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 98/1956, Letter from Chivu Stoica to Nikolai Bulganin, October 2, 1956, 1-3.

an unpopular regime that could not even feed its own population. To make matters worse, the Romanian Workers' Party leadership found itself in the unenviable position of having the deficit double in 1957 because of a dismal grain harvest.

The Soviets did not have to wait long to see their fears about instability in the Eastern bloc materialize. The Hungarian uprising offered the Kremlin a clear example of how internal turmoil could jeopardize nuclear cooperation. In the protests that occurred in late October 1956, Hungary's uranium ore deliveries to the USSR became an issue on the opposition's agenda. Among the sixteen points compiled by a group of students from the Technical University was the demand that Moscow's exploitation of Hungarian uranium reserves should end and Budapest should instead be allowed to sell its uranium on the global market.²⁸ Moscow had no easy way out: if it provided more nuclear assistance to its satellites, it ran the risk of having its nuclear technology end up in the wrong hands in case of political unrest in the respective countries; if it chose to curtail its nuclear aid policy, it would be accused of taking advantage of the poor countries in its orbit. In Hungary's case, the USSR erred on the side of caution

²⁸ Report from Ambassador Yurii Andropov on Deteriorating Conditions in Hungary, August 29, 1956, in Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne, and M. János Rainer, (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 165, 180.

and broke its promise to build a nuclear power plant for the Hungarians.²⁹ Romania looked at Moscow's nuclear assistance policy with increasing alarm: not only were Moscow's commitments anything but fixed, but the Soviet leadership was also establishing a policy of what the Romanians perceived as discrimination.

Worse Than Capitalists

The division between developed socialist satellite countries (Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia) and the backward satellites (Romania, Bulgaria, and to a certain extent Hungary) could be said to have lain at the root of Romania's economic problems. With 70% of its workforce in agriculture, Romania had been assigned the role of grain supplier, the breadbasket.³⁰ Yet because it had also an advanced energy industry, Romania was providing the more developed countries with crude and natural gas.³¹ In return, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and East Germany provided their underdeveloped brethren (including Romania) with technology, equipment, and industrial goods. These products, the

²⁹ Ginburgs, "Soviet Atomic Energy Agreements," 59.

³⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 39/1963, Protocol No. 15 of the CC RWP Politburo Meeting, July 18, 1963, 21-52; Liviu Țăranu, *România în Consiliul de Ajutor Economic Reciproc, 1949-1965* [Romania within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, 1949-1965] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2007), 77, 79; Suvi Kansikas, *Trade Blocs and the Cold War. The CMEA and the EC Challenge, 1969-1976* (PhD Thesis, University of Helsinki, Department of Political and Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, 2012), 33.

³¹ Țăranu, *România în Consiliul de Ajutor Economic Reciproc*, 60.

RWP leadership noticed, were of poor quality and were rarely delivered on time.³² As a consequence, Romania had to resort to imports from the West, a situation which deeply annoyed the leadership in Bucharest: “What the hell are we going to do?” erupted Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the General Secretary of the Romanian Workers’ Party. “Are we going to keep buying from the capitalists?”³³ When the industrialized CMEA countries failed to deliver their products to Romania and the leadership in Bucharest then resorted to imports from the West, the East Germans, Czechs, and Hungarians charged Romania hefty sums of foreign currency in customs.³⁴ The Romanians felt exploited, not by Moscow but by the

³² ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 4/1956, Report about the coordination of the second five-year plans within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, March 10, 1956, 2-26; Țăranu, *România în Consiliul de Ajutor Economic Reciproc*, 85-87.

³³ At no point in time had the Romanians considered that the struggle between capitalism and communism had ended and that the West was no longer the enemy. This perception of the threat as coming from the West was repeatedly reinforced by the RCP leadership throughout the Cold War. ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 30/1962, Protocol of the RWP Plenary Session, November 21-22, 1962, 1-30. ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 25/1965, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Marshal A.A. Grechko, June 16, 1965, 3; ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 11/1966, Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, February 2, 1966, 4-9; Arhivele Organizațiilor Social-Politice [Archives of Political-Social Organizations, Republic of Moldova, in Russian - henceforth AOSP], Nicolae Ceaușescu’s visit to the USSR, November 22-24, 1976; Michael Shafir, *Romania. Politics, Economics, and Society* (London: Frances Pinter; Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1985), 175-194.

³⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 30/1962, Protocol of the RWP Plenary Session, November 21-22, 1962, 1-30.

other satellite countries.³⁵ The industrialized communist brethren seemed to be behaving worse than the capitalists they were supposed to defeat.³⁶

The influence that Warsaw, East Berlin, and Prague seemed to wield over the Soviet Union and within the CMEA only added to the Romanians' frustrations.³⁷ These frustrations were compounded by the traction that Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia had in Moscow, which manifested itself in the field of nuclear cooperation as well. While the Romanians were kept waiting as the construction of their research reactor in Măgurele was postponed by more than two years, the Soviets were busy signing deals for nuclear power plants with the East Germans and the Czechs.³⁸ It seemed the Soviets had judged that

³⁵ Romanian-Czechoslovak relations offered a good example of an exploitative relationship which was completely at odds with CMEA's ideological foundation. Czechoslovakia, Gheorghiu-Dej recalled, performed self-criticism not for its own economic shortcomings (such as the 1955 overproduction of machinery), but for not using Romania's resources enough. To make amends, the Czechoslovaks offered to build a machinery plant in cooperation with the Romanians, but those promises, as Gheorghiu-Dej put it, amounted to nothing more than empty words. ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 30/1962, Protocol of the RWP Plenary Session, November 21-22, 1962, 1-30.

³⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 30/1962, Protocol of the RWP Plenary Session, November 21-22, 1962, 1-30.

³⁷ While it is true that the Soviet State Committee for Planning – Gosplan – was responsible for drafting CMEA's plans and objectives, each member state would send a delegation to Moscow to negotiate with the Soviets. The Romanians were complaining that the GDR, Czechoslovakia, and Poland always got their way with Moscow, and managed to include their own objectives in CMEA's planning. ANIC, CC PCR, Chancellery, 39/1963, Protocol No. 15 of the CC RWP Politburo Meeting, July 18, 1963, 21-52. Țăranu, *România în Consiliul de Ajutor Economic*, 79, 84. For GDR's influence on Soviet policy, see: Hope Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 139-223.

³⁸ The USSR had the world's first grid-connected nuclear power plant at Obninsk, which achieved criticality on May 9, 1954. Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb*, 347; Ginsburgs, "Soviet Atomic Energy Agreements," 60; "Kratkiye soobshcheniya" [Short Communications], in *Izvestia*, August 2, 1957, No. 183 (12490), 3; Gloria Duffy, *Soviet Nuclear Energy: Domestic and International Policies* (Santa Monica: RAND, December 1979), 4.

Romania did not need nuclear power because it had rich hydrocarbon resources. So, it became obvious to the Romanians that the many benefits atomic energy could offer were not to be distributed equally among the members of the Eastern bloc.³⁹ The political rationale behind Moscow's nuclear aid policy defied the central Marxist precept: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."⁴⁰

The ideological underpinnings of Moscow's nuclear assistance policy appeared even shakier given that in January 1956, Moscow had generously extended a helping hand to a former 'traitor' – Yugoslavia.⁴¹ Since the late 1940s, the Stalin-Tito split had weighed heavily on Romania. In a time of great economic hardship for Romania, Bucharest had incurred high costs because of the crisis, as it had to build fortifications on the Romanian-Yugoslav border and mobilize six Army divisions.⁴² Moreover, in January 1950, as Yugoslavia started receiving nuclear assistance from the West, Tito ordered his scientists to build a nuclear

³⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 30/1962, Protocol of the RWP Plenary Session, November 21-22, 1962, 1-30.

⁴⁰ Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," in Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*.

Vol. 3 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), 13-30.

⁴¹ William C. Potter, Djuro Miljanic, and Ivo Slaus, "Tito's Nuclear Legacy," in *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (March 2000), 65; Fuhrmann, *Atomic Assistance*, 124.

⁴² Liviu Ioan Tatu, *Politica Externă a României în Balcani. Între Moscova și Occident (1945-1957)* [Romania's Foreign Policy in the Balkans. Between Moscow and the West (1945-1957)] (PhD Dissertation, University of Bucharest, History Faculty, 2012), 138. The economic situation in Romania in 1951-1952 was so awful that the leadership in Bucharest had to liquidate almost two thirds of its gold reserves. ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Economică, 30/1965, The Situation of Romania's Gold and Silver Reserves, 1950-1964, undated, 78.

bomb, a decision which made the RWP leadership deeply uncomfortable.⁴³ Now Khrushchev seemed to have forgotten about the bad blood between Moscow and Belgrade and instead tried to curry favour with Tito by means of nuclear ‘gifts’.⁴⁴

The leadership in Bucharest also found fault with aid policy in the communist bloc. Khrushchev’s decision to provide nuclear assistance to developing countries such as Yugoslavia, India, and Egypt, while cancelling its nuclear cooperation with China and delaying the transfer of nuclear technologies to Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria startled the RWP leadership.⁴⁵ The Romanians, although they did not agree with Mao’s views of nuclear warfare, did not question for a second the standing of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as the co-leader of the socialist camp.⁴⁶ In the Romanians’ view, China mattered

⁴³ Potter, Miljanic, and Slaus, “Tito’s Nuclear Legacy,” 63.

⁴⁴ Paul E. Zinner, “Soviet Policies in Eastern Europe,” in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 303, *Russia Since Stalin: Old Trends and New Problems*, (January, 1956), 152-165.

⁴⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 30/1962, Protocol of the RWP Plenary Session, November 21-22, 1962, 1-30. In June 1958, Mao publicly stated its intention to acquire nuclear weapons: “Let us work on atom bombs and nuclear bombs. Ten years, I think, should be quite enough” (quoted in Lewis and Xue; see below). Earlier that year, the Soviet Union had decided to cancel the transfer of an A-bomb prototype to China. Ginsburgs, “Soviet Atomic Energy Agreements,” 51; Potter, “The Soviet Union and Nuclear Proliferation,” 469; John Wilson Lewis and Xue Litai, *China Builds the Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 71-72; Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split. Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 103-104; Yanqiong and Jifeng, “Analysis of Soviet Technology Transfer,” 68; Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens. The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 12.

⁴⁶ At the November 1957 Moscow conference, Mao candidly shared his thoughts on the use of nuclear weapons in war: if the US dropped the A-bomb on China, it would not defeat Beijing. At most, a US attack could wipe out 300 million people out of China’s total population of 600 million, which meant that there would be enough people left for China to survive. Mao’s remarks scared the leaders of East European countries, which had tiny populations in comparison to China. ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, Protocol No. 15 of the CC RWP Politburo Meeting, July 18, 1963,

more than Yugoslavia, India, and Egypt combined, and therefore deserved more aid than the three non-aligned nations. Bucharest's attitude towards Beijing should not be mistaken for pandering; it was actually a self-serving tactic. Gheorghiu-Dej argued that it was a communist's duty to help the poorer countries in Eastern Europe, including Romania. More specifically, the developed socialist states (the Soviet Union primarily, but also the German Democratic Republic, Poland, and Czechoslovakia) should first help their less developed brethren in the communist bloc before jumping to the rescue of the non-aligned.⁴⁷ Yet the industrialized communist countries demurred at this suggestion. In effect, they tried, it seemed, to stymie Romania's and Bulgaria's industrial development so as to nip in the bud any competition on CMEA markets.⁴⁸

What irritated Bucharest most was how Moscow turned a blind eye to the many faults in East Germany's and Czechoslovakia's economic performance.⁴⁹ Yet the minute Romania failed to meet its obligations within the bloc, all hell

116-148; Zhihua Shen and Yafeng Xia, "Hidden Currents during the Honeymoon. Mao, Khrushchev, and the 1957 Moscow Conference," in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Fall 2009), 111.

⁴⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 39/1963, Protocol No. 15 of the CC RWP Politburo Meeting, July 18, 1963, 21-52.

⁴⁸ Ghiță Ionescu, *Comunismul în România* [Communism in Romania] (Bucharest: Litera, 1994), 375.

⁴⁹ The preferential treatment given to the developed socialist countries is evidenced in the fact that when Czechoslovakia produced more machinery than necessary in 1955, it forced its East European neighbours to buy these products even if they did not need them. In contrast, when Romania tried to raise the threshold for its industrial products export quotas so as to adjust its balance of payments, the other CMEA countries refused to accommodate it. ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 30/1962, Protocol of the RWP Plenary Session, November 21-22, 1962, 1-30.

broke loose.⁵⁰ Since 1959, the Czechs and East Germans had been accusing Romania of impeding the entire bloc's development because of its inability to fulfil its quotas of exports and imports.⁵¹ The only solution, they asserted, was deeper integration and more efficient specialization – two phenomena which would have cemented Romania's status as a rentier state.⁵² When Khrushchev endorsed these views at the 21st Congress of the CPSU in January 1959 and again in 1961 during his trip to Romania, the RWP leadership hooted and hollered.⁵³ The ideological basis of the Eastern bloc was in peril, the Romanians argued. This closer integration would be the end of communism; the industrialized East European states wanted to cast the communist camp in the mould of the Common

⁵⁰ The Romanians were accused of nationalist tendencies and autarky, labels which Stalin had used in 1948 to excommunicate Tito from the Cominform. In May 1961, during economic talks in Moscow, Aleksandr Zasyadko, the Soviet deputy-premier and head of delegation, attacked the Romanians for “sitting on their resources like a clucking hen sits on its eggs.” Țăranu, *România în Consiliul de Ajutor Economic Reciproc*, 140; ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 30/1962, Protocol of the RWP Plenary Session, November 21-22, 1962, 1-30; ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 39/1963, Protocol No. 15 of the CC RWP Politburo Meeting, July 18, 1963, 21-52.

⁵¹ Romania had drastically reduced its imports of industrial machinery from other CMEA countries, preferring to produce them itself. Also, the Romanians took seriously Khrushchev's December 1956 recommendation to focus on consumer goods so as to keep the domestic population under control. Țăranu, *România în Consiliul de Ajutor Economic Reciproc*, 96, 138.

⁵² Idem, 137-138, 143.

⁵³ In August 1961, Khrushchev scolded the Romanians for their low production of corn (needed as feedstock in industrialized communist countries), which the Soviet leader attributed to Bucharest's stubbornness and unwillingness to adopt the Soviet method of cultivation. The Romanians rejected Khrushchev's advice. This episode marked the beginning of the strained relations between Khrushchev and Gheorghiu-Dej. Khrushchev's passion for corn was widely known. It earned him the disparaging moniker with the Romanians “our corn and pig specialist.” Elena Dragomir, “Romania's Participation in the Agricultural Conference in Moscow, 2-3 February 1960,” in *Cold War History*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (July 2013), 343; Idem, *Cold War Perceptions. Romania's policy change towards the Soviet Union, 1960-1964* (PhD Dissertation, University of Helsinki, Department of Political and Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, 2014), 47-48.

Market.⁵⁴ Profiteering, thievery, and counterrevolutionary trends would sweep across the Eastern bloc if Berlin, Warsaw, and Prague had their way. “We shouldn’t swallow any dumpling, just because it’s smothered in a certain sauce,” Gheorghiu-Dej thundered.⁵⁵ Only socialist industrialization could save Romania and, implicitly, the communist camp.⁵⁶ Therefore, the Romanians started challenging the traditional roles they had been assigned by the CMEA and began looking into technologies that would help them catch up with the rest of the socialist bloc. Acquiring atomic energy ranked high on the Romanians’ to-do list. So, when in 1960 the Soviets rebuffed the Romanians’ requests for a nuclear power plant, the leadership in Bucharest realized that self-reliance represented the most sensible solution.⁵⁷

Soviet Nuclear Warheads

Yet the Romanians were jealous of the other junior members of the communist bloc not only for the agenda-setting powers they had within the CMEA but also for the attention Moscow paid to them in the strategic arena. Romania resented

⁵⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 30/1962, Protocol of the RWP Plenary Session, November 21-22, 1962, 1-30.

⁵⁵ *Idem*, 29.

⁵⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 39/1963, Protocol No. 15 of the CC RWP Politburo Meeting, July 18, 1963, 21-52.

⁵⁷ Purica, “Ionel I. Purica,” 10.

the minor role it had been granted in Moscow's military planning. Because the Soviets believed that the Third World War would not be fought over Romanian territory, they channelled the bulk of their military assistance to front-line countries such as the GDR.⁵⁸ One way in which Moscow ensured the nuclear combat capability of the Eastern bloc was to deploy nuclear-tipped missiles to members of the Warsaw Pact. The USSR deployed more nuclear missile batteries in the GDR than in any other Warsaw Pact country.⁵⁹ The preferential treatment East Germany received made Romania feel like a second-rank member of the socialist bloc.⁶⁰

But for the Romanians, prestige and intra-bloc dynamics represented only part of the problem. Warsaw Pact operational war games carried out in Romania in December 1960 revealed the weakness of the Romanian armed forces.⁶¹ In the enacted scenario, the enemy attacked from the southwest (Yugoslavia), and the Romanians were not able to repel the attack right away.⁶² Only with the

⁵⁸ Matthias Uhl, "Storming on to Paris. The 1961 Buria exercise and the planned solution of the Berlin Crisis," in Vojtech Mastny, Sven G. Holtsmark, Andreas Wenger (eds.), *War Plans and Alliances in the Cold War. Threat perceptions in the East and West* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 61; Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall* 128; Matthias Uhl and Vladimir I. Ivkin, "'Operation Atom' the Soviet Union's Stationing of Nuclear Missiles in the German Democratic Republic, 1959," in *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 12/13 (Fall/Winter 2001), 299-307.

⁵⁹ These tactical nuclear missiles were soon pulled out and deployed in Kaliningrad. Uhl, "Storming on to Paris," 61.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Administrativ-Politică [Administrative-Political Section], 2/1962, Report from General Leontin Sălăjan, Minister of the Romanian Armed Forces, to the Romanian Workers' Party Politburo, February 6, 1962, 2.

⁶² *Idem*, 3.

involvement of the Soviet Union and Bulgaria was the enemy attack repelled.⁶³ This situation demanded the creation of an air defence unified command within the Warsaw Pact, to which the Romanians agreed.⁶⁴ Bolstering the defences of national armies in Eastern Europe became a priority for Marshall Andrei Grechko, the Supreme Commander of the Unified Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact. As a result, in January 1962 he approved the Romanians' request for Soviet nuclear warheads to be mounted on the tactical missiles that Romania had bought the previous year and advised the CPSU leadership to transfer the warheads.⁶⁵

The Romanians' demand defies the conventional narrative about Romania's independence from Moscow.⁶⁶ If Gheorghiu-Dej had been as keen on preserving Romania's room to manoeuvre as he claimed, then he would never have asked for a technology that would only tie Romania more closely to the Soviet Union. It was highly unlikely that the Soviets would just deliver the warheads and then leave the Romanians alone. The deployment of Soviet nuclear warheads on the territory of East European countries was intrinsically linked to the presence of Red Army troops, since Moscow would not leave its junior allies

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Idem, 4-5.

⁶⁵ Even if the warheads were intended for weapons deployed by the Romanian Armed Forces, there was no question that, in case of a war, the vehicles would have been transferred to direct Soviet command. Idem, 11; Petre Opreș, "Romania and the Cuban Missile Crisis: Soviet Nuclear Warheads for Romania?" in *CWIHP Bulletin* 17/18 (Fall 2012), 514. Mark Kramer, "The Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis for Warsaw Pact Nuclear Operations," in *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 5 (Spring 1995), 112.

⁶⁶ For more references on the "maverick satellite" narrative, see thesis Introduction.

in charge of its atomic arsenal; only Soviet armed forces were allowed to defend and operate nuclear weapons in case of necessity.⁶⁷ So why would the Romanians want to have Soviet nuclear warheads on their territory? The currently available evidence suggests that security considerations played a key role. The December 1960 operational war games revealed the vulnerabilities of the Romanian armed forces. The nuclear-tipped tactical missiles would have been deployed in Ineu, in western Romania, less than 150 km from the border with Yugoslavia, which is exactly within the range of the missiles.⁶⁸ At the root of the military planners' assumption about an attack coming from Yugoslavia lay the unsolved territorial issues between Bucharest and Belgrade involving the region of Banat, which means that the Romanians had not ruled out the scenario in which Tito's Yugoslavia could pose a threat to Romania's territorial integrity.⁶⁹

As was the case over the delivery of atomic energy assistance, Moscow kept dragging its feet. Deploying Soviet nuclear warheads on Romanian territory indeed did pose several problems for Khrushchev. First, as mentioned before, it was Moscow's (and Washington's) policy to deploy a certain number of armed forces to guard the missiles in question. Bringing back Soviet troops to Romania

⁶⁷ Uhl, "Storming on to Paris," 59-60; Kramer, "The Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis," 112.

⁶⁸ Opriş, "Romania and the Cuban Missile Crisis," 514.

⁶⁹ For the Yugoslav-Romanian border issues, see Tatu, *Politica Externă a României în Balcani*, 12, 138-139; Rebecca Ann Hayes, "'A New Greater Romania'? Romanian Claims to the Serbian Banat in 1941," in *Central Europe*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (November 2005), 99-120.

would have delegitimized the RWP, which was currently striving to convince both its domestic and its foreign audiences that it was its own master.⁷⁰ Second, at a time when Moscow was advocating a withdrawal of all foreign troops from East and West Germany and the other European member states of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, a deployment in Romania could have been misinterpreted by the Americans and the West Europeans as a possible Soviet volte-face.⁷¹ At a time of high tension between the US and the USSR, a sloppily planned deployment could have alarmed Washington and led them to suspect that the Soviets were preparing for an all-out nuclear war. Third, the Soviets feared the risk of local nuclear wars (especially as Romania advocated a dual-track arrangement similar to that used by NATO), and the possibility that its satellites could switch sides during a superpower conflagration.⁷² With respect to this latter

⁷⁰ The Romanians appeared to have made the best of two bad situations. First, the neutralization of Austria in May 1955 deprived the Soviets of their original authorization to keep troops in Hungary and Romania to protect their lines of communication to Austria, where the Soviet army maintained a garrison. Second, Khrushchev's forceful intervention in Hungary in October/November 1956 reinforced the Soviet military presence on Romania's Western border. However, the support the RWP leadership provided the Soviets during the invasion allowed Bucharest to lobby the Kremlin to then pull its troops out of Romania. The RWP leadership capitalized on this withdrawal to paint itself as independent of Moscow. Malcolm Mackintosh, "The Warsaw Treaty Organization: A History," in David Holloway, Jane M.O. Sharp (eds.), *The Warsaw Pact: Alliance in Transition?* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 45; Edwina Moreton, "Foreign Policy Goals," in Holloway, Sharp (eds.), *The Warsaw Pact*, 150; Jonathan Eyal, "Romania. Between Appearances and Realities," in Jonathan Eyal (ed.), *The Warsaw Pact and the Balkans. Moscow's Southern Flank* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 68.

⁷¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 19/1957, Minutes of conversation between Andrei Gromyko and John Foster Dulles, October 5, 1957, 18-36.

⁷² Mihai Retegan and Alesandru Duțu, *Război politic în blocul comunist* [Political War in the Communist Bloc] (Bucharest: Editura Tritonic, 2004), 12; Kramer, "The Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis," 113.

possibility, Romania's alliance behaviour during both world wars served as a reminder to the Soviet leadership that Bucharest could be a 'loose cannon'. In the span of two decades, Romania had jumped ship twice to advance its own interests.⁷³ Moreover, Romania's anti-Russian alliances had left a deep imprint in the minds of the Soviets.⁷⁴ For instance, the chief ideologue of the CPSU, Mikhail Suslov, took advantage of every opportunity to remind the Romanian communist leadership of Romania's alliance with Nazi Germany during World War II and of the crimes then committed against Soviet citizens.⁷⁵ The fear of history repeating itself, therefore, might well have contributed to Moscow's reluctance to deploy nuclear weapons on Romanian territory.

It was the Cuban Missile Crisis that in fact dashed the Romanians' hopes to have Soviet nuclear warheads deployed on their territory. The crisis taught Khrushchev important lessons not only about the misuse of nuclear weapons by local actors when their goals were not perfectly aligned to Soviet objectives but also about the risk of accidents.⁷⁶ As a consequence, the CPSU leadership decided

⁷³ Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers. Six Months that Changed the World* (London: John Murray, 2003), 140; Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Romania* (London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1964), 87; Randall Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," in *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994), 81-82, 95, 102 fn 117.

⁷⁴ Tatiana Volokitina, "The Image of Romania in the War-time Soviet Propaganda," in *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, No. 1-2 (2011), 37.

⁷⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 9/1965, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraș and Mikhail Suslov, 10 May 1965, 130-131.

⁷⁶ Kramer, "The Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis," 110-112.

not to give the go-ahead to the deployment of Soviet nuclear warheads to Romania. The RWP leadership was left feeling wary of the Soviets' ability to act rationally. The Soviets' re-evaluation of their nuclear missile deployments in Eastern Europe further reinforced the idea that Romania was not strategically important to Moscow. Gheorghiu-Dej was also furious that the Soviets had not consulted with the RWP leadership about their plans to deploy nuclear missiles in Cuba.⁷⁷ As several scholars point out, the Soviet Union kept its contingency planning secret, thus preventing its satellites from having a say over the development of the crisis.⁷⁸ The RWP leadership resented Khrushchev's adventurism during the crisis, which according to Gen. Ion Gheorghe, the Romanian Chief of the General Staff, had placed the Warsaw Pact members in "a situation that would lead them to a state of war."⁷⁹ For the Romanians, the writing was on the wall: in January 1962, Marshall Grechko told the Romanian Minister of Defence, "We hope you trust the person who will be appointed commander of the Air Defence Forces of the Warsaw Pact, for he will make decisions that may temporarily lead to a weakening of air defence for secondary

⁷⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 39/1962, Report of the talks between the Romanian delegation with the CPSU leadership on October 23, 1962, published in Gavriil Preda and Petre Opriş, *România în organizația Tratatului de la Varșovia, 1954-1968* [Romania within the Warsaw Pact. 1954-1968] (Bucharest: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2008), 91-98.

⁷⁸ Opriş, "Romania and the Cuban Missile Crisis," 514; Kramer, "The Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis," 59.

⁷⁹ Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne, *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005), 30.

targets in order to forcefully defend very important targets.”⁸⁰ Like most other East European countries, the Romanians realized that, in the eventuality of a war between the two blocs, Romania could be wiped off the face of the planet.⁸¹ Therefore, an independent nuclear deterrent did not appear to be such a bad idea, despite the huge costs it entailed.

Conclusion

Despite Romania’s position within the communist bloc after World War II, the uneven story of Moscow’s unwillingness to provide Bucharest with nuclear power plants and to deploy Soviet nuclear warheads on Romanian territory pushed the RWP to turn to the West in 1963. However, it is important to stress that this opening to the capitalist bloc did not entail an ideological realignment. The Romanians kept their membership in both the CMEA and the Warsaw Pact, espoused the most rigid communist dogma in the Eastern bloc, and also continued

⁸⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Administrativ-Politică, 2/1962, Report from General Leontin Sălăjan, Minister of the Romanian Armed Forces, to the Romanian Workers’ Party Politburo, February 6, 1962, 7.

⁸¹ The Romanians took notice of the change in Soviet nuclear strategy after 1959, from defensive to offensive. Khrushchev was perfectly aware that the next war would be an “all-out nuclear war,” but he remained optimistic about the Eastern bloc’s chances of prevailing over the capitalist aggressors. David Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), 38-39; Vojtech Mastny, “Imagining War in Europe. Soviet strategic planning,” in Vojtech Mastny, Sven G. Holtsmark, Andreas Wenger (eds.), *War Plans and Alliances in the Cold War. Threat perceptions in the East and West* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 16-25; Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire. The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 126.

to provide uranium to the Soviet Union until the mid-1960s. Switching sides irreversibly would have entailed doctrinal sacrifices that the Romanians were not willing to risk. As the above-mentioned quote from Gheorghiu-Dej reveals, for the Romanians, the simple act of trading with the West was an unpalatable (although necessary) activity, which they would have preferred not to engage in. However, because the other members of the Eastern bloc could not supply the technology Romania wanted, the RWP reached across the Iron Curtain and started to engage in exactly the type of activities for which it had criticized the Poles, East Germans, and Soviets.⁸²

The evidence this chapter relies on suggests that only in certain circumstances can appealing to a shared ideology help the recipient country obtain nuclear technology from a much more powerful supplier. Romania, alongside other East European countries, cajoled and coaxed the USSR to share its technological advances in the field of nuclear energy, arguing that it was Moscow's communist duty to help its allies. This strategy stopped working when the supplier and the buyer started drifting apart after Stalin's death. As Gheorghiu-Dej was one of the very few East European leaders to have survived the process of de-Stalinization, and the changes he then made to the RWP stance

⁸² In its spats with the Poles, for instance, the Romanians accused Warsaw of having sold out to the capitalists, because the US accounted for a large share of Poland's foreign trade. ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 18/1964, Minutes of conversation on the issue of CMEA cooperation, April 29, 1964, 1-23.

were merely cosmetic, his Stalinist orientation put him at odds with Khrushchev.⁸³ The RWP had a different conception than did the CPSU under Khrushchev about the phases a country needs to go through to reach communism. This divergence, which Gheorghiu-Dej deliberately did not publicise, gave rise to tensions between Romania and the other East European countries within the CMEA and the Warsaw Pact. Finally, the Soviet leadership's perception of the Romanians as "nationalistic" and "autarkic" further diminished Bucharest's ability to persuade them to sell its nuclear technology to Romania, thus explaining the domestic and intra-bloc reasons which, as we shall now see, generated an important shift in Romania's acquisition policy.⁸⁴

⁸³ Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 24.

⁸⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 39/1963, Protocol No. 15 of the CC RWP Politburo Meeting, July 18, 1963, 21-52.

Chapter Three: Romania and the Negotiations around the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, 1965– 1968

The last chapter showed why and how the ideological alliance with Moscow did not give scope for Romania to advance its nuclear programme significantly. This chapter will now examine the institutional hypothesis put forward by Benjamin Schiff, which asserts that developing countries such as Romania seek nuclear technology transfers by stressing on Article IV of the non-proliferation treaty.¹ Article IV demands that nuclear powers facilitate the access of non-nuclear-weapon states to the peaceful uses of atomic energy. The archival record suggests that, as far as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was concerned, Bucharest sought more than mere technical assistance. The Romanians' ultimate goal was to avoid tying their own hands in the nuclear arena.

Bucharest advanced its own nuclear agenda by manipulating the various organizations involved in the NPT negotiations: the Warsaw Pact, the military alliance that Romania was a member of; the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament

¹ Schiff, *International Nuclear Technology Transfer*, 6.

Committee (ENDC); and the United Nations (UN). At the core of the NPT lay a grand bargain: forswearing the acquisition of nuclear weapons in exchange for disarmament and nuclear technology.² The tasks of verifying the non-proliferation pledge and of facilitating access to peaceful uses of nuclear energy fell upon the International Atomic Energy Agency.³ The Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee, an international forum located in Geneva and operating under the aegis of the United Nations, represented the venue where, beginning in June 1965, countries debated the NPT and tabled proposals, drafts, and amendments.⁴ After a draft of the treaty was agreed upon within the ENDC in the spring of 1968, the debate was taken to the Political Committee of the United Nations, and then the treaty was subjected to a vote at the UN General Assembly.⁵

These different institutional layers create a complicated picture that might have confused even decision-makers at the time. When designing its attack strategy, RCP leadership bet on a domino effect: if one of these avenues to instituting a non-proliferation regime could be blocked, then the entire edifice

² Liviu Horowitz, “Beyond Pessimism: Why the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Will Not Collapse,” in *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2014), DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2014.917971.

³ Quester, “The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty,” 163; Lawrence Scheinman, *The International Atomic Energy Agency and World Nuclear Order* (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, 1987), 21.

⁴ Mitchell Reiss, *Without the Bomb. The Politics of Nuclear Nonproliferation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 18.

⁵ Jonathan R. Hunt, *Into the Bargain: The Triumph and Tragedy of Nuclear Internationalism during the mid-Cold War, 1958-1970* (PhD Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, Department of History, 2013), 43.

would collapse, and Romania would obtain what it wanted. Bucharest's attempts to block these avenues often overlapped, but, to provide a sense of clarity, this chapter will take a thematic approach in discussing them, namely: using the China card to obstruct an agreement on non-proliferation; blocking the reorganization of the Warsaw Pact; nagging the Soviets, through bilateral politics, to offer Bucharest atomic assistance and to embrace Romania's approach to the NPT; and finally, making an eleventh-hour attempt to torpedo the treaty at the ENDC and then at the UN.

First, the Romanians used Beijing to resist pressure from the other members of the Warsaw Pact to sign the treaty. China frowned at the idea of the NPT because it embodied US-USSR collusion. However, for propaganda purposes, Beijing could not admit to being against non-proliferation, and instead stressed on the need for the NPT to enact general and complete disarmament. Bucharest invoked the need to mend fences with China at a time when the Sino-Soviet split was deepening and pestered the other Warsaw Pact members to make total disarmament the focus of the Eastern bloc NPT draft. Such tactics allowed the RCP to stall negotiations. The China card slipped from the Romanians' hand in June 1966.

At the same time, Bucharest had to address the storm that was gathering on the Warsaw Pact front, which was trying to reach a consensus on the NPT

while undergoing an internal reform effort. This latter would have centralized the decision-making process. Bucharest did its very best to stop the Warsaw Pact from passing the reforms because it did not want to give up the option of acquiring a nuclear weapon. Openly admitting to such nuclear ambitions would have engendered general criticism from the bloc, so Bucharest had to find a cover for opposing both the reforms and the NPT. It proposed that the position of Commander of the Warsaw Pact Unified Armed Forces should not have to be held by a Soviet citizen all the time, but should be rotating during peacetime.⁶ However, for the Soviets, Bucharest's demands were too close for comfort. Romania seemed to have taken its cue from the Multilateral Force (MLF), a proposal that, at the time, was creating problems for NATO. The Romanians scored an important victory on home ground at the July 1966 conference of the Political Consultative Committee in Bucharest. They lobbied hard not only for the Bucharest Declaration, which they advertised as the first step in European détente, but also for postponing the adoption of reforms. On both counts, the RCP leadership won. Its success, however, turned out to be short-lived.

Next, the Romanians tried to impose their nuclear agenda on Moscow bilaterally. Not only did they seek to obtain Soviet nuclear technology, but they

⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 72/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, May 12, 1966, 124, also discussed in Laurien Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered. Inquiries into the Evolution of an Underestimated Alliance, 1960-1969* (PhD Dissertation, University of Utrecht, Department of History, 2013), 172.

also pressed the Kremlin to incorporate Romania's stance on non-proliferation into the proposals and drafts they tabled in international forums. The Soviets rebuffed both of Romania's demands, so Bucharest resorted to the ENDC and UN pulpits to kill the treaty. Then, seeing that the Soviets would not budge, the Romanians signed the NPT, hoping the Kremlin would reconsider atomic assistance to Bucharest. Romania failed to achieve much on either the military option or peaceful uses of the atom.

This chapter will show how the specific NPT talks were in reality deeply linked to other developments, including the rise of China, superpower and early European détente, and the reorganization of Western and Eastern military institutions. The Romanians, despite their fervour and ingenuity, caved in to greater external pressures. Once again, power politics shaped the layout of the nuclear arena.

The China Card

This section will consider the role of China in Romania's policies. It touches upon China's emerging place in the politics of the communist world, and Bucharest's aspirations to make the best use it could of the shifting balance of power during the détente period, particularly with reference to nuclear politics. Ideas about containing the spread of the atom emerged in the early days of the nuclear age.

Proposals such as the Baruch Plan, the Irish Resolution, and the Rapacki Plan, which called for, respectively, international control of atomic energy, the signing of a non-proliferation treaty, and the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) in Central Europe, did not translate into concrete measures, because the two superpowers refused to cooperate.⁷ Mao's increasingly belligerent attitude and his views on nuclear weapons in the late 1950s and early 1960s brought the US and the USSR to the negotiating table.⁸ The looming threat of a nuclear China compelled the two bitter Cold War enemies, the US and the USSR, first to sign the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT) and then to adopt the NPT.⁹

The China problem hit the Romanians where it hurt them most, and that was with their plans to become a nuclear power. It was Beijing's quest for atomic

⁷ Larry G. Gerber, "The Baruch Plan and the Origins of the Cold War," in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1982), 69; William Potter, "The NPT & the Sources of Nuclear Restraint," in *Daedalus*, Vol. 139, No. 1 (Winter 2010), 73; Margaret K. Gnoinska, *Poland and the Cold War in East and Southeast Asia, 1949-1965* (PhD Dissertation, The George Washington University, Department of History, 2009), 387.

⁸ Shu Guang Zhang, "Between 'Paper' and 'Real Tigers': Mao's View of Nuclear Weapons," in John Lewis Gaddis, Philip H. Gordon, Ernest R. May, and Jonathan Rosenberg, *Cold War Statesmen Confront the Bomb. Nuclear Diplomacy since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 194-213.

⁹ The Gilpatric Report on Nuclear Proliferation, produced at the request of President Lyndon Johnson in the aftermath of China's nuclear test, represents a landmark in the evolution of the US attitude towards the spread of nuclear weapons. Francis J. Gavin, "Blasts from the Past: Proliferation Lessons from the 1960s," in *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Winter, 2004/2005), 102; William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, "Whether to 'Strangle the Baby in the Cradle'" in *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Winter 2000/2001), 71; William Burr and Hector L. Montford (eds.), *The Making of the Limited Test Ban Treaty, 1958-1963*, August 8, 2003, available at: <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB94/>.

weapons that made the USSR, Romania's first supplier of nuclear technology, reluctant to continue sharing its nuclear secrets with other countries. After Mao Zedong publicly asserted his desire to obtain nuclear weapons in 1958, the Soviets cancelled the nuclear cooperation agreement with China (June 1959) and reconsidered the transfer of nuclear technology to its allies in Eastern Europe.¹⁰ The Soviet leadership had realized, with shock, that the Chinese nuclear arsenal was aimed as much at the USSR as at the US. As Walker and Lönnroth note, "the Soviets were [...] determined that future nuclear transactions with allies in Eastern Europe and elsewhere should have no chance of springing such nasty surprises."¹¹ To this end, Moscow not only instituted a stringent control system over its allies' nuclear programmes, but also pressed onwards with broader political initiatives, such as an international treaty on non-proliferation.

The ink on the Limited Test Ban Treaty had not yet dried when, on October 10, 1963, Nikita Khrushchev wrote to US President John F. Kennedy that the Moscow Treaty (another name for the LTBT) had to be followed by other steps, including "barring the further spread of the nuclear weapon."¹² Khrushchev's musings on non-proliferation caused great alarm in East European capitals. He proved to be willing to accept mere reassurances from the US that

¹⁰ Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith*, 158.

¹¹ Walker and Lönnroth, *Nuclear Power Struggles*, 15.

¹² *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. VI, Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges, Telegram from the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State, October 10, 1963, 309-311.

nuclear weapons would not end up in West German hands in exchange for having a non-proliferation treaty signed swiftly.¹³ This emphasis on expediency meant that the USSR would be soft on West Germany to gain leverage on China. Such plans put Poland and the GDR at risk, since the LTBT offered no verifiable controls on what Warsaw and East Berlin perceived as Bonn's drive for the bomb. The solution, Władisław Gomułka, the leader of the Polish United Workers' Party, told Khrushchev, was to make peace with the Chinese.¹⁴ This is where the Romanians came into play.

In 1960, at the Romanian Workers' Party Congress, the differences between Moscow and Beijing came out in the open when the Soviet and Chinese delegations hurled insults and accusations of ideological betrayal at each other.¹⁵ In the aftermath of this unfortunate turn of events, which made the Romanians look like inept hosts, the RWP refused to join the other members of the Soviet bloc in condemning Mao's ideological heresy. To the leadership in Moscow, Bucharest's 'neutrality' pointed to 'commitment problems', but the Soviets

¹³ Archiwum Akt Nowych [Polish Central Archives of Modern Records - AAN], Komitet Centralny Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej [KC PZPR - Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party], sygn. 2637, Letter from Władisław Gomułka to Nikita Khrushchev, October 8, 1963, 267-282, published in Douglas E. Selva, *The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Non-proliferation, 1963-1965* Working Paper no. 32, (Washington, D.C.: Cold War International History Project, 2001), 22-29.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Edward Crankshaw, *The New Cold War. Moscow v. Peking* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), 99; Odd Arne Westad, "Introduction," in Odd Arne Westad (ed.), *Brothers in Arms. The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 25.

nevertheless reckoned that it positioned the Romanians as the default intermediaries. On March 1, 1964, a RWP delegation left for Beijing in an attempt to mediate between the CPSU and the CCP. The Romanians, who, it seems, still felt guilty about not preventing the Sino-Soviet split four years earlier, worked hard to persuade Mao to end polemics.¹⁶ The Chinese, however, would not budge. Discussions about Khrushchev's revisionism degenerated, so the RWP delegation left China empty-handed.¹⁷ The Sino-Soviet rift continued to deepen until Khrushchev's removal on October 14, 1964, and the first Chinese nuclear test two days later, when hope about reconciliation appeared on the horizon.

The Chinese could be placated, the Romanians insisted, but first the Soviets had to denounce "the Khrushchevite style of doing foreign policy."¹⁸ Condemning Khrushchev, the Romanians thought, could mend the Sino-Soviet split. The more conciliatory attitude towards China displayed by the new Secretary of the CPSU, Leonid Brezhnev, at the beginning of his term, made the Romanian leadership optimistic about restoring unity within the international communist movement.¹⁹

¹⁶ Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens*, 101; Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 170-173.

¹⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 5/1964, Minutes of conversation between the Romanian Workers' Party delegation and the Chinese Communist Party leadership, March 3-6, 1964.

¹⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 70/1964, Note from E. D. Karpeshchenko, November 5, 1964, 7-12.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Yet the Romanians soon stopped seeing these developments through rose-tinted glasses. Neither the Soviets nor the Chinese proved amenable to a compromise. Mao's stubbornness thwarted any hope for harmony within the communist bloc.²⁰ He dug his heels in and refused any form of contact with the Soviet leadership, given CPSU propaganda against the CCP.²¹ In fact, the Chinese viewed Brezhnev as even more revisionist than Khrushchev.²² Past Soviet initiatives on nuclear proliferation made Beijing see the quarrel with Moscow as irreconcilable. Khrushchev's cancellation of the nuclear cooperation agreement with China had already got Beijing thinking about Soviet-American collusion.²³ When the USSR signed the LTBT without consulting China, Mao had no doubt about the Soviets' goal: the Kremlin was in cahoots with the West to marginalize the People's Republic of China.²⁴ Beijing spewed more and more vitriol on Moscow, accusing it of betraying communism, a stance which Bucharest did not find constructive. Yet being on Mao's good side had its benefits. According to the Romanians, the world was no longer divided along ideological lines (i.e., capitalists versus socialists) but rather as nuclear 'haves' against nuclear 'have

²⁰ Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 153.

²¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 70/1964, Minutes of conversation between Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Emil Bodnăraş, Paul Niculescu-Mizil and Zhou Enlai, November 8, 1964, 72-73.

²² Ibid.

²³ Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith*, 158.

²⁴ Mastny and Byrne, *A Cardboard Castle?*, 25; Boris T. Kulik, *Sovetsko-kitaiski raskol: Prichiny i posledstviia* [The Sino-Soviet Split: Causes and Consequences] (Moscow, Institut Dal'nevo Vostoka RAN, 2000), 453.

nots'.²⁵ Compared to the other nuclear powers, China sang a different tune. Instead of kicking the nuclear ladder away after getting its A-bomb, as the US and the USSR seemed to have sought to do, Beijing advised developing countries that nuclear proliferation was the best means to “shake off imperialist control.”²⁶ So for a country with nuclear ambitions, such as Romania, China was a natural interlocutor and a model to emulate.

In January 1965, when Walter Ulbricht, General Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, put forward a NPT draft, the Romanians became aware of the value of having the Chinese card up their sleeve. Ulbricht’s proposal focused on halting the acquisition and transfer of nuclear weapons, looking primarily at ending the Multilateral Force. The MLF, an idea first proposed by the Eisenhower administration, was sharing mechanism meant to create a fleet of nuclear-armed submarines and warships that could be manned by officers from countries other than the US, including those from West Germany.²⁷ Ulbricht’s proposal failed to take into account the call for total and general disarmament that China made on October 17, 1964, one day after having detonated its first nuclear bomb. The

²⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 4/1965, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraș and Liu Phan, January 27, 1965, 36.

²⁶ Yet, at the time, China did not share its nuclear technology with other countries. ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 223/1965, Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, September 22, 1965, 37, 40-41; Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid*, 261, 364-365.

²⁷ Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace. The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 215.

Romanian leadership capitalized on this omission to fight against an initiative that in reality would have tied their hands in the nuclear arena. The RCP successfully blocked Ulbricht's initiative by arguing that East Germany's concern with killing the MLF was secondary to the importance of reconciling with China.²⁸ A non-proliferation treaty would further alienate the Chinese and thus add to tensions within the international communist movement, Romanian Premier Ion Gheorghe Maurer contended. The leadership in Bucharest thus exploited the Sino-Soviet split to undermine alignment on the NPT in the Eastern bloc.

From this altercation with Ulbricht about the NPT draft, the Romanians learned that as long as the Chinese quarrelled with the Soviets, Bucharest could keep the nuclear option in its pocket and the non-proliferation treaty at bay. China represented an effective and useful obstacle to the superpowers' advances towards instituting a nuclear monopoly, and a shield for Romania's own hedging posture. To maintain Beijing's position as a counterweight to the other nuclear powers, the leadership in Bucharest clearly had to prevent Sino-Soviet collusion on nuclear weapons from occurring. As a result, the Romanians did their best to fuel China's misgivings about the USSR. Emil Bodnăraș, the Romanian Vice-Premier, warned Liu Phan, the Chinese Ambassador to Bucharest, that Moscow

²⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 4/1965, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraș and Liu Phan, January 1, 1965, 13.

sought to use the non-proliferation treaty as a whip against Beijing.²⁹ The NPT draft the East Germans put forward in January 1965, Bodnăraş insisted, must have been written with the support of the US.³⁰ Thanks to such accusations, which reflected Bucharest's own rancour towards Moscow, the Romanians curried favour with the Chinese. Starting to regard the Sino-Romanian relationship as a mutually advantageous one, Mao gave the Chinese Ambassador to Bucharest the green light to have weekly consultations with the Romanian leadership.

These frequent exchanges hardened Romania's position on non-proliferation. The Chinese nuclear programme was an ideal towards which Romania aspired. Mao's determination to build a nuclear bomb after the Soviets had cut off all nuclear assistance in the late 1950s left a deep imprint on Ceauşescu. He relished the fact that instead of blocking China's access to the A-bomb, Moscow's lack of cooperation (and unreliability) actually encouraged Mao to develop China's own nuclear arsenal.³¹ He likened Moscow's refusal to provide Romania with nuclear weapons to the Soviets' decision to withdraw its support

²⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 4/1965, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraş and Liu Phan, January 14, 1965, 27.

³⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 4/1965, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraş and Liu Phan, January 27, 1965, 36.

³¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 79/1976, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceauşescu and John S. Foster and A.M. Aikin, Atomic Energy Canada, Ltd., June 26, 1976, 10.

for the Chinese nuclear programme, hinting to the possibility that Romania might one day follow in China's footsteps.³²

So it seemed that the Chinese offered a solid example to the Romanians of how to deal with non-proliferation: calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons while pursuing them. In January 1965, in a conversation with Liu Phan, Maurer underlined that the RCP's position on the NPT was similar to China's. The RCP leadership was against the use of nuclear weapons, but not against their acquisition unless total disarmament could be achieved. The impossible goal of completely and definitively abolishing nuclear weapons served both Beijing's and Bucharest's interests. Not only did it resonate well with the official propaganda line about communist countries as 'peace-loving nations', but it also allowed the two countries to protect themselves by invoking the oft-repeated principle that non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWS) would not give up the nuclear option until nuclear-weapon states (NWS) started their own general disarmament.³³ Nothing could prevent NNWS from acquiring their own atomic weapons if their survival depended on it, according to Maurer.³⁴ Ceaușescu, in a meeting with a Chinese delegation led by Deng Xiaoping, went even further, saying that "as long as

³² Ibid.

³³ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 223/1965, Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, September 22, 1965, 41.

³⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 4/1965, Minutes of conversation between Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Emil Bodnăraș, and Liu Phan, January 28, 1965, 43.

imperialist countries have nuclear weapons, it is good for as many socialist countries as possible (not just one) to have them as well.”³⁵ He did not want to deprive himself of the possibility of building nuclear weapons at some point in the future.

To do so, Romania would need facilities, know-how, and resources, and in April 1965, the Soviet Union signalled that its nuclear exports policy to the Eastern bloc, in particular to Romania, could change if the Sino-Soviet alliance could be repaired.³⁶ If the danger posed by China were neutralized, then those high-ranking Soviet officials opposed to transferring nuclear technology to Romania would be left high and dry. Therefore, Bucharest resumed its efforts to apply pressure on the Soviets to provide nuclear assistance. In June 1965, in a discussion with Marshal Andrei Grechko, the Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Pact forces, Ceaușescu asserted his intention to pursue nuclear power and subtly nudged his interlocutor, suggesting that the Soviets might share some of their nuclear technology and materials with the Romanians.³⁷ Then in September 1965, he personally went to Moscow to request Soviet atomic assistance.³⁸ These

³⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 4/1965, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraș and Liu Phan, July 20, 1965, Bucharest, 309.

³⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 1/1965, Minutes of conversation between Mihail Roșianu and G. Denisov, the Soviet Ambassador to Bucharest, April 23, 1965, 20; Rosemary K.I. Quested, *Sino-Russian Relations. A Short History* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 133.

³⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 25/1965, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Andrei Grechko, June 16, 1965, 7.

³⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 4/1965, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraș and Liu Phan, September 21, 1965, 200-201.

discussions did lead to an improvement in Soviet-Romanian relations, as Brezhnev not only promised nuclear technology but also sought to reassure Ceaușescu about the Soviet nuclear umbrella.³⁹

Consequently, the Romanian leadership now changed tack in its dealings with the Chinese. After the September talks in Moscow, Bodnăraș painted a more positive image of Soviet intentions regarding the Non-Proliferation Treaty to the Chinese Ambassador, Liu Phan. The USSR, Bodnăraș said, wanted to reassure Beijing about how innocuous the NPT was. The treaty could not harm Beijing because China already had the bomb.⁴⁰ Such a volte-face could have alarmed the Chinese leadership. To reassure Beijing of their reliability, the Romanians then made sure to include disarmament in their position on non-proliferation. Yet, to Beijing's annoyance, Bucharest borrowed from the Soviets the rest of its stance on the NPT: the withdrawal of troops from foreign territories, abolishing foreign military bases, banning the use of nuclear weapons, and preventing the transfer of nuclear weapons.⁴¹ If, in January 1965, the Romanians had joined hands with Beijing to criticize Moscow, towards the end of the year Bucharest found itself

³⁹ Idem, 40; Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe [Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs – henceforth AMAE], 20E/1965 USSR, Vol. III, Telegram from Tiberiu Petrescu to V. S. Sylkin, October 27, 1965, 34-35.

⁴⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 4/1965, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraș and Liu Phan, October 28, 1965, 220.

⁴¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 223/1965, Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, September 22, 1965, 43.

caught between the two. In this delicate spot, the Romanians did not have much room for manoeuvre. Consequently, they decided to adopt a 'wait and see' approach at the ENDC.⁴²

The Romanian Nuclear Question

The Romanians discovered that Mao was partly right about the continuity between Khrushchev and Brezhnev. In January 1966, the new CPSU leadership pushed forward with Khrushchev's efforts to transform the Warsaw Pact into a supranational organization.⁴³ Reforming the Eastern military alliance advanced the interests of its Northern Tier, in particular the German Democratic Republic and Poland. Władisław Gomułka and Walter Ulbricht preferred a stronger, more efficient, and more closely knit organization, better equipped for a confrontation with NATO.⁴⁴ A supranational Warsaw Pact would, however, have stripped member states of their decision-making power in foreign affairs. The new organizational framework would have favoured the Poles and the East Germans and could have allowed them to arm-twist their Eastern bloc 'partners' into signing the NPT. The leadership in Bucharest feared that they could tie

⁴² Idem, 44.

⁴³ Mastny and Byrne, *A Cardboard Castle*, 28.

⁴⁴ Idem, 27, 30.

Romania's hands with respect to nuclear weapons. So the Romanians objected to this institutional design proposal, claiming that it brought the plague of supranationalism, an imperialist invention, upon the Warsaw Pact.⁴⁵ Therefore, at the meeting of deputy foreign ministers from Warsaw Pact member states in February 1966, the Romanians resorted to their preferred tactic – stalling.⁴⁶

Stalling protected the Romanians against accusations of being outright refusniks. The Soviet leadership answered the RCP's request and sent Leonid Il'ichev, a deputy minister within the MFA, to seek their opinion. On March 18, 1966, Ceaușescu exchanged views with him about the NPT. He focused on the impact the treaty would have on China and France. At that time, French President Charles de Gaulle had just announced France's withdrawal from NATO's integrated military command structure, which both the Romanians and the Soviets welcomed as a positive development the socialist bloc could exploit "to weaken imperialism."⁴⁷ Ceaușescu insisted that signing the NPT, which de Gaulle refused to endorse, could derail French-Soviet rapprochement at a critical

⁴⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 17/1966, Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, February 16, 1966, 15.

⁴⁶ AMAE, 23.9V3/1966, Warsaw Pact, First Directorate, The Meeting of Deputy Foreign Ministers from Warsaw Pact Member States in Berlin, February 10-12, 1966, 63-72 published in Mioara Anton, *Romania și Tratatul de la Varșovia. Conferințele miniștrilor Afacerilor Externe și ale adjuncților lor (1966-1991) Documente Diplomatic Române [Romania and the Warsaw Treaty. Conferences of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and their deputies (1966-1991)]* (Bucharest: Alpha MDN, 2009), 14-21.

⁴⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 20/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Il'ichev, March 18, 1966, 10.

juncture – de Gaulle’s visit to Moscow, planned for June 1966.⁴⁸ Moreover, the treaty could alienate Beijing. Consulting China on non-proliferation might take the edge off Beijing’s opposition to the treaty, Ceaușescu seemed to suggest. “We must start from the interests of the entire communist bloc,” he insisted.⁴⁹ Il’ichev dodged Ceaușescu’s rebukes by reminding him about the Soviet nuclear umbrella, from which Romania benefitted.⁵⁰ The Romanians, however, had every reason to worry: the two superpowers were displaying increasing determination to overcome their differences and sign a non-proliferation treaty.⁵¹ The implications for intra-bloc dynamics could not have escaped Ceaușescu’s eagle eye. If the Soviets were so keen to strike a deal with the Americans above the heads of their allies in such a sensitive area as nuclear energy, how could they be trusted with defending those very allies?

To assuage the Romanians’ concerns, Brezhnev paid an unofficial visit to Romania on May 10–13, 1966, hoping to secure the RCP’s cooperation before the ministers of the armed forces met later that month in Moscow. Brezhnev repeatedly urged Ceaușescu to have faith in the Soviet nuclear umbrella. “If a bomb is dropped on Romania, then in thirty seconds a retaliatory bomb drops

⁴⁸ Idem, 7.

⁴⁹ Idem, 8.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ AMAE, 241ONU/1966, The Performance of Romania’s UN Mission in Geneva in 1966, 18; Hunt, *Into the Bargain*, 224.

on the country in which the first bomb originated,” Brezhnev boasted.⁵² He then hinted at the link between Moscow’s offer of protection and Romania’s willingness to endorse the reforms package:

The USSR has nuclear weapons and took upon itself the task of defending the entire [communist] community with its atomic weapons. This, of course, will happen if the enemy wages nuclear war on us. [...] This is how the Chief of Staff, in its operational planning, calculates the strikes against the enemy which will be carried out over the territory of the German Democratic Republic, Poland and Hungary.⁵³

If Ceausescu wanted a functional Soviet nuclear umbrella, able to protect all members of the Warsaw Pact including Romania, then he should not stand in the way of the reform package, Brezhnev implied. The Romanians’ counterproposal caused great concern in Moscow and in the other Warsaw Pact capitals: Bucharest wanted the position of Commander of the Warsaw Pact Unified Armed Forces to be held by each member state on a rotating basis.⁵⁴ Such a mechanism would mean having a non-Soviet finger on the big red button.⁵⁵

The Romanians’ proposals echoed Eisenhower’s late 1950s plans to appoint a European officer to the position of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) within NATO.⁵⁶ The MLF envisaged the remote possibility that non-

⁵² ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 72/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, May 12, 1966, 122-123.

⁵³ *Idem*, 124.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 214.

US officers would end up in charge of some nuclear weapons deployed on a group of submarines and warships. By the mid-1960s, there was no NATO equivalent for the Romanian rotational command proposal; a non-American officer as SACEUR, in charge of all NATO military forces, including all nuclear forces deployed for NATO operations, was no longer conceivable for Washington.

The USSR was confronted with an Eastern bloc version of the ‘German Nuclear Question’, posed by its Second World War foe – Romania. Ceaușescu’s proposals suggested that general disarmament represented little more than a smoke screen for Romania’s real reasons for opposing and obstructing the NPT: keeping the nuclear option in its pocket, including the possibility of ‘acquisition through transfer’. Brezhnev left Bucharest disconcerted. He had less than two weeks to undo the intricate web of excuses and pretexts that the Romanians had been weaving for years to resist the reforms. Unsurprisingly, he failed to do so, and at the meeting of the ministers of the armed forces in Moscow, Romanian obstructionism again blocked any progress on reforms. All other Warsaw Pact members agreed on the final texts of the status for the unified command.⁵⁷ Because of Romania’s opposition, no resolution for the new organizational structure of the Warsaw Pact could be adopted.

⁵⁷ Mastny and Byrne, *A Cardboard Castle*, 32.

To outmanoeuvre Ceaușescu, Brezhnev resorted to copying the Romanians' own tactics. The RCP leadership had made a habit of using Moscow's past initiatives to steer the debate on a particular subject. The RCP averted Moscow's criticism by claiming that all Romania aimed for was to translate desiderata set by the USSR into reality. Brezhnev applied this method in June 1966, at the conference of foreign ministers from Warsaw Pact countries. He took an earlier Romanian initiative on European security and presented it as the basis for foreign policy coordination reforms. In what the head of the Romanian delegation, Deputy Foreign Minister Mircea Malița, regarded as the mother of all diplomatic negotiations, the Romanians worked around the clock to draft a declaration that both Moscow and Bucharest found acceptable, but which did not tie the RCP's hands in any way.⁵⁸ The Romanians once again outsmarted the Soviets. The RCP successfully resisted being brought into the fold because, according to Mastny and Byrne, the Kremlin wanted to keep unity on more urgent issues – relations with West Germany, the dispute with China, and the Vietnam War. But unbeknownst to the CPSU, the Romanians were days away from suffering a major setback.

⁵⁸ Mircea Malița, *Tablouri din Războiul Rece. Memorii ale unui diplomat român* [Cold War Snapshots. The Memoirs of a Romanian Diplomat] (Bucharest: Editura C. H. Beck, 2007), 132.

Losing China

Until July 1966, Romania's close ties to China had paid off handsomely. The Sino-Soviet split proved a valuable instrument with which to fend off Polish and East German demands for greater integration among East European countries and for signing the NPT. But after successfully deflecting these centripetal pressures by playing the China card, the Romanians now found themselves in a cul-de-sac.

Sino-Romanian relations went awry on the occasion of Zhou Enlai's visit to Romania June 16–23, 1966. In the Chinese view, Romania's position coincided with USSR's on too many issues.⁵⁹ Just like the CPSU, the RCP had committed several 'sins' in the eyes of the Chinese: for example, the RCP did not refrain from engaging with US 'imperialists' in various international forums, such as the ENDC meetings in Geneva.⁶⁰ The Chinese counted these negotiations as evidence of collusion with the US against Beijing. The Romanians were also too close to the Soviets, whom Zhou Enlai accused of betraying Marxism-Leninism. Ceaușescu rebuffed Zhou's charge:

⁵⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 87/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Zhou Enlai, June 17, 1966, 74.

⁶⁰ Zhou Enlai's accusations were well founded. As the Soviet diplomat Roland Timerbaev notes in his book, the Romanian delegation was known to inform Western delegations about what happened at the meetings of socialist countries. Roland Timerbaev, *Rossiya i iadernoe nerasprostranenie: 1945-1968* [Russia and nuclear non-proliferation: 1945-1968] (Moscow: Nauka, 1999), 256.

“I do not agree with comrade Zhou Enlai that the Soviet Union betrayed socialism.”⁶¹ The Romanians pleaded with the Chinese to end the public polemics and to reconcile themselves with the Soviets. When Zhou Enlai refused to give in, Ceaușescu swiftly proceeded to censor the speeches that the Chinese premier wanted to deliver to the Romanian masses gathered to receive him, a gesture which the Chinese did not take lightly.⁶² The RCP leadership also cancelled public rallies where the Chinese could have attacked the Soviet Union, leaving the Chinese delegation deeply offended.⁶³ The China card slipped from Romania’s hand.⁶⁴ A cooled Romanian-Chinese friendship meant that the RCP could no longer invoke the need for unity with the Chinese so as to block East German, Polish, and Soviet pressures for convergence on non-proliferation.

Bucharest could not have fallen out with Beijing at a worse time. Only weeks after Ceaușescu’s spat with Zhou Enlai, the Warsaw Pact was scheduled to have its Political Consultative Committee (PCC) meeting in Bucharest. The East Germans had channelled all their efforts into blocking Romania’s proposals to reform the Warsaw Pact, which involved a nuclear sharing mechanism more

⁶¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 87/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Zhou Enlai, June 22, 1966, 113-114.

⁶² ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 88/1966, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraș and Zhou Enlai, June 17, 1966, 2-9.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 127/1966, Minutes of conversation between the Romanian delegation led by Ion Gheorghe Maurer and Paul Niculescu Mizil and the North Vietnamese leadership, Pham Van Dong, Nguyen Duy Trinh, Xuan Thuy, October 3, 1966, 7.

far-reaching than the MLF.⁶⁵ After the quarrel with Zhou Enlai, failing to win the debate on the institutionalization of the Eastern military alliance would have left Romania almost entirely isolated. In the weeks before the meeting, the Romanians became increasingly nervous about any showdown with the other Warsaw Pact members. Luckily, Maurer, the Romanian premier, came up with a solution. A lawyer by training, Maurer put together a convincing case against the structural reforms favoured by the rest of the Warsaw Pact members.

The Warsaw Pact PCC meeting did quickly degenerate into acrimonious exchanges between Ceaușescu, whom the other Warsaw Pact leaders saw as “young and inexperienced,” and Soviet loyalists.⁶⁶ Ceaușescu’s opening salvo, however, was a decoy. In private consultations with the CPSU leadership on July 4, the RCP brought out the big guns. Ceaușescu, Maurer, and Niculescu-Mizil launched volley after volley of carefully prepared arguments which put the Soviets on the defensive.⁶⁷ They pointed out that intergovernmentalism was intrinsic to communism; it was capitalism that relied on supranationalism, which the Romanian leader equated with subjugation.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, *Relații Externe*, 87/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Zhou Enlai, June 17, 1966, 25.

⁶⁶ Mastny and Byrne, *A Cardboard Castle*, 32.

⁶⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, *Relații Externe*, 94/1966, Vol. II, Minutes of conversation between the Romanian Communist Party leadership and the CPSU leadership, July 4, 1966, 168; also in Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered*, 171.

⁶⁸ *Idem*, 155-176.

Although the East Germans and Poles kept pushing for the reforms package, the Romanians stood their ground by inventing a link between ideology and the institutional design of the Warsaw Pact, arguing that to coerce Romania into endorsing the NPT draft put forward by the East Germans would be tantamount to being a bad communist. The solution proposed by the Romanian leadership seemed simple, at least at first glance: improved contacts, consultations, and better preparation of the PCC's sessions.⁶⁹ Bucharest succeeded in mothballing negotiations on reforms. Moreover, the Romanians dealt a blow to the East German and Polish proposals by eventually winning the Soviets to their side. By pointing out that the Kremlin would not like its East European partners to decide what the USSR should do, they convinced Moscow that intergovernmentalism better addressed Soviet interests. This appeal to the ideological implications of institutional design allowed the Romanians to stall the negotiations on the NPT by outflanking ideological allies.

Troublesome Allies and Superpower Collusion

Brezhnev paid heed to Ceaușescu's demands for additional exchanges and consultations, and sent his aides to capitals around Eastern Europe to discuss

⁶⁹Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered*, 184-187.

non-proliferation. Seeking the opinion of Warsaw Pact allies produced the desired outcome – a common line for socialist countries in Eastern Europe.⁷⁰ Yet, once again, the Romanians took exception to this. They actually wanted not to prevent the spread of the atom, but to facilitate it, to their own advantage. Developments in Geneva, where the NPT was being negotiated, did not look auspicious, as the superpowers did their best to close every loophole in the non-proliferation treaty. On August 9, 1966, the US delegation tabled a draft which banned peaceful nuclear explosions (PNEs), given that they did not differ technically from military nuclear explosions.⁷¹ This proposal created an uproar amongst third-wave proliferators, all of which were developing countries. They claimed PNEs had many economic applications, from large-scale excavation projects for canals and harbours to hydrocarbons exploration. Prohibiting PNEs would stunt their economic development, they argued.

The Romanians were also scandalized, but decided to put their time and effort into closed-door diplomacy in Geneva and into pressurising the Soviet leadership in bilateral meetings.⁷² On these occasions, the Romanians asked for nuclear assistance, both civilian and military. In September 1966, Ceaușescu

⁷⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 113/1967, Minutes of conversation between Corneliu Mănescu and A. Soldatov, February 27-28, 1967, 18.

⁷¹ United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *International Negotiations on the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, Publication 48 (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1969), xii.

⁷² AMAE, 241ONU/1966, The Performance of Romania's UN Mission in Geneva in 1966, 18.

insinuated that the USSR should share its military nuclear secrets with Romania.⁷³ The Romanians' insistence on nuclear technology transfers, together with their desire to be in charge of the nuclear capabilities of the Warsaw Pact through a rotating command scheme, suggested further that the RCP was toying with the idea of nuclear weapons.

The Kremlin realized it had serious reason to worry. At the meeting of the CPSU Central Committee in December 1966, Brezhnev reported that Romania had embarked on its own path and that the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party was criticising the Soviet leadership and the CPSU.⁷⁴ Romania's frustration can to be understood in the context of Moscow's stringent nuclear exports policy and its unyielding position on nuclear sharing within the Warsaw Pact. Nuclear weapons – or better said, their absence – seemed to lie at the heart of the most important decisions and actions undertaken by the Romanian leadership. Brezhnev's point about Bucharest's self-reliance suggests that the Kremlin had figured out the course Ceaușescu planned for the Romanian nuclear programme.

⁷³ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 113/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Arvīds Pelše, September 7, 1966, 11.

⁷⁴ RGANI, fond 2, opis 3, delo 45, Report about the foreign policy of the USSR and the struggle for the unity of the communist movement, in the XXIII Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, December 12-13 1966, 32-33.

In the strategic thinking of the Soviets and Americans, small powers such as Romania, armed with nuclear weapons, would pose a threat to both superpowers. And as they realized that non-proliferation represented an important area of overlap in their national security interests, they both mounted increasing pressure on their allies to give up the nuclear military option. Despite the minimal progress made in the first half of 1966, they agreed to hold private discussions at the 21st session of the UN General Assembly in September and October 1966.⁷⁵ Alexei Kosygin, the Soviet Premier, pointed out that although détente with the United States would not be possible while the Vietnam War continued, certain agreements might be reached prior to a relaxation of tensions, including a non-proliferation agreement.⁷⁶ The US, eager to gain some momentum on the treaty, started to show signs that the days of the MLF, or at least the hardware option, were numbered.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Hunt, *Into the Bargain*, 238.

⁷⁶ Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid*, 265-266.

⁷⁷ *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. XI, Arms Control and Disarmament, Memorandum from the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson, September 2, 1966, 354-356. The hardware dimension of the MLF implied the physical presence of non-US officers on nuclear-armed submarines and warships. The software component of the MLF, whose foundation US Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara created in 1965, involved the Nuclear Planning Group, a forum for all NATO members to deliberate on the role of nuclear weapons in the alliance's deterrence policy. Decision-making power on the use of nuclear weapons ultimately rested with the President of the United States, which Johnson's advisers hoped would reassure Moscow and oil the wheels of Soviet-American détente. Seth A. Johnston, *How NATO Endures: An Institutional Analysis* (DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 2012), 167-171; Andrew Priest, "From hardware to software: The end of the MLF and the rise of the Nuclear Planning Group," in Andreas Wenger, Christian Nuenlist, and Anna Locher, eds. *Transforming NATO in the Cold War challenges beyond deterrence in the 1960s* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 148-161.

To Washington's satisfaction, the Soviet leadership welcomed the change in the US position. When Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko met with US President Lyndon Johnson in October 1966, the two made considerable progress on the issue of non-proliferation. The usually morose Gromyko – who had earned the epithet 'Mr Nyet' (Mr No) for his frequent vetoes of initiatives at the UN in the 1940s – adopted a much more forthcoming posture. "The Soviet Union was ready to sign an agreement in two weeks when an agreed text was achieved," the Soviet top diplomat vowed.⁷⁸ Johnson's favourable response to the Soviet overture signalled there was room for convergence. These first joint steps towards an agreement confirmed the pessimism of non-nuclear-weapon states in Europe that the NPT would be concluded at their expense.

All Roads Go to Moscow

By the beginning of 1967, the US and the USSR had overcome one of their most significant hurdles – the nuclear-sharing arrangement within NATO – and started to turn their attention towards the objections raised by developing countries. Shelving the MLF proposal, policy-makers in Washington remarked, could have devastating political consequences inside NATO, especially in terms of the US-

⁷⁸ *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. XI, Arms Control and Disarmament, Memorandum of conversation between President Lyndon Johnson and Andrei Gromyko, October 10, 1966, 386.

FRG relationship.⁷⁹ However, such a move actually improved relations with the USSR, at a point in time when Washington realized that in order to find a peaceful solution to the Vietnam War, it needed Moscow's support.⁸⁰ From the Soviet point of view, Washington's decision to drop the MLF facilitated the consolidation of the status quo and the permanent abandonment of revisionist tendencies in the FRG.⁸¹

The Kremlin's volte-face stemmed from the different approach – Ostpolitik – which the new government in Bonn was adopting. All political players had to adapt in some way or other to this changing perspective in Europe's East-West balance. The Romanians played an important role in changing Soviet attitudes towards Bonn. Until Bonn's March 1966 'peace note', the Eastern bloc followed the line designed by the Poles and the East Germans regarding the German Question on the recognition of the Oder-Neisse border and of the GDR. Any move undertaken by the Soviets to deal directly with the FRG was denounced by Warsaw and East Berlin as an act of betrayal. They both feared that Moscow

⁷⁹ Leopoldo Nuti, *La sfida nucleare. La politica estera italiana e le armi atomiche, 1945-1991* [The Nuclear Challenge. Italian Foreign Policy and Nuclear Weapons, 1945-1991] (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007), 289-291; Hal Brands, "Non-Proliferation and the Dynamics of the Middle Cold War: The Superpowers, the MLF, and the NPT," in *Cold War History* Vol. 7, No. 3 (2007), 408-410.

⁸⁰ Francis J. Gavin, "Nuclear proliferation and non-proliferation during the Cold War," in Melvyn Leffler, Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. II, *Détente* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 407; Nuti, *La sfida nucleare*, 311.

⁸¹ *International Negotiations*, xiii; RGANI, fond 2, opis 3, delo 45, Report about the foreign policy of the USSR and the struggle for the unity of the communist movement, in the XXIII Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, December 12-13 1966, 23, 33.

might strike a deal with the FRG at Poland's and East Germany's expense.⁸² But the Soviets felt trapped in Ulbricht's and Gomulka's geopolitical straightjacket, which prevented the USSR from developing advantageous commercial relations with West Germany. Romania claimed that giving Ostpolitik a chance meant improving the security climate in Europe. At the July 1966 meeting of the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee, held in Bucharest, the Romanian leadership made sure that the final declaration adopted by the participants at this gathering would "not primarily be directed against West Germany, but in favour of more diplomatic contacts between all European countries, including the FRG."⁸³ The document, which became known as the Bucharest Declaration, contributed to paving the way for the normalization of relations between West Germany and Eastern Europe, and allowed the Romanian leadership to justify its recognition of the FRG on January 31, 1967.⁸⁴ Romania's initiative prompted other countries, such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia, to moderate their bellicose rhetoric toward Bonn and to normalize relations with the FRG.⁸⁵ For the Soviets, the non-proliferation corollary of Romania's daredevil move sounded reasonable:

⁸² Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered*, 177.

⁸³ *Idem*, 182.

⁸⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 3/1967, Minutes of conversation between Ambassador Basov and Nicolae Ceaușescu, January 25, 1967, 3.

⁸⁵ Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered*, 193.

if West Germany felt less threatened by its Eastern European neighbours, it would be less inclined to pursue nuclear weapons.⁸⁶

The improvements in the political and strategic situation in Europe pushed the US and the USSR ever closer to one another on the language of the NPT draft. Private discussions helped them find common formulations on Article I and Article II of the treaty, namely on the non-acquisition and non-transfer clauses.⁸⁷ The Americans managed to get Moscow on board on the need to prohibit peaceful nuclear explosions, which both infuriated and alarmed Bucharest.⁸⁸ The Soviets' move confirmed the Romanians' worst fears about the two superpowers colluding to institute nuclear apartheid.

Yet, even after the MLF died out and the superpowers started converging on the core articles of the NPT, the German Question continued to shape the negotiations. At stake was the issue of positive and negative security guarantees – the extension of the nuclear umbrella to cover non-nuclear-weapon states and the principle of not using nuclear weapons against NNWS. In February 1966, in the NPT talks, Kosygin had tabled a formal proposal through which the Soviet Union vowed not to use nuclear weapons against NNWS. Romania welcomed Kosygin's proposal, because it attenuated the sharp difference between the

⁸⁶ Mastny and Byrne, *A Cardboard Castle*, 42.

⁸⁷ *International Negotiations*, xiii.

⁸⁸ *Idem*, xii.

nuclear ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots.’ But the Americans refused to take a ‘non-use’ pledge because doing so would have weakened the US nuclear deterrent. The Soviets failed to apply pressure on the US to accept the Kosygin Proposal. Since Moscow did not take into account Romania’s demands, Bucharest decided to stall negotiations at the ENDC. Before the session beginning on February 21, 1967, the Romanian delegation in Geneva received instructions to decline signing a treaty draft, “invoking the lack of mandate.”⁸⁹

To calm down the Romanians, Brezhnev sent another envoy to Bucharest. On February 27, 1967, A. Soldatov met with Foreign Minister Corneliu Mănescu and the Deputy Foreign Minister, Mircea Malița, to discuss the latest NPT draft. The exchange focused on security assurances and safeguards. The security assurances question ended quickly, as, from the outset, the Soviet envoy rebuffed Mănescu’s plea to insist on security assurances from the US. As far as safeguards were concerned, the Romanians launched a barrage of questions and requests for clarification. Safeguards, the Romanians argued, limited the access of developing countries to nuclear energy. The provision on safeguards was first introduced in the American NPT draft of 1965. It was meant to insure, through rigorous inspections, that nuclear facilities and materials from a civilian programme were not diverted to military purposes. In discussions with Western suppliers, Romania

⁸⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 21/1967, Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, February 15, 1967, 4.

claimed to accept safeguards, but behind closed doors the RCP leadership vilified the proposal, portraying it as a pair of shackles meant to keep importers of nuclear technology dependent on suppliers. Mănescu and Malița grilled Soldatov on the inspections regime, urging him to convey to the leadership in Moscow that “the peaceful uses of nuclear energy must be available to everyone, without discrimination.”⁹⁰ What the Romanians wanted was for inspections to be carried out not on peaceful nuclear activities but solely on military nuclear activities, a provision which all nuclear powers found objectionable.

Also, the leadership in Bucharest knew that the devil was in the details. The US initially requested that *all* peaceful nuclear activities be subjected to inspections. Such an inspections regime would go well beyond existing practices. At that time, safeguards were limited to inspections on nuclear technology and materials transferred between suppliers and buyers. Whatever facilities countries could build and put into operation on their own fell outside the purview of the regime in place in 1967. The US proposal would have expanded the scope of inspections to include indigenously developed technologies. To assuage the Romanians, Soldatov pointed out that the US had dropped its request that all peaceful nuclear activities would undergo inspections.⁹¹ He downplayed the

⁹⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 113/1967, Minutes of conversation between Corneliu Mănescu and A. Soldatov, February 27, 1967, 23.

⁹¹ *Idem*, 24.

importance of this issue by adding that safeguards were mentioned only in the preamble of the treaty and it was not clear what form they would take. But the Romanians sensed the Soviets were being disingenuous. In the fall of 1966, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the GDR agreed to permit inspections on their territory as long as such measures would also apply to NATO and the FRG.⁹² Given the intrusive nature of these controls, Prague, Warsaw, and East Berlin would not have taken such an initiative without Moscow's acquiescence. So while Soldatov pretended that Bucharest's requests could be accommodated, it seemed that the Kremlin was preparing to strike a deal with the Americans over the Romanians' heads.

Because the meeting with Soldatov failed to produce the desired results, Ceaușescu personally went to Moscow on a secret trip in March 1967. He urged Brezhnev to change the articles of the draft treaty dealing with the peaceful use of nuclear energy, so as to prevent the US from interfering in the internal affairs of socialist countries by restricting their peaceful use of nuclear research and their ability to perform nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes.⁹³ In addition, Romania pleaded with the Soviet Union to change the wording of the draft so as to make the matter of safeguards more specific. More clarity on inspections would

⁹² *Idem*, 19.

⁹³ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 14/1967, Minutes of conversation between the Romanian Communist Party delegation and the CPSU delegation, March 17, 1967, 11, 13, 31.

prevent the American imperialists from introducing their own control methods and tampering with the nuclear programmes of socialist countries.⁹⁴

Now, in a bout of honesty, the Romanians disclosed to their Soviet counterparts their actual reasons for opposing the NPT. Maurer showed that by signing the NPT, Romania would self-evidently tie its own hands and would give up the possibility of acquiring a nuclear weapon in the future.⁹⁵ “Romania does not have in mind to build nuclear weapons because it cannot do so. If it could, it would probably try,” Maurer confessed.⁹⁶ After learning of Romania’s nuclear ambitions, Moscow adopted a more inclusive approach towards Bucharest on matters related to the NPT. In April 1967, Soviet and Romanian foreign ministry officials joined forces to elaborate a draft treaty that both Bucharest and Moscow could agree with.⁹⁷ The Soviets took some of Romania’s proposals on board, but Bucharest’s key demands about safeguards and security assurances were left unanswered.⁹⁸ For instance, the draft submitted by the US and the USSR at the ENDC conference in Geneva in May 1967 included a provision on inspections being carried out by the IAEA, which, the Soviets claimed, had been put forward

⁹⁴ *Idem*, 12.

⁹⁵ *Idem*, 68.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 52/1967, Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, April 11, 1967, 9-18.

⁹⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 70/1967, Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, May 16, 1967, 10.

at Romania's behest. But the safeguards article did not reflect the actual Romanian request that inspections be carried out on military nuclear activities, including those on US military bases in the FRG, a provision which would have torpedoed the NPT.⁹⁹

Seeing that bilateral talks with the Soviets yielded so little, the Romanians understood that their battle against the NPT had to be taken to the next level – the ENDC.¹⁰⁰ But at the Geneva negotiations, Bucharest was left with hostility from both NATO and Warsaw Pact members; as allies, they had only a motley crew of non-aligned countries and nuclear threshold states, which could raise suspicions about the reasons for Bucharest's opposition to the NPT. So when the two superpowers introduced identical but separate drafts to the ENDC on August 24, 1967, the Romanians put themselves on the same side of the barricade as Italy, the UK, Sweden, Mexico, Egypt, Nigeria, and Brazil, putting forward amendments to the treaty.¹⁰¹ They opposed the drafts on several grounds: they demanded security assurances against nuclear blackmail, called for effective disarmament measures, urged the NWS to implement checks on the progress of non-proliferation, and asked that safeguards and inspections be less severe on

⁹⁹ *Idem*, 18-20.

¹⁰⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 104/1967, Romania at the ENDC, June 22, 1967, 69.

¹⁰¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 2/1968, Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, January 15, 1968, 23.

NNWS than on NWS.¹⁰² Worried about the damage Romania's activity at the ENDC could inflict on the Warsaw Pact's stance as a whole, Brezhnev decided to invite Ceaușescu for an unofficial visit to Moscow in December 1967.

The General Secretary of the CPSU hoped that by providing Romania a nuclear power plant (NPP), which the Romanians had been requesting since 1960, he would win Bucharest over.¹⁰³ According to the terms of this nuclear technology transfer proposal, the Romanians had to purchase the fuel for the NPP from the Soviet Union, which would cut off their access to a uranium bomb. Also, Romania had to return all the spent fuel to the USSR for reprocessing, which meant that they could not build a plutonium bomb with the materials supplied by the Soviets. The Soviets' offer was supposed to serve two purposes: first, to reassure the Romanians that the NPT would not result in a state of atomic apartheid; and second, to give Moscow an angle into Ceaușescu's nuclear ambitions. Brezhnev's proposal followed logic similar to that of Atoms for Peace: stemming the nuclear tide by making peaceful nuclear technology available. Such an arrangement would have allowed the Soviet Union to control the sensitive parts of the Romanian nuclear fuel cycle (i.e., uranium enrichment and spent fuel reprocessing). At first glance, the Romanians' ability to persuade the Soviets to

¹⁰² NARA, RG 59, CFPF, Political and Defense, INR Report: Romanian Friendship-with-all diplomacy and the NPT, February 28, 1968, DEF 18-6, Folder 2/21/68.

¹⁰³ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 101/1967, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, December 15, 1967, 62-63.

supply them with atomic assistance by invoking the ‘right’ to peacefully use nuclear energy appears to corroborate the institutional hypothesis discussed in the Introduction. But subsequent developments suggest otherwise. After Brezhnev’s proposal, Ceaușescu continued resisting the NPT. He made a last-ditch attempt to derail the treaty right before the submission deadline on March 15, 1968.

At the March 6–7, 1968, PCC meeting in Sofia, which Romania had been trying to convene for over a year, Ceaușescu delivered a point-by-point rebuttal of the NPT, placing great emphasis on disarmament, safeguards, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and a few procedural issues such as review conferences, amendments, and the duration of the treaty.¹⁰⁴ Knowing that he placed great value on private, bilateral encounters, Brezhnev and Kosygin took the RCP General Secretary aside and tried to dissuade him from adopting such an intransigent approach. Ceaușescu’s defence that he was “just trying to improve the treaty” irritated the Soviets. Brezhnev and Kosygin saw right through Romania’s opposition to the NPT: “You [Ceaușescu] are talking about fighting [to improve the treaty] as if we [the Soviets] fell down from the sky and did not know what all this meant.”¹⁰⁵ Ceaușescu’s continued refusal to sign the NPT

¹⁰⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 38/1968, Minutes of the Political Consultative Committee Meeting in Sofia, March 6, 1968, 27-40.

¹⁰⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 38/1968, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Ion Gheorghe Maurer with Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin, March 6, 1968, 118.

made it clear to Moscow that the Romanians had more than the peaceful uses of the atom in mind and that it was possible that any materials transferred to Romania could be diverted to military purposes.

As the Romanians were trying to sabotage the NPT at the ENDC in Geneva and then at the United Nations, the Soviets decided to withdraw their technology transfer offer.¹⁰⁶ But Moscow knew that an outright refusal would make the Romanians even more determined to get the A-bomb. Instead they resorted to postponing the deal.¹⁰⁷ Ceaușescu kept sending envoys to Moscow to check on the technology transfer that Brezhnev had half-heartedly approved in December 1967, but his plan to sign a deal came to naught.¹⁰⁸ The Soviets were fed up with Ceaușescu, whom they rightly viewed as a difficult interlocutor.¹⁰⁹ Having painted himself into a corner, the RCP General Secretary decided to sign the NPT on July 1, 1968, along with all the other members of the Warsaw Pact.¹¹⁰ The Romanians left the NPT negotiations table empty-handed. Several years later, Ceausescu explained his rationale for signing the treaty:

¹⁰⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 74/1968, Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, May 6, 1968, 16; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 101/1967, Letter from Alexandru Bîrlădeanu to V. Novikov, April 24, 1968, 83-84.

¹⁰⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 101/1967, Letter from Alexandru Bîrlădeanu to V. Novikov, April 24, 1968, 83-84.

¹⁰⁸ Malița, *Tablouri din Războiul Rece*, 146.

¹⁰⁹ Rudolf G. Pikhoya, *Sovetskii Soiuz: istoriia vlasti 1945-1991* [The Soviet Union: The History of Power 1945-1991] (Moscow: RAGS, 1998), 264.

¹¹⁰ Albania refused to sign the NPT, but it had been effectively suspended from the Warsaw Pact in the early 1960s.

Romania has greatly praised the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, but this treaty did not solve anything, and internally, we disapproved of it, but for political interests we thought that with or without us, the treaty would have been signed anyway; we had not yet decided to produce nuclear weapons and so we thought to ourselves: when we have the capability to produce them, with or without the treaty, if we decide to produce them, we will produce them. In politics you cannot always applaud what you like.¹¹¹

Conclusion

This chapter examined Romania's unsuccessful attempts to advance its nuclear programme by manipulating various institutional settings – the ENDC, the UN, and the Warsaw Pact – in which the fate of the Non-Proliferation Treaty was discussed. If the leadership in Bucharest had made effective use of the institutional lever analysed earlier in this thesis, we would have seen Romania successfully acquiring nuclear technology by blackmailing suppliers with its opposition to the NPT. Indeed, Romania fought tooth and nail against the treaty. It used Beijing's position on non-proliferation to resist pressures from the other members of the Warsaw Pact to sign a treaty early on. Bucharest stressed on the need for the Eastern bloc to patch up its relationship with China, and so it rebuffed any proposals that did not include the impossible Chinese demand for general disarmament. The China card also allowed Romania to block a reforms package for the Warsaw Pact that would have facilitated the adoption of the

¹¹¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 174/1975, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Abdel Mohsen Abu Meyzer, September 25, 1975, 28.

treaty by subjecting Bucharest's interests to those of the majority. Instead of caving in, Ceaușescu put forward a set of counterproposals which would have undermined the non-transfer article of the NPT by allowing non-Soviet military officers to control the nuclear forces deployed under Warsaw Pact command. All these measures were aimed at maintaining Romania's room for manoeuvre in the nuclear arena, or, in other words, at allowing the leadership in Bucharest to pursue atomic weapons if they deemed it necessary to do so.

As the Introduction has pointed out, neo-liberal institutionalists argue that suppliers offer atomic assistance to dissuade other countries from acquiring nuclear weapons. Instead, the story of Romania's position towards the NPT points in the opposite direction: the more adamant Ceaușescu appeared about not signing the treaty, the less inclined the Soviets were to sell him the requested technology. Because the Romanian leader did not show any signs of being mollified by Brezhnev's promise of a nuclear power plant, the Soviet leadership realized that Romania would eschew the grand bargain implied in the NPT: foregoing nuclear weapons in exchange for enjoying the peaceful uses of atomic energy. As there was no enforcement body to coerce the Soviet Union to keep its promise, Moscow could apply a 'denial by postponement' non-proliferation policy, perpetually delaying the nuclear power plant deal with Romania. Power politics influenced the outcome of these negotiations much more than institutions did.

The Soviets proved to be true believers in the precept that the strong do what they will, while the weak do what they must. It seemed hard, if not impossible, for institutions to shape outcomes. Because of Ceaușescu's intransigence and his unwillingness to give Moscow what it wanted (i.e., a strong endorsement of the NPT), the Soviets withheld nuclear assistance to Bucharest, considerably delaying the Romanian nuclear programme. The next chapter will show how much of a difference political manoeuvring can make and how suppliers can be won over by addressing their needs and requests.

Chapter Four: Peace for Atoms I. The Packers Channel in the Vietnam War and the American-Romanian Nuclear Cooperation Agreement, 1967–1969

In this chapter, I argue that in the 1960s, Romania successfully traded its good offices between Washington and Hanoi to secure a nuclear cooperation agreement from the United States. The agreement promised Romania a TRIGA research reactor, 38 kg of highly enriched uranium fuel, and scholarships for Romanian scientists in the US.¹ The agreement represented a reward for Bucharest having functioned as a secret communication channel to Vietnam in 1967 and 1968. Despite failing to deliver any substantive results in its mediations, Romania managed to extract significant benefits from the US, including the green light for a nuclear power plant deal with Canada.

The existing literature claims that it was thanks to Romania's independent position vis-à-vis the USSR that the US, and the West in general, offered

¹ The quantity of HEU the US provided Romania with would have been more than enough for one bomb. A significant quantity (SQ – which the IAEA defines as “the approximate quantity of nuclear material in respect of which, taking into account any conversion process involved, the possibility of manufacturing a nuclear explosive device cannot be excluded”) of uranium is 25 kg. International Atomic Energy Agency, *Against the Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, available at: <https://www.iaea.org/Publications/Booklets/Safeguards/index.html>.

Bucharest atomic assistance.² Newly declassified primary sources indicate that because Romania was a ‘frenemy’ of the US, given its friendship with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the USSR, the ‘independent maverick’ aura which the Romanian Communist Party propaganda apparatus projected in the Western world was not sufficient for Romania to obtain nuclear technology assistance. This is the reason why Bucharest resorted to a ‘mediation for nuclear technology’ quid pro quo, an aspect which has not been analysed either in the literature on Romania’s role in the Vietnam War or in the thin scholarship on the Romanian nuclear programme.³

Dealing with the Devil

By the early 1960s, Bucharest’s apparent divergence from Moscow gave hope to the leadership in Washington that the socialist bloc could be weakened through a ‘divide et impera’ tactic.⁴ In particular, the US policy of differentiation stemmed from the hope that Romania would become the ‘enemy of the enemy’ vis-à-vis Moscow. Washington’s policy of rewarding states which adopted an independent

² Fuhrmann, *Atomic Assistance*, 115-117.

³ Fuhrmann, *Atomic Assistance*, 115-117; Munteanu, “Over the Hills and Far Away,” 64-96.

⁴ NARA, RG 59, SNF, Box 3069, Folder: AE 1-1 Rum-US 1964, Memorandum from Griffith Johnson, William Tyler to the Under Secretary, June [unspecified] 1964; FRUS 1964-1968, Vol. XVII, Eastern Europe, Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Romania, May 16, 1966, 414-416.

line in regards to Moscow influenced Bucharest's nuclear efforts significantly. Even though Romania had the official trappings of a Soviet ally, its independent foreign policy received Western praise for resisting and disturbing Soviet plans for military coordination within the Warsaw Pact.⁵ Bucharest's obstructionism within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance stymied Moscow's programme for economic integration and specialization and gave way to greater trade relations with the West.⁶ Moreover, by publicly denouncing Soviet actions and openly supporting Moscow's rivals, Romania appeared to directly threaten Moscow's interests in various international issues, such as the German Question, the Sino-Soviet split, the Six-Day War, and the invasion of Czechoslovakia.⁷

What the US did not know was that the USSR was aware of Romania's forays into the Western bloc and allowed it as long as the Romanian Communist Party leadership respected one condition: not selling their souls to the devil, as Stalin had put it as early as 1946. In other words, the Kremlin's main request

⁵ *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. XVII, Special Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, February 18, 1965, 37-38.

⁶ *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. XVII, Telegram from the Legation in Romania to the Department of State, Bucharest, May 12, 1964, 387-388; Library and Archives Canada [henceforth LAC], Record Group 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 1, Telegram from the Canadian Delegation to Vienna to the Ministry for External Affairs, September 27, 1966; LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 2, Memorandum to Canadian Ministers, November 7, 1968.

⁷ Richard Nixon Presidential Library [henceforth RNPL], Series II: Trip File, Wilderness Years, File: Bucharest, Romania, March 22 – 23 1967, Box 9, Memorandum of conversation between Former Vice President Nixon and Secretary General Ceaușescu, March 22, 1967, 22; LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 1, Telegram from Campbell to the Ministry for External Affairs, November 23, 1966.

was that the Romanians fend off any Western attempts to impose political conditions in exchange for commercial ties, technology transfers, or loans.⁸ Despite the risks of Western interference in the internal affairs of its satellites, Moscow greatly valued the political, strategic, and economic benefits that the socialist bloc could extract from these ties to Western Europe.⁹

What exactly did Romania want from the international nuclear suppliers it was courting? Bucharest insisted on a natural uranium reactor, which the French and Canadians used, whereas the Soviets, the US, and the UK offered an enriched uranium plant.¹⁰ The Romanian preference for natural uranium reactors reflects both Ceaușescu's desire to keep the nuclear option on the table and the economic logic of his advisers. The economic rationale was based on the fact that

⁸ Stalin's warning referred to American loans and technology. He advised the Romanian leadership to take the loans if the Americans were offering, but he asked Gheorghiu-Dej not to allow the Americans "to impose conditions on you, to damage your sovereignty." ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 28/1946, Minutes of the meeting between the leadership of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Soviet Union, [represented] by Joseph Stalin, Vyacheslav Molotov, Georgy Malenkov, and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Teohari Georgescu, April 2-3, 1946, 1-16. Later on, the same demand was made by Nikita Khrushchev, Stalin's successor to the helm of Soviet power. ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 28/1964, Minutes of the meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, 1964, 75, quoted in Țăranu, *România în Consiliul de Ajutor Economic Reciproc*, 180; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 1/1965, Minutes of the meeting between Romanian Ambassador Mihail Roșianu and Soviet Ambassador Denisov, April 23, 1965, 4.

⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 5/1966, Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, January 19, 1966, 13; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 72/1966, Minutes of the meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, May 11, 1966, 23-25.

¹⁰ Ministère des Affaires Étrangères [Archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs – henceforth MAE], Eastern Europe, Romania, Folder 208, Memorandum from Jean-Louis Pons, French Ambassador to Bucharest, to Maurice Couve de Murville, Minister of Foreign Affairs, December 8, 1966.

a heavy water reactor, using natural uranium, meant that Bucharest would not need supplies guaranteed by the International Atomic Energy Agency, since Romania had its own uranium deposits.¹¹ On the security side, the natural uranium design appealed to Ceaușescu because the IAEA safeguards system did not extend to heavy water plants at that time, reducing foreign interference in Romanian's nuclear programme.¹²

Shopping Around

Between 1963 and 1968, Romania engaged in a flurry of negotiations for nuclear technology from both East and West, without making a firm commitment to any of the potential partners. This phase, which the Canadians called Romania's "shopping around," caused confusion in Western capitals, as no one could tell what Bucharest's next step would be.¹³ The US and the UK were its first stops. In late 1963, Sterling Cole, then the head of the IAEA, paid a visit to Romania. Gheorghe Gaston Marin, the Romanian Deputy Prime Minister and the President of Romania's State Committee for Nuclear Energy, approached Cole about the

¹¹ LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 1, Telegram from G.T. Leist to R.C. Wallace, January 19, 1967; LOC, Manuscript Division, Glenn Seaborg Papers, Romania File, Box 736, Minutes of the meeting with Ambassador Corneliu Bogdan, April 11, 1968.

¹² LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 1, Memorandum from G.M. Schuthe to F.M. Wanklyn, June 26, 1967.

¹³ LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 1, Memorandum from Belgrade to the Canadian Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, September 27, 1966. See also Chapter 5.

possibility of purchasing a 300 MW atomic power reactor from the United States, worth \$75 million.¹⁴ In April 1964, after having left the IAEA and having held private discussions with Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Dr Glenn Seaborg and some members of the Congressional Atomic Energy Committee, Cole brought the matter to the Department of State.¹⁵ To expedite the process, the RWP sent a delegation to Washington. On May 18, 1964, Gaston Marin talked with Averell Harriman, who had played a significant role in the post–World War II settlement regarding Romania.¹⁶ Gaston Marin touched on the issue of Romanian-Soviet nuclear cooperation, rightly thinking that the US would be worried about shipments of Romanian uranium to the USSR. He pointed out that Romania preferred to put its uranium into “generating electric power rather than in fissionable material.”¹⁷ Some members of the Johnson administration took this statement at face value. The political implications of Romania’s position on

¹⁴ NARA, RG 59, SNF, Box 3069, Folder: AE 1-1 Rum-US, Memorandum of conversation [memcon] between Sterling Cole and Llewellyn E. Thompson, April 6, 1964.

¹⁵ Dr Glenn T. Seaborg, the co-discoverer of plutonium, for which he received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1951, was the chairman of the US Atomic Energy Commission from 1961 until 1971. Glenn T. Seaborg, *Stemming the Tide. Arms Control in the Johnson Years* (Lexington, Massachusetts/Toronto: D.C. Heath and Company, 1987), 497. NARA, RG 59, SNF, Box 3069, Folder: AE 1-1 Rum-US, Memcon between Sterling Cole and Llewellyn E. Thompson, April 6, 1964.

¹⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 98/1967, Minutes of the meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Averell Harriman, November 28, 1967, 1-2.

¹⁷ *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. XVII, Memcon between Gheorghe Gaston Marin and Averell Harriman, May 18, 1964, 392.

nuclear energy, especially in relation to the Soviet Union, gave the State Department a good reason to support a nuclear deal with Romania:

The Rumanians had been pursuing a policy of greater and greater independence from the Soviet Union and of liberalization of her internal situation. She had been moving toward closer relationships with the West and had demonstrated a desire to improve relationships with the United States.¹⁸

The view that Romania should be granted nuclear technology for its independent foreign policy also resonated well at the highest level of the Foggy Bottom bureaucracy, and with none other than Secretary of State Dean Rusk. His support seems to have stemmed more from his conviction that Romania was ‘different’ from other East European countries than from informed consultation with other American decision-makers. Rusk rejected evidence which contradicted his assessment of Romania’s position on key international issues, although his knowledge was rather limited.¹⁹ In April 1965, on the occasion of an internal debate among top US officials on whether to transfer sensitive technology to the Romanians, Rusk argued for granting preferential treatment to Bucharest, similar to the US policy towards Yugoslavia and Poland. He believed that Ceaușescu’s ascent to power marked a watershed in the history of Romanian communism,

¹⁸ NARA, RG 59, SNF, Box 3069, Folder: AE 1-1 Rum-US, Memorandum from John Trevithick for the file, July 15, 1964.

¹⁹ *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. XVII, Minutes of the Meeting of the Export Control Review Board, April 1, 1965, 405-413.

which could take Romania closer to the West. On August 11, 1965, Rusk took the Romanian request to the Oval Office, despite opposition from the State Department's European specialists, who suggested that Romania's nuclear reactor purchase offer be shelved.²⁰ With the President briefed on the issue and with the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Controls (CoCom) agreeing to consider sympathetically requests for exceptions to the embargo on power reactors provided that IAEA safeguards would apply, Romania's efforts to obtain American nuclear technology were now building momentum. The remaining obstacles the Americans envisaged included public pressure in the form of picketing, which could force private firms like Westinghouse and General Electric to pull out of a deal with the Romanians; and also foreign competition from Western European countries.²¹

The Soviet Union was factored in as an obstacle as well, since it could prevent Romania from importing Western technology. American policy-makers, however, quickly discarded the possibility that Moscow would block a nuclear technology deal between Romania and Western suppliers. They dwelt a little

²⁰ NARA, RG 59, SNF, Box 3069, Folder: AE 1-1 Rum-US, Memorandum from Anthony M. Solomon to Thomas C. Mann, Nuclear Reactor for Rumania, August 6, 1965; NARA, RG 59, SNF, Box 3069, Folder: AE 1-1 Rum-US, Memorandum from Thomas C. Mann to the President of the United States, August 11, 1965.

²¹ NARA, RG 59, SNF, Box 3069, Folder: AE 1-1 Rum-US, Minutes of the meeting between Chet Holifield, John Conway, Anthony Solomon, Douglas MacArthur II, Gerald Tape, John Palfrey, Charles Thomas, John Hall, Myron Kratzer, Robert Slawson, August 30, 1965.

longer on the potential benefits Moscow could extract from a Romanian-Western deal, but not even those risks seemed to weigh too heavily. US AEC officials showed little concern for a potential transfer of US technology (a pressurized-water reactor) from Romania to the USSR, given that such commercial technology was declassified and that Soviet pressurized-water reactors were already operating. They put their hopes in the reactor construction phase. Provided the reactor was assembled, built, and sealed by American specialists, the Romanians could not have access to the core because of irradiation dangers and could not, therefore, reverse-engineer the technology supplied by the US.²²

A more serious danger resided in the dual-use of nuclear technology, in other words the possibility that Romania would divert its civilian programme to military ends. Surprisingly, however, between 1964 and 1966, the security implications of such a transfer appear only once in the internal deliberations of decision-makers in Washington, despite the fact that intelligence analysis pointed out Romania's capacity to go nuclear.²³ In August 1965, for the first time in the course of the negotiations, the Chairman of the Joint Atomic Energy Committee

²² *Idem*.

²³ R. Murray, "Problems of Nuclear Proliferation outside Europe," December 7, 1964, DDRS, Doc. No. CK3100281620, 1, quoted in Francis J. Gavin, "Same As It Ever Was. Nuclear Alarmism, Proliferation, and the Cold War," in *International Security*, Vol. 34, Issue 3 (Winter 2009/2010), 17.

noted that the US should elicit an agreement from Romania that it would not manufacture nor accept a nuclear weapon on its territory.²⁴

The biggest obstacle, however, lay in US legislation, which restricted nuclear trade with Romania on national security grounds. The US Export Control Act of 1947 provided for the denial of a license where “the President shall determine that such export makes a significant contribution of the military and economic potential of such nation or nations which would prove detrimental to the national security and welfare of the United States.”²⁵ The main stumbling block in this respect, as Ceaușescu himself admitted, was Vietnam, because Romania supported the North Vietnamese with substantial political, economic, and military assistance.²⁶ In the political arena, the Romanians condemned US aggression against Vietnam in international forums such as the UN General Assembly, organized rallies in Bucharest to protest against US bombings in Vietnam, and tried to influence other countries to support North Vietnam’s

²⁴ NARA, RG 59, SNF, Box 3069, Folder: AE 1-1 Rum-US, Minutes of the meeting between Chet Holifield, John Conway, Anthony Solomon, Douglas MacArthur II, Gerald Tape, John Palfrey, Charles Thomas, John Hall, Myron Kratzer, Robert Slawson, August 30, 1965.

²⁵ *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. IX, International Development and Economic Defense Policy; Commodities, Report of the President’s Task Force on Foreign Economic Policy, undated, 473; Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library [henceforth LBJPL], National Security File, National Security Action Memorandums, Box 4, NSAM 304, Action Program for US Relations with East Europe, Legal Framework for Economic Relations with East Europe, June 12, 1964.

²⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 6/1967, Minutes of the meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and US Ambassador Richard H Davis, January 31, 1967, 5.

position.²⁷ Regarding economic aid, the RCP sent food, clothing, and strategic materials like gasoline and other petroleum products.²⁸ The RCP provided hundreds of Vietnamese engineers, workers, and students with training in Romania, covering all their expenses.²⁹

Romanian military aid to North Vietnam included heavy weaponry such as Soviet-made torpedoes, and logistical equipment such as mobile power generators.³⁰ Propping up the North Vietnamese automatically put Romania on an embargo list regarding transfers of sensitive technology, including nuclear reactors. With the Vietnam issue in the way, Romania had little chance of success in its pursuit of Western nuclear technology. Bucharest nevertheless came up with an innovative approach: contributing to the resolution of the Vietnam War by mediating between the Americans and the Vietnamese. The Romanians' inventiveness helped them remain relevant in a context in which the 'maverick' image was no longer enough.

²⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 188/1967, Minutes of the meeting between Romulus Ioan Budura and Ho Tu Truc, December 21, 1967, 40-50.

²⁸ *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. XVII, Minutes of the Meeting of the Export Control Review Board, April 1, 1965, 406.

²⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 187/1966, Note from the Foreign Relations Section, August 10, 1966, 21-31.

³⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 48/1967, Note from the Ministry of the Armed Forces to Nicolae Ceausescu, March 28, 1967, 30-31.

The Mediation

The Romanians sensed that the intermediary role they could play over Vietnam might get them support from the US executive branch.³¹ Mediating between North Vietnam and the US might allow the Johnson administration to make an exception for Romania from the provisions of the Export Control Act. However, Bucharest moved at a surprisingly slow pace on this idea. The US had been probing Bucharest for clues on Vietnam since the fall of 1965. On October 14, Dean Rusk nudged his Romanian counterpart, Corneliu Mănescu, towards the possibility of Romania mediating between the warring parties of the Vietnam War: “If anyone is entitled to thinking of a role which could peacefully solve the Vietnamese issue, then Romania may come to mind.” Rusk asked the Romanian government “not to be deaf to certain significant elements in the evolution of the situation and when it notices a key signal from the Vietnamese, not to block it.”³² The Romanians refused to relay any messages. The RCP continued to supply North Vietnam with aid, to the displeasure of the Johnson administration, which naturally avoided pushing the nuclear deal forward.³³

³¹ LBJPL, Mandatory Review Case # NLJ 94-164, Document # 63c, Central Intelligence Agency, Intelligence Information Cable, Rumanian Diplomats’ Comments on relations with the United States and the Communist World, July 19, 1967, 1-3.

³² ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 4/1965, Minutes of the meeting between Emil Bodnăraș and Liu Phan, October 28, 1965, 227.

³³ NARA, RG 59, SNF, Box 3069, Folder: AE 1-1 Rum-US, Memorandum from Anthony M. Solomon to Thomas C. Mann, Nuclear Reactor for Rumania, August 6, 1965; NARA, RG 59, SNF, Box 3069, Folder: AE 1-1 Rum-US, Memorandum from Thomas C. Mann to the President

Washington tried to convey its message through various other channels in Western Europe and in the socialist camp. Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and to a small extent Czechoslovakia also played an intermediary role in the Vietnam War, alongside the Soviets, French, British, Canadians, and Italians.³⁴ Bucharest's slow reaction reflected the state of uncertainty about its nuclear programme. From late 1965 to late 1966, Romania limited itself to applying pressure on the US to boost trade with Romania and give the go-ahead for the transfer of nuclear technology, without taking any concrete actions to provide Washington with what it wanted. Although the Americans made several attempts to use the Romanian channel to reach the Vietnamese, the Romanians resisted.

In late 1966 and early 1967, a 'mediator-in-denial' phase ensued.³⁵ The Romanians saw that nuclear negotiations were not getting anywhere, so they hinted to the Americans that talks with the Vietnamese would start soon.

of the United States, August 11, 1965; NARA, RG 59, SNF, Box 3069, Folder: AE 1-1 Rum-US, Memorandum of conversation between Harry Jones, Price Longstreet, and Russell Arthur, January 19, 1966.

³⁴ Leopoldo Nuti, "The Center-Left Government in Italy and the Escalation of the Vietnam War," in Andreas W. Daum, Lloyd C. Gardner, Wilfried Mausbach (eds.), *America's War and the World. Vietnam in International and Comparative Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 259-278; Christopher Goscha and Maurice Vaïsse, *La guerre du Vietnam et l'Europe 1963-1973* [The Vietnam War and Europe, 1963-1973] (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 2003); James Hershberg, *Marigold: The Lost Chance for Peace in Vietnam* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press/Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012); Ilya V. Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 96-107; Pierre Journoud, *De Gaulle et le Vietnam, 1945-1969* [De Gaulle and Vietnam, 1945-1969] (Paris: Tallandier, 2011); Zoltán Szóke, "Delusion or Reality? Secret Hungarian Diplomacy during the Vietnam War," in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (2010), 119-180.

³⁵ LBJPL, National Security File, Country File, Europe and the USSR, Rumania and Spain, Box 204, Memorandum for President Johnson from the Acting Secretary of State, June 26, 1967, 2.

However, they insisted that this was their own assessment and that they were not acting as third-party mediators in the conflict. Behind closed doors, the Romanians, taking their cue from the Soviets,³⁶ urged the Vietnamese to adopt the strategy Moscow preferred too: negotiating while fighting.³⁷ The Romanians stopped short of making their preference for negotiations public; they did not want to appear not to be supporting ‘the heroic struggle’ of the North Vietnamese and encouraging capitulation, which is how some Eastern European leaders, like Tito and Gomulka, were seen by the Vietnamese and the Chinese.³⁸

The risks of hinting to the Americans that there was room for negotiations with the Vietnamese were still considerable, as Bucharest could be accused of intervening in the internal affairs of the Vietnam Workers’ Party (VWP), of misrepresenting their position, and ultimately of selling them out. What was

³⁶ Romania’s position on Vietnam evolved from numerous consultations with top Soviet decision-makers, who repeatedly urged the Romanians to assume the role of mediator between Washington and Hanoi. ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 9/1965, Minutes of the meeting between Emil Bodnăraș and Mikhail Suslov, May 10, 1965, 39-45; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 72/1966, Minutes of the meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, May 10-13, 1966, 157. In late 1967, Ceaușescu admitted to Brezhnev that “our position on Vietnam is the same as yours.” ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 101/1967, Minutes of the meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, December 14-15, 1966, 23.

³⁷ The CPSU leadership told the Vietnamese Workers’ Party delegation that “if necessary, negotiations could be dragged on for a long time, meanwhile the Vietnamese could strengthen their position and expose the Americans’ real intentions.” ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 118/1966, Minutes of the meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Soviet Ambassador A.V. Basov, September 19, 1966, 1-7; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 119/1966, Minutes of the meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and the Vietnamese delegation led by Le Thanh Nghi, September 21, 1966, 13-17; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 127/1966, Minutes of the meeting between Ion Gheorghe Maurer, and Paul Niculescu Mizil and Pham Van Dong, October 3-4, 1966, 28-29.

³⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 127/1966, Minutes of the meeting between Ion Gheorghe Maurer, and Paul Niculescu Mizil and Pham Van Dong, October 3-4, 1966, 25.

worse, the subtlety with which the Romanians operated, which was meant to shield them from such accusations, just confused the Americans. On October 22, only a few weeks after a high-level meeting in Hanoi between the Romanian delegation, led by Maurer, and Pham Van Dong, the Vietnamese premier, Mănescu met with Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach, who asked the Romanian official “for an indication as to what North Vietnam would do in response to a prior cessation of bombing by the US” through “your good-offices.”³⁹ On the same day, the Italian Ambassador in Washington, D.C., Sergio Fenoaltea, told Katzenbach that the Romanian Ambassador to Rome had informed the Italians that “the Romanian [government] had concluded that if the US were to suspend [the] bombing of Vietnam, a concrete response from the North Vietnamese would not be lacking.” This statement was too vague for the Americans, who, according to Department of State records, “showed some scepticism.” Katzenbach insisted that the Romanians be pushed hard for more information and be made aware that this was “not a game.”⁴⁰

³⁹ USUN New York 1777 to SecState (SECRET-NODIS), 22 October 1966, Refs: USUN’s 1764 and Deptel 69440, published in George C. Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War. The Negotiating Volumes of the Pentagon Papers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 773-774.

⁴⁰ *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. IV, Vietnam 1966, Memcon between Acting Secretary Nicholas Katzenbach, Robert H. Miller, Viet-Nam Working Group and Italian Ambassador Sergio Fenoaltea [sic], October 22, 1966, 767-769.

The Romanians tried again on January 23, when the US Ambassador to Bucharest, Richard Davis, went for the annual bear hunt with Foreign Minister Mănescu and Chivu Stoica, who was the President of the State Council at the time. On the way back to Bucharest, the two Romanian officials told Davis that they “were now giving him the ‘signal’ which the Americans had been waiting for from Hanoi,” but later on Mănescu admitted that he had no specific knowledge of this signal.⁴¹ It is possible that the Romanians acted again without a mandate from the North Vietnamese, so as to win over the Americans.

Mănescu’s exchange with Davis prompted a meeting between the American Ambassador and Ceaușescu on January 31, 1967, in which Davis sought to elucidate the willingness of the Vietnamese to enter talks. The RCP Secretary General took the opportunity to press for closer economic ties between the US and Romania, pointing out that although the Vietnam War was an obstacle, Romania was working hard to solve the conflict. He told the American Ambassador that Hanoi “does not wish to have intermediaries but would like to talk directly with you.” Ceaușescu applied the mediator-in-denial approach: he agreed to relay the message that Washington wanted to talk to the leadership in Hanoi, but then quickly added that doing so did not mean Romania wanted to

⁴¹ Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy*, 775-777.

be a mediator between Hanoi and Washington.⁴² Ceaușescu was reluctant to officially accept the role of mediator between the Americans and the North Vietnamese, both because he did not have a mandate from the VWP and because he feared the reaction of the Chinese. Contrary to the popular view that third-party mediators are neutral and impartial, Ceaușescu admitted that no intermediary gets involved in negotiations without a vested interest.⁴³

A meeting between the Romanian and Soviet leaderships in March 1967 sheds light on the turning point in Romania's efforts to acquire sensitive nuclear technology. The Romanians made their nuclear intentions clearer than ever. Prime Minister Maurer told Brezhnev that Romania would probably try to make a nuclear bomb if it had the necessary means to do so.⁴⁴ Acquiring civilian capabilities was therefore an important part of developing a nuclear hedging posture. Subsequently, the Romanian communist leadership set out on a more coherent path in its nuclear technology acquisition strategy. The meeting of the Executive Committee of the RCP on October 17 established that the CANDU

⁴² Davis also asked Ceaușescu to let Washington know what Hanoi would do if the US were to cease bombings. Ceaușescu replied that there could not be any guarantees for a certain gesture from the North Vietnamese if the US stopped the bombings. ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 6/1967, Minutes of the meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and US Ambassador Richard Davis, January 31, 1967, 5, 10, 11, 12.

⁴³ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 6/1967, Minutes of the meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and US Ambassador Richard Davis, January 31, 1967, 11.

⁴⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 14/1967, Minutes of the meeting between the Romanian Communist Party delegation, formed of Nicolae Ceaușescu, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union delegation, formed of Leonid Brezhnev, Alexei Kosygin, Yuri Andropov, Andrei Gromyko, March 17-18, 1967, 68.

(Canada Deuterium Uranium) reactor was the preferred technology. The Canadian-designed heavy water reactor, if ‘unsafeguarded’, could have been used to produce weapons-usable plutonium. Romania’s choice of the type of nuclear reactor it purchased from Canada – that is, a pressurized heavy water reactor which uses deuterium oxide (heavy water) as moderator and natural uranium fuel – was connected with its musings about the A-bomb. Although both the US and Canada were very clear about the inevitability of safeguards being applied to the technologies they would provide Romania, the Romanians relished the fact that IAEA safeguards were not effective. The safeguards issue, which the Romanians thought they could circumvent, was probably another reason for choosing CANDU reactors.⁴⁵

Declassified Canadian Ministry of External Affairs documents now show that the image resulting from Romania’s behaviour towards the Soviet Union gave Bucharest an important advantage in its negotiations with Ottawa. For instance, in November 1966, the Canadian Ambassador to Belgrade, Bruce Williams, reported in his telegram to the Canadian Ministry for External Affairs that “Romania’s overtures to us in the nuclear field [are] a similar manifestation of a desire to establish economic independence of Mcow [Moscow].” This economic

⁴⁵ LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 2, Telegram from the Ministry for External Affairs to the Canadian Embassy in Washington, April 25, 1968; AMAE, 241/12.A.39, folder 5196/1973, Note from the Permanent Mission of the Socialist Republic of Romania to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, on the Problems concerning IAEA Safeguards and Inspections, April 4, 1973.

independence was part and parcel of Romania's increasing political autonomy. In the same telegram, he noted that "in the international sphere nothing could demonstrate more clearly Roumanians' determination to be independent of Mcow [Moscow] than Ceaușescu's forthright opposition to Brezhnev at Sovia [Sofia] on November 16, on holding of international conference on CPS to read China out of movement."⁴⁶

Later on, Williams urged Canada to increase its trade and commercial links with Romania so as to allow the communist leadership in Bucharest to maintain its independence.⁴⁷ Williams was one of the main proponents of selling Canadian nuclear technology to Romania. He repeatedly rebuked the Canadian Ministry for External Affairs for being "unnecessarily rigid in our stance" and for "forfeiting both commercial and diplomatic advantages."⁴⁸

Despite the good impression the Romanians made on the political leadership in Ottawa, the preference for CANDU posed an important difficulty: Washington still had to give its authorization for the transfer of heavy water production technology.⁴⁹ Because of the Export Control Act, Romania's support

⁴⁶ LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 2, Telegram from the Ministry for External Affairs to the Canadian Embassy in Washington, April 25, 1968.

⁴⁷ LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 2, Telegram from the Canadian Ambassador to Belgrade, Bruce Williams, to the Ministry for External Affairs, March 18, 1968.

⁴⁸ LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 1, Telegram from the Canadian Ambassador to Belgrade, Bruce Williams, to the Ministry for External Affairs, November 23, 1966.

⁴⁹ Canadian records show that as early as January 1967 Canadian General Electric forwarded the Romanian enquiry to the Canadian branch of the heavy water company Lummus, but thought it was unlikely that the US parent of Lummus would pursue it. Later on, in March 1968, the

for North Vietnam remained the biggest obstacle standing in the way of Bucharest's efforts to obtain US approval of nuclear technology transfers from Canada and from US companies. Therefore, as soon as the Permanent Presidium of the RCP settled on CANDU, Bucharest left behind its prior reservations about not having a mandate from the North Vietnamese and got involved in the mediation process, hoping that if it did so, Romania would then receive the support it needed from Washington. On October 25, Maurer called in Davis to discuss the Vietnam issue.⁵⁰

A flurry of messages and high-level meetings ensued. According to Vietnam War historian George Herring, Washington viewed the Romanian mediation as the most promising yet undertaken, calling it PACKERS (for the American football team, the Green Bay Packers) because, as the State Department's executive secretary, Benjamin Read, commented, "it looked like a winner."⁵¹ The Johnson administration responded to Romania's availability to play the mediator role by dispatching Averell Harriman to Bucharest, where on November 28 he met with Maurer and Ceaușescu. Ceaușescu did not miss the

Canadians expected fierce opposition from other Western countries on the issue of the heavy water production technology that Romania was requesting from Canada. The problem was that the government in Ottawa did not possess exclusive control over said technology. LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 1, Memorandum from G.T. Leait to R.C. Wallace, January 19, 1967; LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 1, Report on nuclear power – Romania, March 12, 1968.

⁵⁰ Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy*, 780.

⁵¹ *Idem*, 523.

opportunity to point out the potential for economic cooperation between the two countries and to restate his position on tighter commercial ties, which included the heavy water production facility deal.⁵² Although the Romanians initially brought no new messages from the Vietnamese, they subsequently embarked on shuttle diplomacy between Washington, Hanoi, Moscow, Beijing, and Bucharest. This December 1967–January 1968 peace initiative gave hope to the Americans that direct talks with Hanoi would start soon.⁵³

In addition to advancing their own interests, these mediation efforts allowed the Romanians to make a valuable contribution to the Vietnamese cause. The political leadership in Bucharest knew that even while talking about peace negotiations, Hanoi was preparing to deal a powerful blow to the US, a blow which became known as the Tet Offensive.⁵⁴ Bucharest's collusion with Hanoi confirms Herring's intuition that "what the United States viewed as the most promising peace initiative may well have been the least."⁵⁵ Herring suggests that the PACKERS peace move was meant to lull the Americans into a false sense of

⁵² ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 98/1967, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Averell Harriman, November 28, 1967, 4; LOC, Manuscript Division, Averell Harriman Papers, Box 498, Minutes of conversation between Ion Gheorghe Maurer and Averell Harriman, November 29, 1967; UKNA, FCO 15/546, Telegram from the British Embassy in Bucharest about Mr Averell Harriman's visit to Bucharest, December 7, 1967.

⁵³ Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy*, 802-815.

⁵⁴ AMAE, Circular Telegrams 1968, Vol. 1, Bulletin of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs No. 08/00227, sent to all Romanian missions abroad, January 10, 1968, 37; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 6/1968, Minutes of the meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Hoang Tu, January 18, 1968, 3.

⁵⁵ Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy*, 523.

security and to increase internal and international pressures for negotiations on the eve of the military blow to be delivered by the Tet Offensive. The Romanians knowingly facilitated the Vietnamese strategy of fighting while negotiating, allowing the Vietnamese to get some small concessions, including reduced bombing around Hanoi and Haiphong, when the Romanian delegation, led by Deputy Foreign Minister George Macovescu, visited North Vietnam.⁵⁶ The message the Romanians delivered from Hanoi on February 12 represented a “very very flat turndown”⁵⁷ for the Americans. A few months after, the North Vietnamese profusely thanked the Romanians for “their help with the offensive,” adding that “diplomacy helped us achieve [military] victories faster.”⁵⁸

The US duly rewarded Bucharest, although the whole story of Romania’s mediation efforts remained hidden from American eyes and ears. The pressure the Romanians put on the US executive branch, which then had to persuade Congress and various other groups of the benefits that such transfer of technology would bring to the United States, had started to bear fruit. On March 27, 1968, Myron B. Kratzer, Assistant General Manager for International Activities with

⁵⁶ AMAE, Vietnam File – Top Secret of Special Importance [SSID], Minutes of the meeting between George Macovescu and Richard Davis, 0/000132, February 24, 1968, 7.

⁵⁷ Transcript, Benjamin H. Read Oral History, Interview II, 3/70, by Paige E. Mulhollan, Internet Copy, Lyndon B. Johnson Library, quoted in Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy*, 523.

⁵⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 82/1968, Minutes of the meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Le Thanh Nghi, June 11, 1968, 2-11.

the Atomic Energy Commission, delivered a positive report on the state of Romania's nuclear programme before the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs.⁵⁹ On April 11, 1968, the Romanian Ambassador to Washington DC, Corneliu Bogdan, brought the nuclear issue into discussion with Department of State representatives, placing the heavy water plant deal in the context of the Vietnam War: "He understood the problems caused by the current political situation in relation to Viet-Nam, although he hoped that progress could be made."⁶⁰

Sealing the Deal

The progress the Romanians were hoping for came with the help of Dean Rusk, who, during a National Security Council meeting on April 24, urged the other policy-makers present to pass a West-East Trade bill, citing the opportunity which the Romanian nuclear deal presented. He recounted how he had "sent over a package on the Romanians' desire to purchase a heavy water plant, with his

⁵⁹ Statement of Myron Kratzer, Assistant General Manager for International Activities, US Atomic Energy Commission, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Ninetieth Congress, Second Session, March 27, 1968 (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1968), 214-233.

⁶⁰ *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. XVII, Memcon between Corneliu Bogdan, John M. Leddy, Walter J. Stoessel, Jr., April 11, 1968, 440.

recommendation that the President approve it.”⁶¹ At the same time, Rusk also gave the green light to the Canadians on the transfer of heavy water production technology. At the end of April 1968, Rusk told the newly appointed Canadian State Secretary for External Affairs, Mitchell Sharp, that the Americans

had been impressed by the way [the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the United Nations General Assembly] Corneliu Mănescu and his colleagues had carried out certain abortive explorations with the North Vietnamese a short while ago. Rusk said the Romanians had played their part with integrity. They had reported the negative as well as any positive elements in the responses received from Hanoi.⁶²

Although Romania continued to supply Vietnam with economic and military aid, nuclear negotiations made significant advances. The Romanians found out about Rusk’s endorsement on the occasion of a visit to American nuclear facilities a few months afterwards. In June 1968, Dr Donald Hornig, the President’s Special Assistant for Science and Technology, invited a group of Romanian officials to visit the United States.⁶³ The RCP accepted, and on June 18 a Romanian delegation led by Alexandru Bîrlădeanu arrived in Washington. Bîrlădeanu talked with Rusk about nuclear technology, specifically the heavy water plant Romania

⁶¹ Texas Tech University, Larry Berman Collection (Presidential Archive Research), Folder 13, Box 14, Memorandum for the record: National Security Council Meeting of 24 April 1968 – Eastern Europe, April 26, 1968.

⁶² LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 2, Telegram from Ritchie, Canadian Embassy in Washington, DC, to the Canadian Ministry of External Affairs, May 1, 1968.

⁶³ LBJPL, National Security File, Country File, Europe and the USSR, Rumania and Spain, Box 204, Memorandum for the Record. Conversation with Romanian Deputy Prime Minister Bîrlădeanu, June 19, 1968.

wanted to purchase from Lummus Company. “The Secretary [Rusk] said that the outlook for US authorization had improved. He said he had been personally involved in this matter, as had President Johnson, and that the US Government favoured the sale on national policy grounds.”⁶⁴ At the end of the visit, representatives of the two governments signed a joint statement calling for increased cooperation in science.⁶⁵ It is unlikely that this change of heart would have occurred had it not been for Romania’s involvement in the Vietnam War negotiations. The echo of the enormous enthusiasm generated by the PACKERS channel allowed the Romanians to draw increasingly nearer to the technology they sought.

Ceaușescu’s disapproving reaction to the invasion of Czechoslovakia on August 21, 1968, then gave a boost to Romania’s reputation as a ‘maverick’. This was music to the ears of many Western leaders, although as the State Department noted, the Romanian leader’s criticism did subside, while that of Tito continued unabated.⁶⁶ For a while, nuclear negotiations proceeded smoothly. In November 1968, US AEC Chairman Dr Glenn Seaborg invited a delegation from the Romanian State Committee for Nuclear Energy, headed by Dr Horia Hulubei and

⁶⁴ *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. XVII, Memcon between Alexandru Bîrlădeanu, Corneliu Bogdan, Mihai Croitoru, Dean Rusk, George R. Kaplan, July 9, 1968, 446-448.

⁶⁵ LOC, Manuscript Division, Glenn Seaborg Papers, Romania File, Box 736, *Atoms in Action in Romania. A Staff Guide*, Atomic Energy Commission, Division of Technical Information, 1969.

⁶⁶ *FRUS 1964-1968*, Vol. XIII, Western Europe Region, Telegram from the Department of State to the Mission of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, October 16, 1968, 774-775.

accompanied by Dr Ionel Purica and Marius Pătrașcu, on a tour of nuclear installations in San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, and Oak Ridge.⁶⁷ The Romanian delegation was the first one to visit a major nuclear laboratory in the United States.⁶⁸ Seaborg and Hulubei signed a Nuclear Cooperation Agreement providing for reciprocal exchanges of information regarding the peaceful uses of atomic energy between the two countries.⁶⁹ It is clear, however, that the signature of this nuclear cooperation agreement did not result solely from Ceaușescu's reaction to the invasion of Czechoslovakia, since the decisive steps towards the agreement, such as the preliminary visits and the Congressional testimony of the US AEC officials, took place before August 1968. Through the November 1968 agreement, the US committed itself to giving Romania several pieces of equipment which bolstered Romania's nuclear infrastructure, including a 14 MW TRIGA II research reactor, a Co-60 source of irradiation, uranium enriched to 93%, and training for Romanian nuclear scientists.⁷⁰

It was to be Richard Nixon's ascent to power that gave additional impetus to the nuclear technology transfers between the US and Romania. As Chapter

⁶⁷ LOC, Manuscript Division, Glenn Seaborg Papers, Romania File, Box 736, [Untitled Document], November 12, 1968.

⁶⁸ Purica, "Ionel I. Purica," 10.

⁶⁹ LOC, Manuscript Division, Glenn Seaborg Papers, Romania File, Box 736, [Untitled Document], November 12, 1968.

⁷⁰ LOC, Manuscript Division, Glenn Seaborg Papers, Romania File, Box 736, Agenda, September 30 – October 2, 1969, 4.

Seven will show in more detail, his visit to Bucharest in August 1969 marked one turning point in East-West relations, not least because Romania became the first East European country visited by an American president. But it marked an even more important moment in US-Romania nuclear cooperation dynamics.⁷¹ Until Nixon's visit, the Romanians were more subtle and discrete about the linkage between Vietnam and nuclear technology transfers. However, Ceaușescu had little patience with quiet diplomacy, as he himself often admitted.⁷² Cooperation on nuclear technology was the first topic he addressed in his meeting with Nixon. The US President believed the Romanians were a useful channel in negotiations with Hanoi and with Beijing and therefore indulged the Romanians more than any other US president had, although Romania's support for Vietnam represented one of the main reasons for the delay with which bilateral economic relations warmed up.⁷³ Ending the war "on a fair basis" would make possible the transactions the Romanians were interested in, including the nuclear deal. Nixon also thanked Maurer for the role he played in 1967 in trying to open channels of

⁷¹ Nixon Presidential Materials [henceforth NPM], National Security Council [NSC] Country Files, Europe, Romania, Vol. I-8/69, Box 702, Intelligence Information Cable, July 17, 1969.

⁷² ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 6/1967, Minutes of the meeting between Nicolae Ceaușescu and US Ambassador Richard Davis, January 31, 1967, 5-10.

⁷³ NPM, NSC Files, President's Trip Files, Box 454, Romania, Background on Viet-Nam, July 10, 1969; NPM, NSC Files, Presidential/HAK MemCons, The President and President Ceaușescu, Box 1023, Memcon between President Richard M. Nixon and President Nicolae Ceaușescu, August 2, 1969; NPM, NSC Files, Presidential/HAK MemCons, The President and President Ceaușescu, Box 1023, Memcon between President Richard M. Nixon and President Nicolae Ceaușescu, August 3, 1969.

communication to resolve the Vietnam problem, adding that “the actions were responsible and helpful.”⁷⁴

After his visit, Nixon urged the Atomic Energy Commission to approve Romania’s bid for the heavy water plant and sent his Science Advisor, Dr Lee DuBridge, and US AEC’s chairman, Dr Glenn Seaborg, to Bucharest to advance the implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation that had been signed in 1968.⁷⁵ Nixon told Kissinger in a memorandum that such a visit “would be enormously helpful in letting Ceaușescu have some little goodies that he can tell his associates about as to how dealing with the US really pays.”⁷⁶ For the RCP General Secretary, the nuclear cooperation agreement with the US was not “some little goodie.” The nuclear equipment and materials the US transferred to Romania gave impetus to his nuclear ambitions, as he realized the quantity of highly enriched uranium (HEU) the US agreed to provide was enough to build an atomic bomb. However, the actual approval for the transfer of the TRIGA

⁷⁴ NPM, NSC Files, Presidential/HAK MemCons, The President and President Ceaușescu, Box 1023, Memcon between President Richard M. Nixon and President Nicolae Ceaușescu, August 2, 1969; NPM, NSC Files, Presidential/HAK MemCons, The President and President Ceaușescu, Box 1023, Memcon between President Richard M. Nixon and President Nicolae Ceaușescu, August 3, 1969.

⁷⁵ LOC, Manuscript Division, Glenn Seaborg Papers, Romania File, Box 736, Memorandum from Julius H. Rubin to Glenn Seaborg, August 12, 1969.

⁷⁶ *FRUS 1969-1976*, Vol. XXIX, Eastern Europe; Eastern Mediterranean, 1969-1972, Memorandum from President Nixon to his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), August 7, 1969, 458.

reactor and the necessary fuel required another phase of high-level negotiations, as Chapter Seven will show.

Conclusion

During the Johnson presidency, Bucharest made its first forays into the international nuclear market. Romania's interest in a deal for atomic assistance with the US was prompted by Moscow's delays and hesitation. In the initial stage of flirting with the US, the communist leadership in Bucharest tried to capitalize on its divergence from Moscow and the favourable sentiment its dissidence created in the West. But the realization that US legislation banned sensitive technology transfers to countries supporting North Vietnam, including Romania, meant Bucharest had to step up its efforts and get involved in the resolution of the conflict as a third-party mediator. The Romanians took advantage of talks on Vietnam to press Washington to strengthen economic ties with Romania, which would facilitate the transfer of the desired nuclear technology. The strategy worked, primarily because the US sought to use Bucharest to advance its own economic and political interests. Ending the Vietnam War ranked higher on Washington's agenda than the risks presupposed by nuclear technology transfers to Romania.

So Bucharest experienced some success with the ‘mediation-for-nuclear technology’ barter. Romania became the first Warsaw Pact country to sign a nuclear cooperation agreement with the US. However, before securing the actual technology from the US, the Romanians would now have to jump through several other hoops. As Chapters Six and Seven will show, not only did Bucharest have to win the approval of its most important political, military, and economic partner, the USSR, but it also found itself in a middleman position again, this time between Washington and Beijing. The deal with Canada, which became possible thanks to Washington’s approval, and the negotiations with Western (including West European) suppliers for a nuclear power plant will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Tertius Gaudens I. Exploiting Anglo-French

Rivalry to Obtain the HELEN Reactor, 1963–1968

In this chapter, I examine Bucharest's efforts to secure a nuclear power reactor from the West. Romania's opening to the 'Free World' was not just a natural and logical consequence of its cultural and linguistic heritage (its Romance language and its German-born monarchs in the 19th century), as most Westerners at the time assumed. Its burgeoning relations with capitalist countries resulted from its ability to exploit their national capitalist instincts, as the Tertius Gaudens principle implies.¹ Romania's ultimate objective was twofold: to weaken the Western bloc by driving a wedge between its members, while at the same time accumulating the necessary nuclear technology that would allow Bucharest to become a nuclear hedger, and thus, develop the capability to build a nuclear weapon in a short period of time.

Using archival sources from both sides of the Iron Curtain, this chapter documents Romania's first forays into the West European nuclear arena. It examines how Bucharest capitalized on historic ties with Paris to pit the French

¹ For some Westerners' perception of Romania, see: NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal Files [CDF], RM/R File, 766.00/1-2758, Robert Thayer to the Secretary, Assessment of Situation in Rumania, The Director of Intelligence and Research, Washington, D.C., January 27, 1958; CREST, Rumania: The Maverick Satellite, October 1968, CIA-RDP78-03061A000400030017-8, 10.

against the British. The UK had the most powerful and most developed nuclear industry in Western Europe at the time, so it represented the Romanians' main target. London, to cope with fierce competition from its continental neighbours, sought to get a foothold in the Romanian market through the sale of a research reactor. The UK became the first country to introduce Western nuclear technology across the Iron Curtain. Romania suffered a minor setback in 1967, when the French, Swedes, and West Germans formed a consortium to confront the British challenge. Instead of intensifying the rivalry between the West Europeans, Romania found that it was actually contributing to closer integration among some of these nuclear suppliers. Then, Romania reached across the Atlantic to draw Canada into the game, coming within an inch of signing a deal. Yet in 1970 the leadership in Bucharest put these contacts on hold, after finding itself under pressure from the Soviet Union. This halt suggests that business interests alone did not create a solid enough foundation to allow the West's relations with Romania in the field of atomic energy to progress unhampered by events in the Moscow-Bucharest bilateral relationship.

Looking West

Contrary to the orthodox narrative, which holds that Bucharest's turn to Western Europe was a matter of choice, recently declassified archival materials

point to a much more complicated picture.² As Chapter Two has showed, Moscow kept delaying the transfer of atomic reactors for electricity production after it had helped to launch Romania's nuclear research programme in 1955. Soviet concerns about the spread of nuclear weapons lay at the root of this 'denial by postponement' policy. The USSR's unwillingness to sell a nuclear power reactor to Romania compelled a search for alternatives in Western Europe and across the Atlantic. Moreover, Moscow used the levers it had at its disposal (the CMEA framework and bilateral relations with Bucharest) to try to shape Romania's relations with the West. Since 1958, the Soviets and their allies had been working on a framework for how to engage with the European Economic Community (EEC). The ensuing strategy entailed a focus on bilateral relations between CMEA and EEC countries instead of bloc-to-bloc ties (which would have implied a recognition of the EEC), with a view to exploiting the increasing tensions and the lack of coordination between Western countries.³ This approach suited both the Kremlin and the Romanian leadership: the USSR made sure its junior allies would remain committed to the cause of defeating capitalism and fighting for the victory of socialism, while Romania still had the room for manoeuvre it needed in order to get access to Western advanced technology and financial resources.

² See the Introduction.

³ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 182/1972, Memorandum regarding the position of CMEA member states towards the Common Market, [1972], 12. The same desire to deal with countries bilaterally was true for the EEC as well.

The Romanians started their quest for Western nuclear technology in the European capital they found most accessible: Paris. Not only did Romanian statesmen and scientists speak French, but Bucharest also had spies who had infiltrated into various international organizations headquartered in Paris at that time, such as NATO.⁴ Moreover, French-Romanian economic relations had been steadily developing since 1959. Commercial opportunities abounded, as both countries implemented wide-ranging reforms to stabilize their economies.⁵ French firms were enticed by Romania's recent economic success; they sought new markets and were putting pressure on government officials in Paris to create a framework which would facilitate the growth of international trade.⁶ For Bucharest, the development of commercial exchanges represented the crux of its foreign policy in general, and its détente policy with Western Europe in particular. As early as 1963, Gheorghiu-Dej commented on a conversation between the Romanian Foreign Minister Corneliu Mănescu and his French counterpart, Maurice Couve de Murville, that technology transfers were Romania's foremost objective.⁷ To Gheorghiu-Dej's satisfaction, Mănescu

⁴MAE, Europe, Roumanie, Série29, Sous-série 17, dossier 8, May 29, 1963; National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives [CNSAS], FC/587 (Mihai Caraman), microfilm, Précis regarding the activity of Col. Caraman Mihai, [undated]; Accoce and Pouget, *Le réseau Caraman*.

⁵ MAE, Europe, Roumanie, Série29, Sous-série 17, dossier 8/1, December 19, 1966.

⁶ AMAE, 220/1963 France, Mănescu's visit to France, Proposal Regarding the Meeting between the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and his French Counterpart, October 16, 1963, 2.

⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 91/1963, Note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, November 7, 1963, 12; AMAE, 220/1963 France, Mănescu's visit to

persuaded Couve de Murville to intensify scientific-technical cooperation between the two countries.

Exploiting Anglo-French Rivalry

As an old Romanian proverb goes, when two parties fight, a third one stands to win. This principle, known as *Tertius Gaudens*, applied to the nuclear arena: the tensions existing between Western suppliers could greatly benefit Romania. In this respect, the RWP leadership diligently identified the most important frictions among West European countries, so as to find a crack which they could exploit to their advantage. These strains did not take long to become obvious. On November 25, 1963, at the funeral of US President John F. Kennedy, the Romanian delegation, led by Gheorghe Gaston Marin – the head of the State Committee for Nuclear Energy (CSEN) – noticed the rancour displayed by the British officials present towards their French counterparts, most likely because France had rejected Britain’s application for EEC membership in January 1963. The British characterized de Gaulle’s behaviour at the memorial service as that of “a monkey which wants to stand out from the crowd at all costs.”⁸

France, Proposal Regarding the Meeting between the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and his French Counterpart, October 16, 1963, 3.

⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 89/1964, Report on Gheorghe Gaston Marin’s visit to the US and the UK, November 24 – December 7, 1963, 4.

De Gaulle, Gaston Marin noted, tried to assert himself as the leader of the West, but the British would have none of it. On the margins of this report, Gheorghiu-Dej wrote: “Here we can see the extent of the rivalry [between France and the UK].”⁹

To create the impression that Romania favoured one country over the other, Gaston Marin declined the invitation of the French government to stop over in Paris, preferring London instead. The British took the bait. In an outpouring of frustration with de Gaulle’s European policies, the Foreign Office offered Romania a deal. Acceptance of the deal would have implied that Romania was siding with London against Paris in exchange for better commercial relations.¹⁰ Gaston Marin did not make any commitments, however: Romania, he said, “supports all actions meant to eliminate the discrimination which precludes normal economic exchanges between various countries.”¹¹ Gaston Marin argued that the main culprit in this respect was the Common Market, because it curtailed commercial exchanges during a period when trade liberalization was more needed than ever.¹² From this angle, de Gaulle’s veto of Britain’s bid for EEC membership served Romanian interests well: not only were British firms

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *Idem*, 27.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

interested in finding alternatives to the Common Market, but they were also free of the limitations imposed by the EEC.

Gaston Marin's visit launched what the British referred to as the "window-gazing" stage of Romania's nuclear acquisition programme.¹³ Bucharest sent experts to spot the most attractive systems available and probe their commercial viability. In London, Gaston Marin contacted English Electric and Associated Electrical Industries and informed them that Romania wanted to place an order for a 300–400 MW reactor by 1965 or 1966. British businesses flocked to the Romanian delegation.¹⁴ Gaston Marin reported with obvious satisfaction that the conditions for an increase in Romania's exports to the UK and for purchasing equipment on far more advantageous terms (10- to 15-year loans) were ripe.¹⁵ According to Gaston Marin, two factors contributed to this favourable situation: "Romania's growing prestige and trustworthiness as a commercial partner" and the "rising economic pressure generated in Western countries by the saturation of the market."¹⁶

English Electric and Associated Electrical Industries piled dozens of portfolios and commercial offers on the Romanians, and even agreed to organize

¹³ UKNA, AB 48/949, Background paper UKAEA from MacLean, February 2, 1968.

¹⁴ UKNA, FO 371/176255, Letter Hope-Jones to Killick, UK Embassy, Washington undated [1964].

¹⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 89/1964, Report on Gheorghe Gaston Marin's visit to the US and the UK, November 24 – December 7, 1963, 29.

¹⁶ *Idem*, 30.

a trip for Romanian nuclear specialists to study their industrial equipment and delivery conditions for nuclear power reactors.¹⁷ The Romanians jumped at this and dispatched a team of trade experts to London in February 1964. The delegation included some of Romania's most important nuclear scientists: Dr Horia Hulubei, the Chairman of the Atomic Physics Institute and a member of the State Committee for Nuclear Energy, and Dr Ionel Purica, Chief Engineer at the Atomic Physics Institute. On paper, the purpose of their trip revolved around the acquisition of conventional electrical plants, but then the delegation raised the question of nuclear equipment with the electrical members of the British Nuclear Consortia.¹⁸

Despite the fact that the British government had instructed UK firms to discourage the Romanians by pointing out the difficulties related to safeguards and CoCom, the delegation was given privileged access to nuclear power stations in Berkeley, Oldbury, and Trawsfynydd.¹⁹ Next, the Romanians were received by the Chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and his top aides. Hulubei cut straight to the chase: Romania wanted a 500 MW nuclear power station (operating on the British magnox system), and the

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ UKNA, FO 371/176255, Minutes of the meeting between Authority representatives and the Rumanian trade delegation, February 17, 1964.

¹⁹ CoCom dealt with the strategic embargo NATO countries imposed on the communist bloc. Its decision-making process required unanimity, so if any of the members disagreed, a deal would not go through. Michael Mastanduno, *Economic Containment. CoCom and the Politics of East-West Trade* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 181.

necessary know-how that, over the long term, would enable it to produce and reprocess fuel elements in Romania.²⁰ While the fabrication of fuel did not pose any risks, as natural uranium is not fissile, the reprocessing of spent fuel entails the extraction of plutonium, which can then be converted into nuclear weapons. This key technical detail indicates that the Romanians had more than just electricity production in mind when they embarked upon the quest for Western nuclear technology. To hide Bucharest's intentions, Hulubei insisted that Romania would go even further than the benchmarks set by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at the time, and would be prepared to return all the irradiated fuel elements for processing to Windscale in the UK.²¹

The British Nuclear Consortia (encouraged by the UKAEA) bent over backwards to sell nuclear technology to communist Romania. But soon the Romanians hit a wall: some ministries in Her Majesty's Government (HMG) realized that before a deal could be sealed, they had to factor in disarmament concerns, financial considerations, and the pressure coming from NATO allies, as well as Britain's participation in an internationally agreed strategic embargo. Before the Romanian visit, the Foreign Office had pointed out that a meeting

²⁰ Magnox reactors are pressurized reactors using natural uranium as fuel, carbon dioxide as coolant, graphite as moderator, and magnox alloy as fuel cladding.

²¹Romania's only demand was that the plutonium derived from their fuel elements should either be placed in an IAEA depot or sold to third parties, so that nobody could accuse Bucharest of helping Britain increase its nuclear arsenal by providing it with the plutonium from Romanian reactors. UKNA, FO 371/176255, Meeting with Hulubei and Cocos, February 17, 1964.

with a delegation of Romanian nuclear scientists and officials, even for the sole purpose of rejecting Bucharest's bid for British nuclear technology, might "alarm our allies" (although by 'allies' the British were probably referring more to the US than to Western Europe).²²

Moreover, a nuclear deal with Romania was a hard sell because nuclear power reactors had been placed on the embargo list put together by CoCom. The Foreign Office anticipated that "it would be next to impossible to get nuclear reactors off CoCom."²³ The British expected the other members of CoCom, above all the United States, to block any attempt undertaken by London to lift such restrictions on Romania.²⁴ To allay some of Washington's concerns, Britain sought to contribute to the consolidation of the non-proliferation regime by refusing to negotiate a special bilateral agreement with the Romanians to cover a particular reactor sale, insisting instead that Bucharest adopt the latest IAEA safeguards scheme and accept IAEA inspectors at their reactors.²⁵ The Foreign Office realized that such a deal would involve "a very long wait for payment" as Bucharest did not have the necessary resources to pay for a large nuclear power reactor, despite Romania's astonishing annual growth rates of 14-15%.²⁶ Therefore, helping the Romanians establish a nuclear programme, a task for

²² UKNA, FO 371/176255, Minutes from Smith to Brown, and Mason, February 19, 1964.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

which they were still ill-prepared, seemed like a risky bet. As a result, in February 1964 the British turned down Bucharest's requests for nuclear energy technology.²⁷

However, these reservations then quickly vanished. The Romanians got the British interested by approaching not only the US, whose approval the Foreign Office regarded as essential for obtaining a CoCom exception, but also France, a serious competitor to the British nuclear industry.²⁸ Drawing the Americans in represented a key move, because once the US opened the door for exceptions in the atomic energy field, the UK could follow suit and pursue its own commercial interests with countries placed on the strategic embargo list.²⁹

Bucharest's approach to France caused significant alarm in the UK. The Foreign Office, aware of Romania's preference for a nuclear reactor using natural uranium, believed there was "no danger of the US capturing the market if we held back."³⁰ However, there was "an evident danger of the French doing so, particularly since many Rumanian technicians were trained in France."³¹ London's position now underwent a notable change: in contrast to the initial

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ MAE, Europe, Roumanie, Série29, Sous-série 17, dossier 8/1, December 9, 1966.

²⁹ Officials in London decided to play the 'loyal ally' card. If initially the Foreign Office refused to raise the issue of a CoCom exemption for the nuclear deal with Romania, the Romanians' approach to Washington for a nuclear reactor prompted the British to "tell the Americans that we would support them in any approach they made to CoCom." UKNA, FO 371/176255, Minutes from Smith to Brown, and Mason, February 19, 1964.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

reluctance the UK had displayed toward selling nuclear reactors to communist Romania, institutions like the British Board of Trade (BoT) now took a keen and active interest in the question of the sale of a nuclear reactor to Romania.³² However, not all British governmental agencies became convinced of the need to win the nuclear deal with Bucharest. The Export Credits Guarantee Department (ECGD) posed the biggest obstacle, as it refused to raise the £15 million ceiling on the insurance benefits UK businesses could qualify for in their dealings with the Romanians. Under these conditions, the British Nuclear Consortia preferred to stay away from such a deal “if it was likely that the sale would be frustrated for export licensing or credit reasons.”³³ Yet the volte-face the BoT underwent shows that Bucharest’s strategy of playing the West Europeans against one another was starting to pay off. As soon as Bucharest put out feelers to France for the purchase of nuclear reactors, the BoT showed an interest in the Romanian market.

The British were right about the ties binding French and Romanian officials: personal relationships served as a catalyst for government-to-government exchanges. The head of CSEN, Gheorghe Gaston Marin, for instance, had established close connections to French political circles. Born into a Jewish family as Gheorghe Grossman, he went to France to study electrical engineering in

³² Ibid.

³³ UKNA, FO 625/13, Meeting held in the Board of Trade, December 15, 1965.

Grenoble. While he was in France, his father, mother, and sister perished in Auschwitz, having been sent there at the orders of the fascist government in Bucharest. Grossman adopted the false surname of Gaston Marin and became very active politically, enrolling in the French Communist Party and fighting in the Resistance. He familiarized himself with Western customs and negotiating styles so well that some American businessmen said “he could have easily headed the executive board of any American industrial consortium.”³⁴ Such a compliment had previously been paid only to Nikita Khrushchev.³⁵ Another figure who built bridges between Romania and France was Dr Horia Hulubei, the father of Romania’s nuclear programme. As Chapter One revealed, Hulubei studied at the Sorbonne with Nobel Laureate Jean Perrin and in 1933 defended his PhD thesis before a committee chaired by Nobel Laureate Marie Curie.

Hulubei’s contacts in Paris proved extremely useful in the first stage of French-Romanian talks about nuclear technology transfers. Bucharest insisted on both the consolidation of bilateral relations and the intensification of visit exchanges before any nuclear cooperation agreement was signed. The French hastily invited the Romanians to send a high-level delegation to Paris.³⁶ As a

³⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 89/1964, Marin impressed US businessmen, June 18, 1964, 31-32.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ AMAE, 220/1964 France 8 Vol. II, Maurer’s visit to France, Report on the visit of the governmental delegation headed by the President of the Council of Ministers, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, July 27 – August 3, 1964, 201.

result, between July 27 and August 3, 1964, Premier Maurer visited France. Maurer, who served as Prime Minister from 1961 to 1974, had a special bond with both France and Germany, as his father had immigrated to Romania from Alsace. A lawyer by training, Maurer impressed his Western interlocutors with his fluent French, elegance, sharpness, and sense of humour. During the July and August 1964 meetings with de Gaulle and Prime Minister Georges Pompidou, Maurer made it very clear that Romania wanted to acquire the modern technology it needed for its economic development (including in the field of atomic energy) on a competitive basis. French tenders needed to offer more advantageous terms than those put forward by other Western countries, especially with respect to financing and delivery. During these official talks, the two delegations reached an agreement to strengthen French-Romanian scientific cooperation. Afterwards, Maurer visited the Nuclear Research Centre at Saclay, near Paris, and the nuclear power station at Chinon, in the Loire Valley.

As a follow-up meeting, Maurer arranged for Dr Horia Hulubei to visit France in early 1965.³⁷ In March 1965, the French took the Romanians to nuclear research institutes, nuclear power stations (including Chinon again), private companies specializing in the production of installations for nuclear power stations, and most important, to fuel production plants (using uranium as well

³⁷ MAE, Europe, Roumanie, Série29, Sous-série 17, dossier 8/1, December 19, 1966.

as plutonium).³⁸ For the Romanians, the plutonium production plants represented the highlight of the trip, since plutonium can be used for both nuclear power stations (as fuel) and weapons. Moreover, the French authorities and nuclear private sector provided the Romanian delegation with the latest reports on nuclear energy trends, price quotations, and the details of the Franco-Soviet nuclear cooperation agreement, which the Romanians took as a model for their own relations with the French nuclear industry.³⁹

Upping the Ante

The keen interest France displayed towards the Romanian market for nuclear technology now made the British abandon their last reservations about considering a nuclear deal with communist Romania. In August 1965, a few months after Hulubei's visit to France, British officials told Corneliu Mănescu that "the UK would be prepared to consider sympathetically a request for an import license for a British nuclear power reactor."⁴⁰ As a discussion in the Board of Trade made clear in December 1965, Britain's reputation was at stake. There was "a great deal to be gained from prestige and future benefits" for the British

³⁸ AMAE, 212E/1965 France, Romanian delegations to France, Brief regarding the visit to France of a Romanian delegation of nuclear scientists, May 27, 1965, 5.

³⁹ *Idem*, 6-7.

⁴⁰ UKNA, FO 625/13, Meeting held in the Board of Trade, December 15, 1965.

nuclear industry.⁴¹ It was this change in attitude that the Romanians had been hoping for. Bucharest took pride in being able to change Britain's approach towards Romania by attracting competitive offers from other countries, especially the US, France, Sweden, and West Germany.⁴²

Yet London sensed that the Romanians were playing the UK off against its allies. A January 1966 report from the British Embassy in Bucharest stated that a high-ranking Romanian official had complained to the US Ambassador to Romania, Richard Davis, that "the USA and Great Britain had refused to entertain enquiries from Rumania about the possible purchase of atomic reactors."⁴³ The American and British rejections, he said, were the reason the Romanians had held discussions with the French for a natural uranium reactor. The Romanians' version of the story irked the British, who had done their very best to convey to the Romanians London's interest in a nuclear deal. The British Ambassador to Bucharest, Leslie Charles Glass, pointed out that these false claims were an attempt "to stimulate the Americans into action."⁴⁴ Glass realized that the competition with other Western nuclear suppliers had reached a critical point:

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² AMAE, 212/1966 Britain, The work plan and the performance report of the Romanian Embassy in London, Romanian-British relations, January 25, 1966, 91.

⁴³ UKNA, FO 625/13, Letter from the British Embassy in Bucharest to the Foreign Office, January 6, 1966.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

By taking no further action at this stage we run a real risk of missing the opportunity of a sale to Rumania, and allowing others (e.g. the French or the Americans) to get in before us. [...] Such a sale would strengthen our ties with Rumania in a field of great importance and significance and would at the present time be an important prestige success for us in the eyes of the world generally.⁴⁵

Glass conceded that “economically and financially the project required hard thought,” but “after all,” he added, “ECGD have not lost one penny in Rumania since the war and the Rumanians have taken great care of their reputation as payers in all their world dealings.”⁴⁶ Yet again, the political implications of the sale for both West and East remained unaddressed. To lure the Romanians towards a deal with the British, the UKAEA came up with a clever solution: offering a nuclear research reactor for the Polytechnic University in Bucharest, which would then serve as a bridgehead into Romania for the rest of the British nuclear industry in its efforts to seal the nuclear power station deal.⁴⁷ UKAEA officials knew that “no firm decision has been taken as to type and output” of the research reactor.⁴⁸ They hoped to sway the Romanians their way, and the approaching visit of Alexandru Bîrlădeanu, the Romanian Deputy Prime Minister, presented itself as the best opportunity.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ UKNA, FO 625/13, Letter from Fairey Engineering Ltd. to the Foreign Office, January 7, 1966.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Bîrlădeanu, however, had a rather unpleasant experience in Britain. Among other officials, he met with George Brown, the British Foreign Secretary, whom the Romanians despised for several reasons: he had no scruples, he showed no tact, and, above all, he wanted “to continue Labour’s foreign policy where Ernest Bevin left it in 1951.”⁴⁹ To add insult to injury, Brown showed up “tired and emotional” (the euphemism the British press used to refer to the Foreign Secretary’s fondness for the bottle) to his meeting with Bîrlădeanu. The British were deeply embarrassed. Thankfully, Sir William Penney, the Chairman of the UKAEA, saved the day by steering the visit towards the nuclear power station deal. Penney tried to persuade the Romanian delegation to consider enriched uranium reactors. The communist leadership in Bucharest had showed no inclination towards reactors using enriched uranium because such a design would make Romania dependent on foreign suppliers. Penney underlined that the Advanced Gas-Cooled reactors (AGR) designed in the UK

did not necessarily involve the purchaser in a long term commitment to enriched uranium fuel. [...] After a few years and the purchase of, say, two charges of fuel, it would be possible to operate such reactors with natural uranium fuel mixed with the plutonium produced by the reactors themselves.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ AMEA, 220/1966 Britain, Various actions undertaken by the UK with a variety of countries, Biography of George Alfred Brown, undated [1966], 140.

⁵⁰ UKNA, FO 625/13, Visit of Mr. Bîrlădeanu, February 9, 1966.

The UKAEA, Penney added, “would be ready to receive a party of Rumanian experts and to explain to them the reasons behind the UK’s choice of the AGR and to give them a general and impartial review of the overall power reactor position” as understood by the British.⁵¹ Bîrlădeanu readily accepted. Penney’s invitation gave the Romanians some extra time both to continue their probing elsewhere and to solve the “very complicated problems and heavy investment in hard currency” entailed by this project.⁵²

After the Romanian delegation left London, the British realized they were stuck in a rut. They wanted to solve the remaining problems posed by credit guarantees, but such an issue “clearly required a political decision.”⁵³ The matter, however, could not be taken to the top until the Romanians figured out what kind of reactor design they wanted and submitted “a request to a British company to tender.”⁵⁴ The Romanians, on the other hand, were in no rush, as they wanted to wait for the results of the March 1966 general election in the UK.⁵⁵ Their patience paid off, as the Labour government returned with a much larger majority of 96 MPs, compared to 4 MPs before the election. The Romanian Embassy in London reported, with obvious satisfaction, that after winning the March

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ UKNA, FO 625/13, Letter from the Foreign Office, March 14, 1966.

⁵⁴ UKNA, FO 625/13, Minutes about the Atomic Power Station for Romania, June 2, 1966.

⁵⁵ UKNA, FO 625/13, Letter from the British Embassy in Bucharest, March 14, 1966.

elections, certain leftist circles in the Labour Party were increasingly at odds with their party's official line on issues such as the war in Vietnam, the future of the two military blocs, and East-West relations.⁵⁶ Instead, they were pressing the Labour government to pursue its own interests. These were the political circles Ceaușescu referred to in a May 1966 discussion with Brezhnev, deeming them worthy of support from the socialist bloc so as to encourage Britain to adopt a foreign policy more independent from that of the US.⁵⁷ Closer relations with Europe (both East and West) could serve as an incentive for Albion to distance itself from Washington.

By mid-1966, London had good reason to worry about its international position and the performance of its economy. The Empty Chair Crisis (France's 1965 boycott of European institutions), de Gaulle's March 1966 withdrawal from NATO's Integrated Military Command, and the Anglo-American differences over policy in Vietnam made the need for consolidation in Europe more evident.⁵⁸ The outlook for the British economy was gloomy: British exports needed a rapid boost after a sterling crisis hit, again, in July 1966, resulting in the devaluation of the

⁵⁶ AMAE, 210/1966 Britain, Regarding the Labour Party in the UK, Note from the Romanian Embassy in London to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *The Labour Party in the United Kingdom*, June 29, 1966, 15.

⁵⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 72/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, May 10, 1966, 25.

⁵⁸ N. Piers Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crises of the 1960s: Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge* (London: Routledge, 2006), 40-124; Helen Parr, *Britain's Policy Towards the European Community: Harold Wilson and Britain's World Role, 1964-1967* (London: Routledge, 2006), 13-60.

pound. Britain's exclusion from the EEC had battered British businesses, as European tariffs made British products and services less competitive than those of their rivals in the EEC.⁵⁹ The British government realized that the private sector needed access to a much wider European market.⁶⁰ Prime Minister Harold Wilson, after exploring the likely continental response to another British bid for membership in the EEC, decided that reapplying to join the Six was the best option for Britain.⁶¹ The Romanians looked favourably upon Wilson's decision to reapply, since a vocal Britain within Europe posed fewer risks than a docile Britain serving the interests of the US.⁶²

Some Successes: The HELEN Nuclear Research Reactor

The nuclear research reactor the UK offered to socialist Romania showcases the benefits Bucharest reaped thanks to its ingenious strategy of playing the French and British off against one another. As the first country to request such a facility, Romania knew the odds were stacked against success. Any number of factors, including Washington's concerns about nuclear proliferation, French competition,

⁵⁹ AMAE, 220/1966 Britain, Various activities undertaken between the UK and other countries, Report from the Romanian Embassy in London about the current position of the United Kingdom towards some European problems, December 1, 1966, 50.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Parr, *Britain's Policy Towards the European Community*, chapter 3.

⁶² ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 72/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, May 10, 1966, 25.

and the difficulty of passing a deal through CoCom,⁶³ could have nipped this initiative in the bud. The British regarded the nuclear research reactor as a catalyst for the much larger nuclear power station deal, which raised the stakes even higher for them. Their business logic was simple: “If the Rumanians, and other communist countries, see that it is in fact not a protracted and cumbersome business to buy from the West, they will be more likely to turn to us in the future.”⁶⁴ And so, the negotiations began. In April 1966, P.J. Bray, the Commercial Director of Fairey Engineering Ltd., reached an agreement with the Romanians over the sale of a HELEN training reactor worth a paltry £100,000.⁶⁵ By June 17, the British had put together a proposal on the export of nuclear research equipment to Romania for submission to CoCom. This first draft addressed the most obvious security risks the deal posed, including the possible future diversion of nuclear materials to a military programme (for example, the plutonium that would be formed in the installation) and the safeguards issue.

Initially, the UK authorities vowed not to permit the export of the equipment until Romania concluded a safeguards agreement with the IAEA. This assurance was directed mainly at the United States, in relation to which the

⁶³ In August 1965, CoCom decided to permit the sale to East European socialist regimes of civilian research equipment and power reactors subject to certain safeguards. UKNA, FO 625/13, Telegram from Washington to the Foreign Office, June 23, 1966.

⁶⁴ UKNA, FO 625/13, Letter from the Foreign Office, June 18, 1966.

⁶⁵ UKNA, FO 625/13, Letter from the British Embassy in Bucharest, April 21, 1966.

British decided to put “strong emphasis on the safeguards system.”⁶⁶ Initially, the Romanians had promised to accept the application of safeguards by the IAEA (a first for the Eastern bloc), but soon after, they began backpedalling, realizing that the application of safeguards implied visits and on-site inspections by foreigners, which in the RCP’s view amounted to interference in Romania’s internal affairs. Instead of applying more pressure on the Romanians, the British simply withheld from the US any information about Bucharest’s backtracking on the safeguards issue. The British continued to downplay the risks involved. They lobbied the US Atomic Energy Commission first to accept just an annual report instead of regular inspections (as the Americans had originally envisaged), and later on to accept Romania’s exemption from safeguards altogether.⁶⁷ In June 1968 Romania signed a safeguards agreement for the HELEN reactor with the IAEA, but there is no evidence that the British demanded such an agreement as a condition of supplying the facility.⁶⁸ As a matter of fact, the UK insisted that since the quantity of fuel it was supplying to Romania (under 9 tons) was below the minimum requirement for the full range of IAEA safeguards, the safeguards did not apply. Ironically, pressing Bucharest to sign the safeguards agreement

⁶⁶ UKNA, FO 625/13, Letter from the Foreign Office, June 18, 1966.

⁶⁷ UKNA, FO 625/13, Telegram from Washington to the Foreign Office, June 23, 1966.

⁶⁸ NARA II, RG 59, CFPPF, 1967-1969, Box 2916, Airgram from the US Embassy in Bucharest to the Department of State, August 23, 1968.

could actually, the British maintained, “bring the IAEA into disrepute by attempting to bend regulations to meet political objectives.”⁶⁹

The opposition of other CoCom members represented the second hurdle the British had to overcome. Fairey faced a difficult dilemma: whether to lobby the potential opponents (primarily the French) and risk having them steal the deal from under Britain’s nose, or to keep quiet about Britain’s intention to provide Romania with a nuclear research reactor and risk having their plans vetoed by the other CoCom members. Having decided against the lobby option, the British delegation faced stiff opposition from not only the French but also the Canadians.⁷⁰ Yet the threats to veto the deal were idle, as both Paris and Ottawa were interested in setting a precedent within CoCom which would prove useful in case either country managed to sell a nuclear power station to Romania.⁷¹

In September 1966, the Romanians and the British sealed the deal, and so Britain became the first country to sell a nuclear research reactor behind the Iron Curtain. The *Daily Telegraph* reported that Fairey managed to sell the research reactor “in face of French, West German, and Swedish competition” and that it had begun negotiating a similar sale with another Communist state (possibly

⁶⁹ NARA II, RG 59, CFPPF, 1967-1969, Box 2916, Memorandum of conversation between Smart, Gleysteen, and Stillman, January 16, 1968.

⁷⁰ MAE, Europe, Roumanie, Série29, Sous-série 17, dossier 8/1, December 19, 1966; LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 2, Telegram from the Canadian Embassy in Belgrade to the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 18, 1966.

⁷¹ LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 2, Telegram from the Canadian Embassy in Belgrade to the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 18, 1966.

Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia).⁷² For the Western bloc, this contract represented “a hole in the Iron Curtain.”⁷³ For the Eastern bloc, on the other hand, it seemed to provide evidence that playing the West Europeans off against each other could bring significant rewards. London achieved its short-term goal of winning the contract, but it fell short of accomplishing the more important objective of getting the Romanians to make a decision on the purchase of a nuclear power station. As a result, Britain continued to advance the sale of a nuclear power reactor in parallel with the negotiations for the research reactor. In the meanwhile, opposition from other West European suppliers intensified.

Casting a Wider Net

In addition to sending out feelers to the French and the British, the Romanians initiated contacts on nuclear matters with Sweden, the FRG, and Canada. These efforts to reach out to more Western nuclear suppliers were an integral part of their strategy aimed at dividing potential commercial competitors and driving a wedge between the Europeans. Not knowing what Bucharest was up to, the Swedish responded promptly: on March 31, 1966, Gunnar Lange, the Swedish Minister of Commerce, visited Bucharest to discuss, among other things, the

⁷² UKNA, FO 625/13, Letter from the British Embassy in Bucharest, September 13, 1966.

⁷³ Ibid.

possibility of supplying an atomic power station to Romania.⁷⁴ He underlined Sweden's extensive experience with both natural uranium and enriched uranium power stations, and invited a delegation of Romanian nuclear experts to visit some of these facilities. This delegation arrived in July 1966. Sweden, which, according to the British, had been "indulging in some heart searching about the failure of their atomic energy industry to win any export orders," took the Romanians to some of the Swedish nuclear industry's trademark facilities: the Agesta Nuclear Power station, the heavy water reactors under construction at Marviken, the Stal-Laval Company, and ASEA (Allmänna Svenska Elektriska AB).⁷⁵ Sweden's heavy water reactors using natural uranium caught the Romanians' attention, but no decision was made during the visit.

Romania kept exploring other options as well, such as the West German nuclear industry. The FRG was Romania's top economic partner in the capitalist bloc (being ranked second in Romania's overall foreign trade, after the Soviet Union); it provided most of the advanced technology the communist leadership in Bucharest imported at that time. In early 1966, Bucharest accepted an invitation from the West German Economics Minister, Kurt Schmücker, to send a trade delegation to the FRG. In May 1966, the Romanian Foreign Trade

⁷⁴ AMAE, 220/1966 Sweden 1, Gunnar Lange's Visit to Romania, Minutes of conversation between Corneliu Mănescu and Gunnar Lange, March 31, 1966, 60-61.

⁷⁵ UKNA, FO 625/13, Telegram from the British Embassy in Stockholm, July 20, 1966.

Minister, Gheorghe Cioară, visited the Siemens Research Centre at Erlangen, which carried out groundbreaking work on nuclear power stations.⁷⁶ Cioară established contacts with other important private firms, such as Gutehoffnungshütte (GHH), a mining and engineering company active in the field of nuclear power reactor construction.⁷⁷ The visit ended with promises from West German businesses to send delegations to Romania, intensify the exchange of information, and carry out joint research projects. Even if, for the time being, these contacts did not bring many concrete benefits, they were an extremely effective propaganda instrument, capable of stimulating other Western countries' interest in Romania.

Canada, for example, was eager to expand its share of the atomic market, and Romania appeared to be a promising bridgehead into Eastern Europe. Bucharest had already demonstrated its interest in the Canadian nuclear industry in 1964 and 1965, but the Canadians, afraid of the opposition they would encounter from their allies in CoCom, did not follow up on these initial contacts.⁷⁸ At the beginning of 1966, Romania was still not a priority for the Canadian nuclear industry because it was placed on the 'restricted list' within CoCom.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Florian, Preda, and Trașcă (eds.), *România-Republica Federală Germania*, 37.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 1, Telegram from the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C. to the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 14, 1964.

⁷⁹ LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 1, Possibility of a Sale of Nuclear Reactor to Roumania, January 27, 1966.

The strategy that the communist leadership in Bucharest had used with the British was now to pay off with Canada as well. As soon as the Canadians heard about the keen interest displayed by the French and the Swedish, they reconsidered their approach to Romania, becoming much more open to the idea of a nuclear power station deal with Bucharest.⁸⁰ In June 1966, the Canadian Ambassador to Belgrade, Ross Campbell, paid a visit to the Romanian Nuclear Energy Committee (CNE) to learn more about Romania's intention to buy a nuclear power station. Campbell met with Șerban Țițeica, the Deputy Director of CNE and the Vice-President of the Romanian Academy, who informed him that according to the five-year plan adopted in 1966, Romania sought to acquire three reactors of 500 MW each by 1980. Also, Țițeica added, Romania was interested in building a heavy water production facility with Yugoslavia.

All these detours and flirtations with various countries frustrated the British, who saw Romania's slow response as an affront to Britain's status as the dominant nuclear power in Europe. They "had not heard a squeak" from Bucharest regarding the visit of Romanian nuclear power experts to Britain, and were getting increasingly anxious about the chances of selling them a nuclear power station.⁸¹

⁸⁰ LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt. 1, Telegram from the Canadian Embassy in Belgrade to the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 13, 1966.

⁸¹ UKNA, FO 625/13, Letter from the British Embassy in Bucharest to the Foreign Office, June 23, 1966.

After much delay, Bucharest finally realized that Western countries could provide Romania with advantageous credit conditions only if they received a formal invitation to submit a bid. As a result, in July 1966 the Romanian government sent “specifications for quotations” to various private firms in the UK, France, Sweden, and West Germany.⁸² This move gave hope to Western nuclear suppliers that Romania was getting serious. Knowing whether the Romanians were ‘talking big’ or actually committed to doing business made a big difference for Western businesses, as the costs of getting negotiations underway ran high. In the UK, for instance, replying to a specification for tender alone could cost companies £500,000. The enquiry filed in July 1966 by Industrialimport – the Romanian state company which dealt with the import of technology and licences – included specifications for a nuclear power station of 500–600 MW, a heavy water manufacturing plant, and a fuel manufacturing plant.⁸³ Industrialimport invited representatives from companies supplying these facilities to come to Bucharest before submitting tenders, so as to further discuss the specifics. These preliminary talks would enable them to make more realistic tenders, the Romanians argued. Romanian officials underlined the fact that tenders accompanied by firm proposals for financing would receive more

⁸² MAE, Europe, Roumanie, Série29, Sous-série 17, dossier 8/1, December 19, 1966.

⁸³ UKNA, FO 625/13, Telegram from the British Embassy in Bucharest to the Foreign Office, August 1, 1966.

sympathy.⁸⁴ To avoid a scenario in which the communist leadership in Bucharest would pit British firms against each other, the British authorities decided to assign the newly created British Nuclear Export Executive (BNX) to handle the enquiry.⁸⁵

The British were unduly optimistic about their chances of winning a nuclear deal with Romania. They thought that “there is a good prospect of a British firm obtaining the contract for a nuclear power station provided that the question of financing can be satisfactorily resolved.”⁸⁶ For the BNX, a whole plethora of new “opportunities are now arising for exploiting nuclear power overseas on a widening scale and making a great contribution to this country’s needs for exports.”⁸⁷ However, Britain faced a serious problem: it did not have available a natural uranium fuelled heavy water moderated reactor (which the Romanians wanted) and the UKAEA was very far from completing the research and development work necessary to make the Steam Generating Heavy Water (SGHW) reactor operational.⁸⁸ The British were in no rush to address this problem for two reasons.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ UKNA, FO 625/13, Letter from the British Nuclear Export Executive to the Foreign Office, July 26, 1966.

⁸⁶ UKNA, FO 625/13, Telegram from the British Embassy in Bucharest to the Foreign Office, August 4, 1966.

⁸⁷ UKNA, FO 625/13, Atom No. 117/July 1966.

⁸⁸ UKNA, FO 625/13, Interim report of the BNX Mission to Romania, October 9-14, 1966.

First, they received news from the Americans that the Romanians “had scrapped their plans to buy a nuclear power station until after 1970.”⁸⁹ Given that the nuclear power revolution was still in its early phase, the Romanians realized a ‘wait and see’ strategy would be a better idea. Bucharest decided to let the developed (capitalist) countries bear the brunt of developing commercially viable nuclear power stations, so that in the end Romania could buy a turnkey reactor. The Romanians

reckoned that power stations would become much cheaper over the next few years and that the latest estimates suggest that they had sufficient reserves of oil and natural gas to make the immediate purchase of a nuclear power station unnecessary.⁹⁰

In a conversation with a counsellor at the American Embassy in Bucharest, Hulubei indicated that he “expected the power station to be bought in 1970 and brought quickly into operation. Negotiations would, of course, begin earlier.”⁹¹ The British, judging that Hulubei might not have had the full picture of the Romanian nuclear power programme since decisions on major economic projects were taken at a political level, saw no reason for a change in their dealings with the Romanians. Therefore, the BNX pushed forward with a visit to Romania in the first half of October 1966. On this occasion the Romanians confirmed the

⁸⁹ UKNA, FO 625/13, Letter from the British Embassy in Bucharest, September 8, 1966.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

postponement of the nuclear power station acquisition, but, more important, Hulubei indicated that he “personally would favour a British plant because [Britain] had the most experience and he liked what he had seen and heard. But the scientists could only give advice. The decision would be a commercial one.”⁹²

The second reason why the UKAEA did not have any qualms about the delay in the development of the SGHW reactor was that Britain’s competitors, especially the French, were confronted with the same R&D problems. In the second half of the 1960s, the *Électricité de France* (EDF) and the *Commissariat à l’énergie atomique* (CEA) vied for influence, each trying to impose its own nuclear power reactor design on the French domestic markets and, more broadly, on the European and global markets.⁹³ This struggle pitted the gas-graphite reactor (also known as the *filière française*), jointly developed by the EDF and the CEA in the 1940s, against the light water design (also referred to as ‘the American model’).⁹⁴ At the time the Romanians submitted their enquiry to the French, the heavy water reactor (EL-4) had not yet gone critical.⁹⁵

The BNX visit to Bucharest clearly indicated that the British were serious about getting access to the Romanian market. After the trip, the British authorities decided that “a more complete preliminary offer should be made as

⁹² UKNA, FO 625/13, Minutes of conversation between Hulubei and Birch, October 12, 1966.

⁹³ Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity After World War II* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 55-131.

⁹⁴ *Idem*, 271-272.

⁹⁵ *Idem*, 95.

soon as possible.”⁹⁶ The UK embassy in Bucharest noted the Romanians’ satisfaction at the fact that a *Financial Times* report that a British nuclear power contractor would be putting forward a bid to Romania caused an “electrifying effect on the French.” Moreover,

the text of the report was sent to [the French] the following day and the [French] First Secretary in charge of economic affairs was on [the] doorstep [of the British Embassy] even before we had received the copy of the *Financial Times* containing the report. Such alacrity seems to indicate that they are very seriously interested themselves in supplying a nuclear power station to Rumania.⁹⁷

Britain’s visible interest motivated the other West European nuclear suppliers to come up with better strategies for winning the nuclear deal with Romania. But soon Romania saw its strategy fray at the margins. Instead of driving a wedge between West European countries, the communist leadership in Bucharest unintentionally brought several of them together. West Germany’s Siemens Company approached the CEA on the possibility of submitting a joint project to Romania’s enquiry for a heavy water moderated natural uranium reactor.⁹⁸ Siemens’s proposal was based on an agreement for research on heavy water reactors concluded in 1964 with CEA.⁹⁹ The French took on the West German offer and invited the Swedes to join in bidding for the nuclear deal with Romania.

⁹⁶ UKNA, FO 625/13, Interim Report of the BNX Mission to Romania, October 9-14, 1966.

⁹⁷ UKNA, FO 625/13, Letter from the British Embassy in Bucharest, November 30, 1966.

⁹⁸ MAE, Europe, Roumanie, Série29, Sous-série 17, dossier 8/1, December 19, 1966.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

The resulting consortium, which comprised SOCIA (France), ASEA, and Siemens, made an offer to the Romanians in summer of 1967.¹⁰⁰ The Franco–West German–Swedish partnership stimulated a discussion early in August between the UKAEA, BNX, and The Nuclear Power Group (TNPG) on the possibility of forming a consortium of UKAEA, TNPG, and GHH to push nuclear power in Romania.¹⁰¹ In addition, the UKAEA mobilized its R&D and commercial teams to put together the bid for Romania. In February 1967, the UKAEA put forward a proposal for a 600 MW SGHWR using natural uranium. The proposal contained a technical account of the design, engineering, and safety aspects of the reactor, together with an indication of costs. Contrary to the UKAEA’s expectation that the Romanians “wanted to get their nuclear power station with as little delay as possible,” the Romanians did not reply for more than six months.¹⁰²

This silence suggests that Bucharest knew it was in demand. The six-month hiatus compelled the BNX to send yet another delegation to Romania in September 1967. The trip did not yield much: the British experts found that

the Rumanians were very keen to have technical discussions on the natural SGHWR and on the integration of SGHWR’s and fast reactors into a nuclear power programme. They would not want to discuss

¹⁰⁰ MAE, Europe, Roumanie, Série29, Sous-série 17, dossier 8/1, May 7, 1968.

¹⁰¹ UK AB 48/949, Member for Reactors Business meeting, January 9, 1968.

¹⁰² UKNA, FO 625/13, Letter from the British Embassy in Bucharest, December 30, 1966.

commercial aspects of the UK proposal, although they wished economics to be included in the broad sense.¹⁰³

The British proposed to hold further discussions on the occasion of a symposium lasting two to three days, sometime in the first half of December 1967. Romanian archival materials note the BNX's eagerness to hold an event that would outshine the French exhibition organized in May 1967.¹⁰⁴ But for the Romanians, the British were losing their appeal, because of a massive changeover in Britain's nuclear industry. In the fall of 1967, the Romanians learned about the proposed merger between General Electric Co. and Associated Electrical Industries (AEI), given the difficulties that the British nuclear industry faced because of competition from West Germany, the United States, Japan, and France. Britain's plans to join the EEC also played a role in the decision to merge the two companies. British companies needed to toughen up in order to compete with private businesses in EEC countries. As the British government was to become a shareholder in this conglomerate, the Romanian leadership decided to target companies which could not be 'swallowed' because, in the event the Romanians chose a British firm, they feared that Whitehall would indirectly have a say over the Romanian nuclear programme.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ UKNA, AB 48/949, Member for Reactors' Business Meeting, [1967].

¹⁰⁴ AMAE, 212/1967 Britain, Britain's relations with other states, Note from Gheorghe Cioară, July 27, 1967, 5.

¹⁰⁵ AMAE, 212/1967 Britain, Informative note from the British Embassy in London, October 11, 1967, 4.

As a result, when, on October 17, 1967, the Executive Committee of the RCP finally met to select which type of reactor Romania would purchase, they dismissed the SGHWR developed by the UK from the start. Instead, they decided that the Canadian system (CANDU) represented the most efficient option.¹⁰⁶ On this occasion, the Executive Committee, on the advice of the Romanian scientific community, changed course with respect to the reactor's capacity. Instead of a 500–600 MW nuclear power station, they were now interested in a smaller 300 MW reactor, which would allow them to gain experience before installing larger facilities.¹⁰⁷ The Executive Committee did not scrap the plans to build a 600 MW; it just put them on the back burner.

Although the top echelons of the RCP seemed convinced of the advantages presented by the Canadian system, they understood that breaking off contacts with the West Europeans would strip Bucharest of a useful commercial instrument in its relations with other nuclear suppliers. Therefore, the Romanians continued negotiations. However, the RCP asked Industrialimport to inform Western nuclear companies that the plan had changed as far as reactor capacity was concerned. Industrialimport duly conformed and submitted enquiries for a 300 MW natural uranium fuelled nuclear power reactor and a fuel manufacturing

¹⁰⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 147/1967, Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, October 17, 1967, 35-40.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

plant.¹⁰⁸ This shift wreaked havoc among the West Europeans. The British, for instance, concluded:

It will not be possible to assess whether the Roumanians are serious about their latest enquiry – or indeed their earlier enquiries. On the face of it, it would not look as though those who control the foreign credit purse strings in Bucharest are giving much priority to the introduction of nuclear power.¹⁰⁹

Luckily, the Romanians had a chance to explain this change of heart on the occasion of the BNX symposium held in Bucharest in December 1967. They pointed out that Romania's plans to purchase a 300 MW nuclear power station did not entail the complete and definitive annulment of the order for a 600 MW reactor. Their preference to build a 300 MW station first stemmed from their desire to "diminish the risks inescapably associated with assimilating a new technology."¹¹⁰ The contract hinged on the openness of the supplier to Romania's acquisition of know-how and the training of Romanian personnel. This prerequisite indicates that the RCP was fully aware of and prepared to counter any attempts by the West Europeans to render Romania dependent on their technology. Should Britain refuse Bucharest's terms, the RCP had other offers to choose from. Or so they thought at the time.

¹⁰⁸ UKNA, AB 48/949, Industrialimport enquiry, October 1967.

¹⁰⁹ UKNA, AB 48/949, Letter from MacLean to Burkitt, December 14, 1967.

¹¹⁰ This 'experimental' first reactor would help the Romanian nuclear industry acquire skills and experience for the next, more complex stages of its development. UKNA, AB 48/949, Meeting at Offices of Industrialimport, December 15, 1967.

The Canadians were the first to submit an offer for the 300 MW reactor, in November 1968. Their bid included a CAD\$65 million loan, almost double the amount the British were ready to offer.¹¹¹ Canada was keen to expand its nuclear exports, as the era of American hegemony on the international nuclear market was drawing to a close.¹¹² The failure to sell nuclear power reactors to Finland and the slow pace of negotiations with Argentina affected the Canadian atomic energy industry, where it was noted that only through the quick award of a domestic or foreign project could the Canadian nuclear industry continue the support of the last remaining private-sector nuclear design group in the country.¹¹³ The deal with Romania appeared to be the only solution on the horizon. Still, the deal was so advantageous to the Romanians that some policy-makers in Ottawa felt “at a loss to understand the business sense of it.” The Director General of Atomic Energy Canada Ltd. added that the deal with Romania brought “the following question: ‘Are we that desperate?’”¹¹⁴ Instead of addressing this question, the Canadian industry and government embarked on an

¹¹¹ LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt.3, Memorandum to the Ministers, November 7, 1968.

¹¹² Robert Bothwell, *Nucleus: The History of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 390; Sigvard Eklund, “Reliable Supply: Respecting the ‘Rules of the Game’,” in Joseph F. Pilat, Robert E. Pendley, and Charles K. Ebinger, *Atoms for Peace. An Analysis After Thirty Years* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985), 171.

¹¹³ LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt.3, Report on Nuclear Power, March 12, 1968.

¹¹⁴ LAC, RG 20, Vol. 1644, 20-68-Ra Pt.3, Memorandum from Gauthier to Kniewasser, October 10, 1968.

all-out effort to defeat “the formidable international competition” they were expecting from Britain, France, West Germany, and Sweden.¹¹⁵

Pressing Pause

The Westerners faced real difficulties in putting forward viable bids. The British were seriously lagging behind in design and development of the SGHWR. They managed to get a deadline extension from the Romanians, who agreed to receive their offer by March 1969. But by that time, the British had decided to abandon the project.¹¹⁶ The invasion of Czechoslovakia on August 21, 1968, created some alarm among the West Europeans.¹¹⁷ The British, for instance, argued that while the UK “might have had a chance of supplying a reactor to Roumania or Yugoslavia before the Czech crisis, we have no such chance now.”¹¹⁸ Uncertainty about Moscow’s next steps prompted decision-makers in London to adopt a cautious approach.

The Franco–West German–Swedish efforts also received a significant blow, in this case because of problems encountered in the operation of their natural uranium fuelled heavy water moderated reactor.¹¹⁹ As a result, West Germany

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ UKNA, AB 48/949, Letter from Searby to Burkitt, July 31, 1968.

¹¹⁷ LBJPL, Mandatory Case Review NLJ-051-027-5-8-6, NATO Ministerial Meeting, Brussels, November 14-16, 1968.

¹¹⁸ UKNA, AB 48/949, Letter from MacLean to Cole, November 11, 1968.

¹¹⁹ UKNA, AB 48/949, Member for Reactors Business Meeting, June 24, 1968.

put forward a separate bid, through Kraftwerkunion (KWU), a joint subsidiary of Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft Aktiengesellschaft and Siemens.¹²⁰ To the Romanians' dissatisfaction, the West Germans offered an enriched uranium nuclear reactor, not the heavy water power plant Bucharest had requested. So the FRG stood almost no chance of winning the contract, although the Romanians still kept KWU in the race to stimulate the Canadians, who were the only other bidders. The Romanians clung to Ottawa for a little longer, as the Soviets had no objection to Canada's involvement in the development of its satellites' atomic energy industry.¹²¹ As a matter of fact, after the invasion, Czechoslovakia "had asked that Canada's bid be expedited."¹²²

Conclusion

Chapter Six will reveal that the West Europeans had taken the right decision when they stepped back from their nuclear dealings with Bucharest. In 1970, the Romanians agreed to purchase a nuclear power reactor from the Soviet Union.¹²³ The technology bought from the USSR was everything the Romanians did not want: a light water reactor, using HEU which could only be purchased from the

¹²⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Economică, 23/1970, Romania's Nuclear Power Plant Acquisition Programme, February 2, 1970, 33.

¹²¹ UKNA, AB 48/949, Letter from the Board of Trade to MacLean, December 3, 1968.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ See Chapters Three and Six.

USSR. The West Europeans were left in disbelief, as they did not know that throughout the entire duration of Romanian discussions with the West Europeans, the Romanians had also been prodding the Soviets to sell them a nuclear power plant. The archival record indicates that the Kremlin wanted Bucharest to buy a Soviet reactor so that the USSR could keep an eye on the Romanian nuclear programme. The archival record suggests that Moscow pressed Romania to purchase a Soviet nuclear power plant not because it harboured inimical feelings towards Western nuclear companies, but rather because throughout the 1960s Bucharest had repeatedly talked about getting nuclear weapons.¹²⁴

The 1970 nuclear deal with the Soviet Union marked not the end but a hiatus in Romania's negotiations with Western countries. As Chapter Eight will show, Bucharest resumed its pursuit of Western nuclear technology in the second half of the 1970s, as *détente* carried on in the aftermath of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. We have seen that, during the 1960s, Bucharest put its economic and political interests at the centre of its *détente* policy, a move which the West Europeans readily welcomed. Westerners regarded Bucharest's opening as an opportunity to tap into a new market. The economic benefits the West Europeans

¹²⁴ To Shmuel Mikunis, the leader of the Communist Party in Israel, Ceaușescu confessed: "we thought about cooperating with Israel to build an atomic weapon together." ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 25/1967, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Shmuel Mikunis, April 12, 1967, 8.

wanted to extract from the Romanian market put them at odds with one another. Aware of these tensions, Romania skilfully played them off against each other, driving down the price of technology and making safety measures laxer.

This strategy brought the Romanians both victories and defeats. Romania became the first Eastern bloc country to import a British research reactor, but it failed to prevent the French, the West Germans, and the Swedes from forging a partnership between themselves. The Romanians forgot that competing companies may try to form cartels to prevent a rival from securing a deal. Yet, closer cooperation between these West Europeans did not bring about the technological innovation they needed to win contracts with the Romanian government. The failure of the Franco–West German–Swedish consortium to develop the type of reactor Bucharest wanted limited the options Romania had so avidly tried to expand since the early 1960s. The reform of the nuclear industrial complex in Britain resulted in a similar fiasco: the British nuclear industry decided to scrap its plans to build a SGHWR altogether. The technological difficulties the West Europeans encountered, together with developments in the Eastern bloc – the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet–Romanian nuclear deal in 1970 – forced the Romanians to pause their negotiations with the West Europeans. However, Romania’s 1960s efforts to acquire Western nuclear technology speak to a variety of issues related to the politics of nuclear technology transfers. The historical record reveals that the search for profits

motivated Europeans on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Yet, while economics and profits may have appeared to be a key driver during the détente period, the hard facts of political life, as typified by the 1968 crisis, could still trump commercial endeavours.

Chapter Six: Interlude. Romania's Nuclear Cooperation with the Soviet Union in the 1960s

As the previous chapters have showed, in the late 1960s, Romania came within an inch of signing a deal for a Western nuclear reactor. Negotiations advanced frantically until they reached a sudden and unexpected dead end. Chapter Three looked at Romania's first requests for nuclear reactors from the Soviet Union. That story comes full circle in this section, as I will examine the fits and starts of Soviet-Romanian nuclear cooperation in the 1960s. Unbeknownst to nuclear suppliers in the capitalist bloc, Bucharest had been discussing with Moscow the transfer of a nuclear reactor throughout the 1960s. I show that the Soviet Union adopted a 'denial by postponement' counter-proliferation strategy towards Romania which consisted of perpetually delaying the transfer of the actual technology, while officially upholding the deal. This approach allowed the Soviets to keep an eye on the Romanian nuclear programme, which is why they tolerated Bucharest resuming its negotiations with Western suppliers, as Chapters Seven and Eight will show. Soviet-Romanian consultations rumbled in the background for the entire duration of the 1970s. Moscow, through the contract it signed with Bucharest in 1970, successfully managed to tie Romania to the USSR.

The fraying ideological alliance between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Romanian Communist Party and the Romanians' disloyalty explain the why Moscow implemented this counter-proliferation strategy. Bucharest's position on the Sino-Soviet split prompted Moscow's concern with the RCP's drift away from Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Romania's refusal to definitively disavow its friendship with the People's Republic of China had strategic implications as well, especially in relation to the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. Nuclear technology transfers gave Moscow the opportunity to keep the Romanians in check.

Atoms from the East

In the early 1960s, the growing tensions between Romania and the USSR meant that Bucharest's attempt to secure Soviet nuclear technology was doomed to failure. Despite the Soviets' 1963 promise to deliver the much sought after nuclear power plant (NPP), the assistance never came.¹ The personal antipathy between Nikita Khrushchev and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej reduced Romania's chances of getting Soviet nuclear technology even further. The Romanians exasperated the Soviets with their requests for assistance. On the occasion of a visit by a high-

¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 18/1963, Minutes of conversation between Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Yuri Andropov, April 3, 1963, 2-25.

level Romanian delegation to Moscow in June 1964, Khrushchev complained about the many responsibilities incumbent on the USSR. Everybody wanted something from Moscow, Khrushchev complained:

The Vietnamese are grabbing us by the short and curlies, and ask us to help them. They say: you are the big brother and you must give us what we are asking for, as the Albanians used to say, and then they spit at us in the face. [...] And now, you [the Romanians] want to bust my chops.²

But as the dust from the Khrushchev–Gheorghiu-Dej row was settling, with both leaders out of the picture in 1965, the new General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, Nicolae Ceaușescu, resumed Romania’s lobbying for a Soviet nuclear power plant, sending a nuclear experts delegation to the USSR.³ Ceaușescu, at his first Congress as Secretary General of the Romanian Communist Party in 1965, set the main medium-term targets for Romania’s nuclear energy programme far beyond Romania’s capabilities. He stated that by 1970 Romania must produce 32–34 billion kilowatts hour (kWh) and by 1975 55–60 billion kWh. In other words, Romania’s energy sector had to double its output by 1970 and triple it by 1975.⁴ Ceaușescu stressed on the share nuclear power

² ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 36/1964, Discussions between the two delegations after the official talks ended on July 7, 1964, 209. Khrushchev’s profanities were reproduced euphemistically.

³ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 24/1965, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Ivan Kuzmich Zhegalin, June 3, 1965, 3.

⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 25/1965, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Andrei Grechko, June 16, 1965, 7.

plants would have in Romania's energy mix: At least 1000 MW out of the total output had to come from nuclear power plants.⁵

Despite the Soviets' solid arguments about the exorbitant costs of NPPs, Ceaușescu remained firm in his belief that Romania must have nuclear power.⁶ Therefore, the Soviets' delays infuriated him. Bucharest changed its acquisition strategy from invoking Soviet generosity (in the 1950s) to excoriating Moscow for its reluctance to share its nuclear weapons with Romania. On September 7, 1966, in a meeting with Arvīds Pelše, the Chairman of the Party Control Committee of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Ceaușescu complained that "you [the Soviets] are too secretive about things: energy plants, missiles, the A-bomb!"⁷ Pelše, who intensely disliked Ceaușescu, retorted: "Come [visit us] and we'll show you!" During the same meeting, Ceaușescu also displayed his frustration towards Moscow's unwillingness to share its technology with its East European satellites. "How come 500 MW nuclear plants are still secret?" he asked his Soviet

⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 24/1965, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Ivan Kuzmich Zhegalin, June 3, 1965, 3; Report of the Central Committee of the RCP regarding

the activity of the party in the interval between the 8th Congress and the 9th Congress of the RCP;

The Report of Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, July 19-24, CNSAS, http://www.cnsas.ro/documente/istoria_comunism/documente_PMR_PCR/congrese/1965%20Raport%20la%20Congresul%20IX.pdf

⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 25/1965, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Andrei Grechko, June 16, 1965, 8.

⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 113/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Arvīds Pelše, September 7, 1966, 11.

interlocutors. The Soviet Ambassador to Bucharest, A. Basov, who customarily attended such meetings, could not provide the Romanian leader with a satisfactory explanation.⁸ Ceaușescu then pointed out the practices of Western countries with which Romania had entered negotiations for nuclear technology, such as Germany, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom: their technology, once on the market, was no longer a secret. Ceaușescu was willing to pay for Soviet patents at the price charged on the global market.⁹ However, the Soviets did not budge, as Ceaușescu's poor attempt to pit them against the Westerners fell on deaf ears.

Since 1958, but especially after the Chinese nuclear weapon test in 1964, Moscow had implemented a comprehensive non- and counter-proliferation strategy.¹⁰ After failing to apply safeguards to any of the facilities exported in the 1950s, due to (perhaps misplaced) optimism about its ability to control its allies, the USSR made a U-turn in its nuclear cooperation policy. Not only did Moscow limit its export offers to only light water reactors, which made its customers dependent on Soviet highly enriched uranium (HEU), but it also made nuclear assistance conditional

⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 113/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Arvids Pelše, September 7, 1966, 13.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Gloria Duffy, *Soviet Nuclear Energy: Domestic and International Policies* (Santa Monica: RAND, December 1979), 3-11; Potter, "The Soviet Union and Nuclear Proliferation," 470.

on its customers returning all spent fuel rods to the USSR.¹¹ As was also true for the US, the Soviets realized that with every additional new member of the nuclear powers club, Moscow's clout weakened.¹² So, keeping nuclear weapons out of the hands of other powers was in the Soviet Union's interest. However, the Soviets knew that their denial policy could just as well provoke a 'fraternal country' into building nuclear weapons. Cutting off nuclear assistance to China only provoked Beijing to build the atomic bomb without help from the outside.¹³ A discussion with the RCP leadership in March 1967 confronted the Soviets with the possibility that the Romanians might take their cue from Beijing. Ion Gheorghe Maurer, the Romanian Prime-Minister, candidly confessed that Romania would probably try to build a nuclear weapon if it had the means to do so.¹⁴ An alarmed Brezhnev urged Bucharest to inform him if it wanted to build a nuclear bomb.¹⁵ After this fateful encounter, Moscow realized it was faced with a 'lose-lose' situation: nuclear technology transfers bolstered recipient countries' ability to

¹¹ Potter, "The Soviet Union and Nuclear Proliferation," 470.

¹² On the US position, see ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 19/1957, Minutes of conversation between Andrei Gromyko and John Foster Dulles, October 5, 1957, 18-36. On the Soviet position on the spread of nuclear weapons, see: ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 14/1967, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, March 17-18, 1967; Potter, "The Soviet Union and Nuclear Proliferation," 468.

¹³ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 79/1976, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and John S. Foster and A.M. Aikin, Atomic Energy Canada, Ltd., June 26, 1976, 10.

¹⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 14/1967, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, March 17-18, 1967, 68.

¹⁵ Ibid.

build their own arsenals, but, at the same time, a policy of nuclear denial emboldened proliferants to seek nuclear weapons on their own.

Romania's nuclear ambitions worried Moscow not least because of Bucharest's ambivalence towards the Sino-Soviet split. Initially, the Kremlin lived under the impression that Bucharest had come back into the fold. As Chapter Three has showed, Brezhnev and Kosygin breathed a sigh of relief in the summer of 1966, when Ceaușescu and Maurer prevented Zhou Enlai from delivering a vituperative speech targeting the Soviet Union.¹⁶ However, Romania's spat with Beijing was short-lived. Détente, seen as the relaxation of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union, also held the promise of additional room for manoeuvre for Romania. Small and medium-sized countries could be more assertive, Ceaușescu thought, in a world where the boundaries of the superpowers' spheres of influence were getting blurred.¹⁷ Helping China re-enter the international arena now became one of Ceaușescu's main foreign policy objectives.

¹⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 87/1966, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Zhou Enlai, Eforie, June 16-23, 1966.

¹⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 8/1969, Meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact, Budapest, March 17, 1969, 27.

March 1967: Lecturing Nixon on China

Shortly after Bucharest jolted Brezhnev with its nuclear ambitions, Ceaușescu met Richard Nixon, now the former US Vice President. Bucharest was one of the stopovers in Nixon's four-continent tour, and Nixon was particularly impressed with the "outbursts of friendship from the people," especially since the Soviet leadership shunned him.¹⁸ Nixon's curiosity about China, together with the fact that the entire tour was meant to inform his international affairs agenda, indicated to the Romanians that, if elected president, Nixon would take a U-turn on relations with Beijing. Unlike other US leaders, who preferred to ignore China, Nixon wanted to know whether there was a future for US-China relations. "We Americans," Nixon said on March 22, 1967,

understand that without ending the war in Vietnam, the odds for establishing a line of communication with China are slim. This is why I asked you for your opinion on China. What will happen? What should we do? What should Romania, USSR, the US do about China?¹⁹

¹⁸ Richard M. Nixon, *RN. The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset&Dunlap, 1978), 281-282; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 15/1967, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Richard Nixon, March 22, 1967, 16; Miller Center, University of Virginia, White House Tapes, Nixon Tapes Transcripts, Telephone Tapes, Tape 001-150, Conversation between Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, April 18, 1971.

¹⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 15/1967, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Richard Nixon, March 22, 1967, 19.

Nixon's rationale anticipated his détente strategy, which started from the recognition of American decline and the growth of multipolarity.²⁰ A country with China's potential, while innocuous at that moment because of the economic problems it was facing, could pose a significant military challenge in 20 years. Moreover, an isolated China would represent a threat to global peace.²¹ Nixon's instincts to ask the Romanians for information on China made sense, as the Cultural Revolution had made Beijing turn inwards, recalling its ambassadors from foreign capitals and cutting down on its involvement in international affairs. Bucharest, however, remained knowledgeable about the CCP thanks to its diplomats in Beijing and its contacts and exchanges between mid-level party members.²²

Nixon's questions gave Ceaușescu a unique opportunity to show off his firsthand experience in dealing with Beijing. Not only did he seek to impress Nixon by mentioning his personal visit to China in 1964 before he became General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, but he also proceeded to lecture

²⁰ Svetlanta Savranskaya and William Taubman, "Soviet Foreign Policy, 1962-1975," in Melvyn Leffler, Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 147; Hanhimäki, "Détente in Europe," 200; Robert D. Schulzinger, "Détente in the Nixon-Ford Years, 1969-1976," in Melvyn Leffler, Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 374; John Lamberton Harper, *The Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 167.

²¹ RNPL, Series II: Trip File, Wilderness Years, File: Bucharest, Romania, March 22 – 23 1967, Box 9, Memorandum of conversation between Former Vice President Nixon and Secretary General Ceaușescu, March 22, 1967, 22.

²² Nicholas Khoo, *Collateral damage: Sino-Soviet rivalry and the termination of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 48-49.

Nixon on what needed to be done. Everybody knows China is a big country, but people did not understand China and they did not try to establish effective relations with China, Ceaușescu lamented.²³ Establishing greater mutual understanding, developing relations with China, and eliminating mistrust were the solutions. China's isolation, and the implicit danger this situation could pose, was the fault of the US. Ignoring China's actions during the First and Second Taiwan Strait Crises (1954–1955 and 1958), Ceaușescu praised Beijing's "caution and wisdom in solving international issues," which implied that China was not the irrational actor many American leaders vilified, but a reasonable interlocutor with whom the US could sit down. "What is there to be gained from [isolating China]?" he wondered. Washington's approach towards Beijing was rotten to its core.

Nothing will stop China from becoming a great industrial and economic power. If one imagines that in 50 years from now China will continue to be a second-rank power, one does not have a very realistic view of international affairs. One hundred years ago the US was quite backward, the UK was ruling the world. Then France took over, and so on. Now things have changed.²⁴

Great powers are destined to rise and fall, which for Ceaușescu meant that trying to keep China down was a futile effort. "China raises a fundamental problem: it

²³ RNPL, Series II: Trip File, Wilderness Years, File: Bucharest, Romania, March 22-23 1967, Box 9, Memorandum of conversation between Former Vice President Nixon and Secretary General Ceaușescu, March 22, 1967, 9.

²⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 15/1967, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Richard Nixon, March 22, 1967, 21.

should be given its seat at the United Nations, to which it has a legitimate claim.”²⁵ Its influence at the UN could only be beneficial, he argued. Even if it “managed to coalesce a majority of states around it, it would only be able to do so by promoting peace because that would be the only way to garner the support of other nations.”²⁶ Ceaușescu’s message to Nixon was straightforward: “[the US] should take the first step and let China assume its seat at the UN.”²⁷

Nixon thought otherwise; the main impediment for Sino-American rapprochement was the Vietnam War, he believed, not China’s presence at the UN. He retorted, “I foresee that when the Vietnam War ends, relations between the US and China will be normalized.”²⁸ He then underlined another pillar of his future détente policy: driving a wedge between Moscow and Beijing. “Our impression is that the conflict between the Soviets and the Chinese is a family quarrel, which, as you well know, are the most difficult conflicts to solve.”²⁹ Ceaușescu agreed but managed to turn Nixon’s argument on its head. “I also think that ending the Vietnam War would have a favourable influence [on normalizing relations with China]. But this depends very much on the US,”³⁰ he

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ RNPL, Series II: Trip File, Wilderness Years, File: Bucharest, Romania, March 22-23 1967, Box 9, Memorandum of conversation between Former Vice President Nixon and Secretary General Ceaușescu, March 22, 1967, 11.

²⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 15/1967, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Richard Nixon, March 22, 1967, 22.

³⁰ Idem, 22-23.

asserted. “If the US stopped its bombing, Mr. Ceaușescu was confident that negotiations could begin.”³¹ At the end of this very important conversation, Nixon made a last remark on China, signalling his willingness to reach out to Beijing: “Either the US or the USSR (or together) will have to talk to China. Otherwise, progress on nuclear disarmament will be very dangerous.”³² Nixon then made Ceaușescu an offer he could not refuse: “In the future I am convinced that Romania’s foreign policy will play a very useful role [in relations between Beijing and Washington].”³³

The foundation for Bucharest’s involvement in the Sino-American rapprochement was thus set. This arrangement was mutually beneficial. Nixon was aware that Ceaușescu used his foreign policy to legitimize his rule in the eyes of the Romanian population and to create a reputation for himself as an international player. He also knew that Romania was a ‘frenemy’, not ‘the enemy of the enemy’. Bucharest’s opening to the West did not mean that Romania would either terminate its alliance with the Soviet Union or cease its support for countries that were at war with the US, and Nixon was perfectly aware that Moscow enjoyed unrivalled influence over Bucharest, since Soviet-Romanian

³¹ RNPL, Series II: Trip File, Wilderness Years, File: Bucharest, Romania, March 22-23 1967, Box 9, Memorandum of conversation between Former Vice President Nixon and Secretary General Ceaușescu, March 22, 1967, 11.

³² ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 15/1967, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Richard Nixon, March 22, 1967, 23.

³³ *Idem*, 24.

trade amounted to more than 30% of Romania's total foreign trade, eclipsing Romania's economic ties to any other single country. Also, Nixon knew that Romania was providing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam with weapons and financial aid, a fact which Nixon used in his electoral campaign speeches advocating an overhaul of Washington's foreign aid policy.³⁴ In July 1967, Nixon addressed the Bohemian Club in San Francisco, recommending that

we should have a policy which encourages more trade with the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. We must recognize, however, that to them trade is a political weapon. I believe in building bridges but we should build only our end of the bridge. For example, there should be no extension of long term credits or trade in strategic items with any nation, including the Soviet Union, which aids the enemy in North Vietnam.³⁵

After he became president, Nixon demonstrated a rather consistent approach towards East-West relations, making sure to maintain a connection between military and political issues, in what became known as "linkage policy."³⁶

³⁴ RNPL, Series II: Trip File, Wilderness Years, File: Bucharest, Romania, March 22 – 23 1967, Box 9, Memorandum of conversation between Former Vice President Nixon and Secretary General Ceaușescu, March 22, 1967, 22.

³⁵ *FRUS 1969-1976*, Vol. I, Foundations of Foreign Policy 1969-1972, Address by Richard Nixon to the Bohemian Club, San Francisco, July 29, 1967, 2-10.

³⁶ The US granted the USSR Most Favoured Nation clause in 1972. Harrington and Courtney, *Tweaking the Nose of the Russians*, 296-298.

Looking to Moscow for Help

Moscow frowned upon Ceaușescu's meeting with Nixon and declined his invitation to pay a visit to Bucharest. The Romanians soon found themselves regretting that they had antagonized Moscow. The flare-up in violence in the Middle East, which climaxed in the 1967 Six-Day War, gave rise to a shortage of oil which seriously affected Romanian exports.³⁷ It is generally assumed that Romania simply refused to follow the Soviet line on the Six-Day War. Recently declassified documents show that Romania adopted a dual position: it maintained its diplomatic relations with Israel while providing material aid to the United Arab Republic (a sovereign union between Egypt and Syria, which lasted from 1958 to 1971).³⁸ However, this conciliatory position did not bring the Romanians any favour with Moscow, whose bottom line remained that Bucharest did not show enough support for the Arab cause and proved unwilling to break off

³⁷ Romania had significant oil reserves, but it preferred to import lower quality Iranian crude for its own consumption, while exporting gasoline and other refined products derived from the more profitable and better quality Romanian oil. As Ceaușescu himself put it, "we do not want to extract more crude because we do not want to exceed the security coefficient which is at 4-5% of known reserves. Unlike the bourgeoisie, we do not want to deplete our reserves through intensive exploitation." Istituto Luigi Sturzo [Historical Archive of the Luigi Sturzo Institute], Fondo Giovanni Gronchi, Report on Romania, December 1962; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 70/1966, Minutes of conversation between Emil Bodnăraș and Pham Van Dong, May 6-10, 1966, 47.

³⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 91/1967, Minutes of conversation of the meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, June 13, 1967, 2.

diplomatic relations with Israel, striking a dissonant note with the rest of the Warsaw Pact.³⁹

An energy crisis was brewing as well. With the exception of Iran and Israel, most Middle Eastern countries grew very critical of Bucharest's reaction to the war, making the prospects of oil imports from the region rather grim. The Romanian leadership was caught off-guard: no contingency planning had been made for such a situation, and not meeting the energy objectives was not an option. The appeal of nuclear technology skyrocketed. In a few months, Romanian scientists and economic planners put together studies on introducing the atom into the national energy mix. One of the scenarios drawn by this team of experts forecast the introduction of nuclear energy in 1974, a projection which could not be met, given the slow pace of negotiations with Western suppliers.⁴⁰ A quicker route to harnessing the peaceful uses of the atom, the Romanians now thought, passed through Moscow.

As a result, Ceaușescu went to Moscow to meet with Brezhnev on December 14 and 15, 1967. On this occasion, he requested, once again, a nuclear power plant from the USSR. The Soviets readily agreed to provide Romania with

³⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 90/1967, Protocol of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party meeting, June 12, 1967.

⁴⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 147/1967, Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, October 17, 1967, 108-109.

this technology, but they reiterated the condition they had previously insisted on: that the Romanians import the nuclear fuel from the USSR.⁴¹ The Soviet leadership sent a proposal to Bucharest in a timely fashion, to which the Romanians replied at the end of April 1968.⁴² The Romanians were left with the promise that the Soviets would supply the NPP.⁴³ As Chapter Three suggests, Brezhnev may have agreed to sell the NPP to Romania to secure Bucharest's endorsement for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to gain a foothold in the Romanian nuclear programme. But the journey from this preliminary agreement to the actual signature of the Soviet-Romanian nuclear agreement proved to be an obstacle race.

From the Cannons of August 1968 to the Ides of March 1969

Events in Czechoslovakia shook Romanian-Soviet relations once again. As the Czechs helplessly watched Soviet tanks roll into Prague on August 20, 1968, Ceaușescu created waves of euphoria both at home and abroad by launching a virulent attack against the intervention of 'the Five' (the USSR, Poland, the

⁴¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 101/1967, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, December 15, 1967, 62-63.

⁴² Idem, 77-84.

⁴³ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 69/1968, Letter from Leonid Brezhnev to Nicolae Ceaușescu, May 21, 1968, 3.

German Democratic Republic, Hungary, and Bulgaria).⁴⁴ The day after the invasion, thousands of Romanians gathered in front of RCP headquarters to show their solidarity with Czechoslovakia and, more important, with Ceaușescu.⁴⁵ In the West, Ceaușescu's defiance of Moscow was regarded as "the return of the prodigal son," confirming a long-held belief that "ethnically, culturally and historically, Romanians belong to the West."⁴⁶ The ripple effects of the intervention quickly spread beyond mere bilateral relations or even regional issues. China now also became part of the problem.

The rumour fuelled by the Romanians that, after restoring order in Czechoslovakia, Moscow wanted to invade Romania and replace Ceaușescu with a more Soviet-friendly leader, caused great alarm in Beijing. Mao saw China as next in line.⁴⁷ Prior to the invasion, Beijing had taken a "plague on both your houses" attitude to the Czechoslovak-Soviet dispute, particularly because for the CCP, the reforms adopted by Alexander Dubček boded ill for the fate of communism worldwide.⁴⁸ Yet, the invasion of Czechoslovakia gave China

⁴⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 133/1968, Minutes of conversation at the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, August 21, 1968, 16-18.

⁴⁵ Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 202.

⁴⁶ NARA, RG 59, Decimal Files, RM/R File, 766.00/1-2758, Robert Thayer to the Secretary, Assessment of Situation in Rumania, The Director of Intelligence and Research, Washington, D.C., January 27, 1958; CREST, Rumania: The Maverick Satellite, October 1968, CIA-RDP78-03061A000400030017-8, 10.

⁴⁷ Khoo, *Collateral damage*, 48-49.

⁴⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, Intelligence Memorandum: World Communist Reaction to the Invasion of Czechoslovakia, LBJ Library, available at:

ammunition in its ideological dispute with the USSR: the Soviet leaders, whom the Chinese media called “a pack of robbers,” lacked legitimacy as the flag-bearers of the international communist movement.⁴⁹ The Romanians’ reaction to the events proved instrumental in the CCP’s efforts to publicly denounce the CPSU, as Romania offered the Chinese a pulpit from which to attack the USSR.

Three days after the invasion, Bucharest celebrated its national day (August 23), and ceremonies were organized at some of Romania’s embassies, including the one in Beijing. Zhou Enlai gave a speech in which he proclaimed that the Soviet leadership had “degenerated into social-imperialism and social-fascism.”⁵⁰ His reference to the “clique of Soviet revisionist leaders” made the diplomats of ‘the Five’, together with Mongolia’s representative, leave the party in protest.⁵¹ The Chinese, Zhou Enlai insisted, were fully behind the Romanians: “We will support your fight for your independence and sovereignty. Hang in

http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000126876.pdf, 3.

⁴⁹ Ibid; Iurii M. Galenovich, *Rossiysko-Kitaiskie Otnosheniya. Konets XIX – nachalo XXI v.* [Russian-Chinese Relations. The End of the 19th to the Beginning of the 20th Century] (Moscow: Institut Dal’nevo Vostoka RAN, 2007), 147; Vladimir P. Fedotov, *Polveka vmeste s Kitaem. Vospominaniya, zapisi, razmyshleniya* [Half a century with China. Recollections, letters, reflections] (Moscow: Rosspen, 2005), 365-366.

⁵⁰ Khoo, *Collateral damage*, 48.

⁵¹ AMAE, Telegrams from Beijing, vol. II, 1968, Telegram from Aurel Duma, the Romanian Ambassador to Beijing, to Petru Burlacu, Deputy Foreign Minister, regarding the speech delivered by Zhou Enlai, the Chinese Premier, at the cocktail party organized at the Romanian Embassy on Romania’s National Day, a speech in which he firmly supported the position of the Romanian government, August 23, 1968, 74350, 281-283, in Romulus Ioan Budura, *Relațiile Româno-Chineze, 1880-1974. Documente* [Romanian-Chinese Relations. Documents. 1880-1974] (Bucharest: Arhivele Naționale ale Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, 2005), 903.

there; if necessary, we'll send you cannons!"⁵² While the Romanians must have felt some gratification at the thought of having China on their side, they also did not want to provoke the Soviets unnecessarily.

So now, Bucharest actually drew closer to Moscow. Ceaușescu shifted his position towards the USSR partly because Brezhnev himself now adopted a more moderate stance, and partly because he did not want to provoke the Kremlin's ire even further. After the invasion, Brezhnev emphasized the need for normalization of Soviet-Czechoslovak relations and insisted that the troops would be withdrawn when socialism in Czechoslovakia was no longer in danger.⁵³ On August 25, in a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador to Bucharest, A. Basov, Ceaușescu pointed out the differences between Bucharest and Moscow, which stemmed both from the fact that Romania had not been included in the decision-making process that eventually resulted in the invasion, and from the fact that

⁵² Mihai Croitor, *Romania și conflictul soviet-chinez (1956-1971)* [Romania and the Sino-Soviet Split, (1956-1971)] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2009), 345 quoting AMAE, Telegrams from Beijing, vol. II, 1968, Telegram from Aurel Duma, the Romanian Ambassador to Beijing, to Petru Burlacu, Deputy Foreign Minister, regarding the note from Zhou Enlai, the Chinese Premier, about Romania's position towards the intervention in Czechoslovakia, August 24, 1968, 74325, in Budura, *Relațiile Româno-Chineze*, 905.

⁵³ Normalization amounted to "an attempt to restore conservative, pro-Soviet rule in Czechoslovakia." Matthew J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 39. On the withdrawal of troops, see: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny [Institute for Contemporary History – ÚSD], Archiv Ústředního výboru Kommunistické strany Československa [Archives of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia – AÚV KSČ], F. 07/15, Minutes of Soviet-Czechoslovak Talks in the Kremlin, August 23 and 26, 1968, published in Jaromír Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archives Documents Reader* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998), 469-473.

‘the Five’ did not try to deploy peaceful means to solve the crisis. These divergent views, Ceaușescu underlined, were temporary, and the Romanian leadership wanted to resolve them as soon as possible.⁵⁴

There was thus potential for the post-invasion dynamics to hurt Ceaușescu’s ties to Beijing. In addition, there were ‘differences of opinion’ between Beijing and Bucharest on the Prague Spring: Ceaușescu supported Dubček, whom the Chinese regarded as ‘revisionist’.⁵⁵ Luckily for the Romanians, the CCP leadership showed some leniency and did not equate Ceaușescu’s rhetorical support for Dubček with betrayal of the communist revolution.⁵⁶ Romania, after all, was not engulfed in the chaos and ideological disarray that threatened socialism in Czechoslovakia. By defending Dubček, Ceaușescu actually managed to rally the population around the RCP, achieving what the Chinese regarded as the ultimate goal of a communist party: the total unity of the people

⁵⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 111/1968, Minutes of conversation between Soviet ambassador Basov and Nicolae Ceaușescu, August 25, 1968, 4-5.

⁵⁵ AMAE, Telegrams from Beijing, vol. II, 1968, Telegram from Aurel Duma, the Romanian Ambassador to Beijing, to Corneliu Mănescu, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, regarding the briefing offered to the Chinese on the events in Czechoslovakia and on the position of the Romanian government, August 22, 1968, 74320, 272-274; AMAE, Telegrams from Beijing, vol. II, 1968, Telegram from Aurel Duma, the Romanian Ambassador to Beijing, to Petru Burlacu, Deputy Foreign Minister, regarding the note from Zhou Enlai, the Chinese Premier, about Romania’s position towards the intervention in Czechoslovakia, August 24, 1968, 74325, in Budura, *Relațiile Româno-Chineze*, 901-902; 905.

⁵⁶ AMAE, Telegrams from Beijing, vol. II, 1968, Telegram from Aurel Duma, the Romanian Ambassador to Beijing, to Corneliu Mănescu, Romanian Foreign Minister, regarding the briefing offered to the Chinese on the events in Czechoslovakia and on the position of the Romanian government, August 22, 1968, 74320, 272-274, published in Budura, *Relațiile Româno-Chineze*, 901-902.

around the party. Such was the control exerted by the RCP over Romanian society and politics that even the most adamant Romanian dissidents joined the party.⁵⁷ Moreover, it seemed that Ceaușescu was also showing signs of increasing ideological convergence with Mao Zedong by ordering the re-creation of the Patriotic Guards, the keystone to Romania's "Total People's War for the Defence of the Motherland," a concept Bucharest borrowed from the Chinese.⁵⁸ Therefore, even if the RCP and the CCP did not now see eye to eye on the Prague Spring, they shared a common goal: the unchallenged rule of the communist party. Romanians rushed to enlist in the Patriotic Guards, demonstrating the same fervour and zeal which the CCP tried to instil in the Chinese population through the Cultural Revolution.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Dragoș Petrescu, "Legitimacy, Nation-Building and Closure: Meanings and Consequences of the Romanians August of 1968" in M. Mark Stolarik (ed.), *The 'Prague Spring' and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia, 1968: Forty Years Later* (Mundelein, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2010), 237-259.

⁵⁸ Ivan Volgyes, *The Political Reliability of the Warsaw Pact Armies. The Southern Tier* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Press Policy Studies, 1982), 44-45.

⁵⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 72/1969, Minutes of conversation between Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Paul Niculescu Mizil and Zhou Enlai, September 11, 1969, 43.

Zhenbao Island

It was this very campaign to forge national unity in China through ‘war hysteria’ that brought the Chinese into direct conflict with the USSR in March 1969.⁶⁰ The Sino-Soviet border clashes on Zhenbao Island (on the Ussuri River) marked yet another turning point in the Cold War. This conflict between Moscow and Beijing presented the Chinese leadership with a new strategic outlook, in which the US became “a card to play against the common enemy, the Soviet Union.”⁶¹ Romania played an important role in this episode: by limiting Moscow’s ability both to close ranks among its East European allies and to use the Warsaw Pact to put pressure on China, Bucharest not only gained ground with the CCP leadership but also exposed the USSR on the European front, which ultimately facilitated the triangular diplomacy on which Nixon’s and Kissinger’s détente strategy was to rely.

The crisis on the Ussuri River had been brewing for at least five years, as both the Soviets and the Chinese had been amassing troops there since the mid-1960s.⁶² While skirmishes between Soviet and Chinese patrols had occurred as

⁶⁰ Soviet Report to East German Leadership on Sino-Soviet Border Clashes, March 2, 1969, German Federal Archive, SAMPO-BArch J IV 2/202/359. Translated by Christian F. Ostermann, available at: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116975>

⁶¹ Margaret MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao: the week that changed the world* (New York: Random House, 2008), 5.

⁶² Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 240; Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, 69.

early as 1967, it was not until January 1968 that the first Chinese border guards died.⁶³ Afterwards, the CCP leadership was more than eager to teach the Soviets a “bitter lesson.”⁶⁴ After a one-year reprieve, hostilities resumed as the Chinese planned an ambush on Soviet border guards. On March 2, as Lüthi points out, Soviet patrols “marched into the Chinese ambush,” killing scores of Soviet border guards.⁶⁵ The events caught the Kremlin by surprise: Brezhnev and Kosygin had reserved the month of March, as Crump shows, to set the Warsaw Pact house in order.⁶⁶ The Soviets were hoping to pass a series of reforms to the Warsaw Pact’s institutional framework, which had given rise to a great deal of bickering since the early 1960s. These changes would strengthen the military command of the Warsaw Pact and allow it to act more decisively in the international arena.⁶⁷ The Soviets tried to use the Chinese threat to solidify the Warsaw Pact, asking their East European allies for support “to prevent further border violations.”⁶⁸ Yet this was a political rather than a military move, since Article 4 of the Warsaw Treaty

⁶³ Soviet Report to East German Leadership on Sino-Soviet Border Clashes, March 2, 1969, German Federal Archive, SAMPO-BArch J IV 2/202/359. Translated by Christian F. Ostermann, available at: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116975>

⁶⁴ Lorenz Lüthi, “Restoring Chaos to History: Sino-Soviet-American Relations, 1969,” *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 210 (June 2012), 382.

⁶⁵ Polish-Soviet Talks in Moscow, March 1, 1969, source: Andrzej Paczkowski, ed. *Tajne Dokumenty Biura Politycznego PRL-ZSRR, 1956-1970*. London: Aneks Publishers, 1996. Translated for CWIHP by Malgorzata K. Gnoinska; available at: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112937>

⁶⁶ Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered*, 319, 323.

⁶⁷ Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation. American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institutions, 1994), 130.

⁶⁸ Lüthi, “Restoring Chaos,” 383.

stipulated that the principle of collective security (i.e., an attack against one is an attack against all) applied only in the eventuality of an armed attack in Europe.⁶⁹

The Kremlin knew that China was not interested in an all-out war, but solely in a limited conflict which they could use for their “anti-Soviet propaganda at home” and at the 9th CCP Congress, which was scheduled to begin on April 1, 1969.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, on March 15, to show the Chinese that the USSR would not capitulate, Brezhnev ordered a massive counterattack. To Brezhnev’s chagrin, the operation failed to dislodge the Chinese from the island.⁷¹ This retaliation, however, combined with the rumour spread by the Western press that the Kremlin might launch a preemptive attack on China’s nuclear facilities and with Nixon’s decision to deploy a new anti-ballistic missile system meant to protect the US from both the USSR and China, made the Chinese feel under attack on two fronts.⁷² Making peace with one of the two enemies became a priority for Beijing, which bolstered the Romanians’ importance in the eyes of Mao and Zhou.

⁶⁹ The Warsaw Treaty, May 14, 1955, published in Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne, *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005), 78.

⁷⁰ Polish-Soviet Talks in Moscow, March 1, 1969, source: Andrzej Paczkowski, ed. *Tajne Dokumenty Biura Politycznego PRL-ZSRR, 1956-1970*. London: Aneks Publishers, 1996. Translated for CWIHP by Malgorzata K. Gnoinska; available at: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112937>

⁷¹ Lüthi, “Restoring Chaos”383.

⁷² Zhang Baijia, in Xiaoyuan Liu and Vojtech Mastny (eds.), *China and Eastern Europe, 1960s-1980s. Proceedings of the International Symposium: Reviewing the History of Chinese-East European Relations from the 1960s to the 1980s, Beijing, 24-26 March 2004*, 32, available at:

Ironically, the Soviets' musings strikingly resembled those of the Chinese, and at fault were not only Western imperialists, but the Soviets' own allies in Eastern Europe, the Romanians. In mid-March, the Soviets pressed their Warsaw Pact allies to issue a joint condemnation of China's encroachment on Zhenbao Island, which Bucharest vehemently opposed.⁷³ The Romanians' obstructionism stemmed from their unwillingness to let the Warsaw Pact be transformed from its original purpose of "defence against an imperialist aggression in Europe" into an entity invading and fighting against other communist countries.⁷⁴ Also, condemning another socialist country within the Warsaw Pact framework, especially for what had started as a minor incident, set a dangerous precedent, which could later be invoked against countries like Romania. The RCP leadership, since the invasion of Czechoslovakia, had tried to downplay Moscow's accusations that Romanian border guards attacked Soviet patrols.⁷⁵ The Romanians' veto of Brezhnev's attempt to turn the entire Warsaw Pact against China made the Soviets appear weak, unable to muster even the support of its

<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=CAB359A3-9328-19CC-A1D2-8023E646B22C&lng=en&id=10435>

⁷³ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 40/1969, Report by Nicolae Ceaușescu to the Politburo of the Romanian Communist Party on the Political Consultative Committee Meeting in Budapest, March 18, 1969, 4-13.

⁷⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 7/1969, Memo regarding the talks between Nicolae Ceaușescu and the leaders of the delegations at the PCC meeting in Budapest, March 16-17, 1969, 31-33.

⁷⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Organizatorică [Organizational Section], 55/1968, Response to the note filed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR regarding incidents on the Soviet-Romanian border, September 1, 1968, 2-5.

formal allies.⁷⁶ In an even more brazen move, the RCP leadership saluted and endorsed the 9th CCP Congress, thus scoring important points with Beijing.⁷⁷

Empty Words

For the Soviets, the RCP's endorsement of the CCP appears to have been the last straw. Brezhnev and Kosygin invited Ceaușescu and Maurer to Moscow for talks in mid-May 1969. This meeting represented the first encounter between the party and state leaderships of the two countries since the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The two delegations agreed to speak their minds. Neither side beat about the bush, so recriminations abounded. Brezhnev voiced his stupefaction at Ceaușescu's position on Czechoslovakia:

You blew the Czechoslovak matter out of proportion. You created guards, you armed the workers, you created the impression that the USSR would attack you. [...] Your trip to Czechoslovakia poured gasoline on fire. [...] You [Ceaușescu] gave many speeches in [August], your newspapers portrayed us as aggressors, and then you went to Czechoslovakia. I know what you said. But of course [your speeches] were interpreted by right-wing forces as a form of support. You didn't

⁷⁶ AMAE, Telegrams from Beijing, vol. II, 1969, Telegram from Aurel Duma, the Romanian Ambassador to Beijing, to Corneliu Manescu, Romanian Foreign Minister, regarding the comments made by the Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister, Qiao Guanhua about the RCP's participation at the Moscow meeting, June 17, 1969, 56265, 138, published in Budura, *Relațiile Româno-Chineze*, 924.

⁷⁷ AMAE, Telegrams from Beijing, vol. I, 1969, Telegram from Aurel Duma, the Romanian Ambassador to Beijing, to Marin Mihai, Deputy Foreign Minister, regarding the echo of the message sent by the RCP CC to the CCP CC, April 17, 1969, 56158, 225-226, published in Budura, *Relațiile Româno-Chineze*, 916.

actually have to say anything, the very fact that you went there, when the atmosphere was so loaded, was perceived as a form of support.⁷⁸

Ceaușescu tried to defend himself by pointing out Moscow's discriminatory behaviour towards Bucharest. The USSR did not deliver its weapons supplies to Romania on time, it ignored the RCP's requests for economic and technological assistance, and it failed to consult with the Romanian leadership.⁷⁹ His pleas for closer economic ties, which, to his mind, morphed into tighter political relations, contradict the conventional narrative that his desire was to move away from Moscow. The Soviets would have none of it, however. The more the Romanians tried to justify their actions, the more intensely the Soviets attacked them. At the core of the problem lay ideological differences. Brezhnev emphasized that the USSR wanted to have good relations with Romania: "We have communist parties that share a Marxist-Leninist ideology. But lately Romania is drifting away from a series of political positions which we think should be shared by us all because of our common ideology."⁸⁰ The Romanian General Secretary realized that he had

⁷⁸ Brezhnev was referring to Ceausescu's visit to Czechoslovakia days before the invasion (August 15-17, 1968), when he and Czechoslovak President Ludvík Svoboda signed the Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance Treaty. The treaty included a mutual defence article, which Romania failed to respect when the troops of "the Five" invaded on the night between August 20 and August 21, 1968. ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 108/1968, Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance Treaty between Romania and Czechoslovakia, 112-116; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 25/1969, Minutes of conversation between the Romanian party and state delegation led by Nicolae Ceaușescu and the Soviet party and state delegation led by Leonid Brezhnev, May 16, 1969, 55, 79.

⁷⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 25/1969, Minutes of conversation between the Romanian party and state delegation led by Nicolae Ceaușescu and the Soviet party and state delegation led by Leonid Brezhnev, May 16, 1969, 28, 76, 80.

⁸⁰ *Idem*, 52.

painted himself into a corner: the Soviets already regarded his take on Marxism-Leninism as a brand of its own, which they called ‘Ceauşism’, akin to Maoism and Castrism.

Only a bold move could help him mend fences with Moscow. Renouncing Mao to the Soviets appeared the best solution at hand: not only would the Chinese not know about it, but such a statement also was not binding. So Ceauşescu took the plunge: “We disagree with the Chinese on the construction of socialism. We can’t apply those things.”⁸¹ A sceptical Kosygin exclaimed, “You’re trying to apply them!”⁸² Left with no counterargument, Ceauşescu barked back, “Maybe you’re trying to apply them!”⁸³ After taking a moment to calm down, Ceauşescu continued. “We told the Chinese we don’t agree with their approach to the USSR. [...] We do not support Mao’s ideas.”⁸⁴ Kosygin asked for concrete evidence, in the form of public statements. Backed by Maurer, the main figure on foreign policy in Ceauşescu’s early years, Ceauşescu thought he had a solid excuse: “We talked to the Chinese. We didn’t go public because we didn’t think it was the right moment to do so.”⁸⁵ “Taking sides would only worsen the situation,” Maurer chimed in.⁸⁶ Brezhnev hammered away: “Your position on

⁸¹ *Idem*, 71.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Idem*, 72.

⁸⁵ *Idem*, 73.

⁸⁶ *Idem*, 74.

China is strange. You don't want to upset either side." Luckily Maurer managed to diffuse the tension by making a joke. "We can upset you both! [...] You should appreciate our position of non-interference, if nothing else."⁸⁷ After having a good laugh, the two sides agreed to disagree, and it seemed that the Romanians' reassurances sufficed for the moment.

The Romanians also resorted to sending the Soviets on a guilt trip. To put pressure on the CPSU leadership to expedite the sale of the nuclear power reactor, Ceaușescu reminded Brezhnev and Kosygin about how Romanian spies had stolen military technology from the West and then shared it with the Soviet Union.⁸⁸ The Soviets agreed to help the Romanians, suggesting that they would not hold Bucharest's *past* relations with Beijing against the RCP.⁸⁹ The Romanians' tactics did not take the Soviets by surprise; Moscow knew that Bucharest sought to use its public criticism of the USSR to extract more assistance and additional benefits. But the Soviets were also fully aware that, out of necessity, the Romanians would forget all their criticism of the Chinese Communist Party.

⁸⁷ Idem, 75, 82.

⁸⁸ Idem, 30-32.

⁸⁹ Idem, 92.

Conclusion

Given Romania's ambivalence towards China, the USSR could not trust the Romanians with its nuclear secrets. At any given point, Bucharest might collude with Beijing behind Moscow's back. So the Soviets adopted a strategy similar to that applied by the RPC: although they sealed the nuclear deal with the Romanians on May 20, 1970, they were not planning on actually keeping their word. The agreement stipulated the purchase of the 440 MW VVER reactors for Romania's Olt River site, with a delivery deadline in 1978, which is why Romania put on hold its negotiations for NPPs with Western suppliers.⁹⁰ Then, the USSR repeatedly delayed the delivery of equipment and technology but never cancelled its nuclear cooperation agreement with Romania, permanently keeping the 440 MW VVER nuclear power plant on the Olt River on the back burner.⁹¹ The reactor never got built. In 1989, the only employees of the Olt nuclear plant were a director, an accountant, and a secretary.⁹² The strategy of denial by postponement offered the Soviets a solid shield against possible accusations of breaching the core principles of the ideological alliance with Romania. More

⁹⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 44/1970, Minutes of the Meeting of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, April 6, 1970, 15; ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Economică, 9/1970, Briefing regarding the Decision taken by the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party regarding the postponement of certain facilities in the National Nuclear Programme, October 10, 1970, 71.

⁹¹ Purica, "Ionel I. Purica," 11; Vladimir Sobell, *The Red Market: Industrial Co-operation and Specialisation in Comecon* (Aldershot: Gower, 1984), 150.

⁹² Purica, "Ionel I. Purica," 11; Sobell, *The Red Market*, 150.

important, Moscow's strategy stalled Romania's negotiations with Western nuclear suppliers for approximately four years.⁹³ It was not until 1973 that Bucharest resumed its pursuit of nuclear power reactors from the West, as the next chapters will show.

⁹³ CNSAS, D13490/5, Note regarding some technical-economic aspects of building nuclear power plants in Romania, 16 August 1973, 120-125.

Chapter Seven: Peace for Atoms II. The Sino-American Rapprochement and the TRIGA Research Reactor from the United States, 1969–1971

This chapter will deal with the political manoeuvring Romania undertook to obtain a nuclear research reactor from the United States. Chapter Four examined the ‘mediation for nuclear technology’ quid pro quo of the 1960s, when Bucharest’s close ties with North Vietnam enabled it to serve as a back channel between Washington and Hanoi. Thanks to this unorthodox barter, the Romanians and the Americans signed a Nuclear Cooperation Agreement which promised the delivery of nuclear technology. Now, in the early 1970s, the leadership in Bucharest managed to repeat this feat, using its good offices with Washington and Beijing as leverage in its negotiations with President Richard Nixon and his National Security Adviser, Henry A. Kissinger. Once again, Ceaușescu capitalized on Washington’s plans to end hostilities in Asia to gain access to nuclear technology, in what I call a ‘Peace for Atoms’ arrangement.

Romania's role in the Sino-American rapprochement has been analysed before.¹ However, the existing scholarship misses the important role that nuclear technology played in Bucharest's efforts, and mistakenly assumes that the Romanian mediation did not achieve much. Thanks to recently released documents, this analysis can contribute towards a fuller narrative and an interpretation of events which casts the Romanian initiative in a different light. Far from being a botched attempt at 'to-ing and fro-ing' between Washington and Beijing, Bucharest's diplomatic machinations paid off handsomely. The Romanian back channel, because of its simultaneous connections with the Americans, the Soviets, and the Chinese, made a valuable contribution to Nixon's opening to China, while also advancing the Romanian nuclear programme. The reward for the frantic shuttle diplomacy that Romanian officials carried out for almost two years – i.e., a TRIGA nuclear reactor – brought Ceaușescu's nuclear ambitions closer to fruition. The American-Romanian nuclear deal, which included the transfer of a sensitive quantity of highly enriched uranium, became the first and only such transaction between the US and a Warsaw Pact country. The 'Peace for Atoms II' story suggests that offering political services can go a long way.

¹ Croitor, *Romania și conflictul soviet-chinez*, 343-361; Munteanu, "Communication Breakdown?," 615-631.

Nixon in Bucharest

The seeds of the Romanian involvement in the Sino-American rapprochement were planted before Nixon came to the White House, during his so-called 'wilderness years' (1962–1968) when, as we have seen in the previous chapter, he paid a visit to Bucharest as a private citizen.² Nixon's interest in normalizing relations with Beijing indicated to Ceaușescu that the world was on the cusp of a tidal change in international relations. More important, Ceaușescu realized that Romania, if it took the right steps, could greatly benefit from a Sino-American rapprochement, first and foremost in the nuclear arena. When Nixon asked Ceaușescu to mediate between the US and China, the Romanian leader jumped at the opportunity, but he emphasized that Romania ought to have access to nuclear technology.³ Bucharest knew it had to perform a delicate balancing act: the Sino-Soviet split, discussed in Chapter Six, prompted Nixon's overture to Beijing, but it also placed Bucharest under considerable strain. For two years, the Romanians tried to keep a low profile so as not to get caught in the cross fire.

² RNPL, Series II: Trip File, Wilderness Years, File: Bucharest, Romania, March 22 – 23 1967, Box 9, Memorandum of conversation between Former Vice President Nixon and Secretary General Ceaușescu, March 22, 1967; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 15/1967, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Richard Nixon, March 22, 1967, 17.

³ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 15/1967, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Richard Nixon, March 22, 1967, 17.

Tensions were running high, especially after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and the military clashes on Zhenbao Island in March 1969. The Romanians had to deal with the intransigent Chinese, unwilling to make peace with either Washington or Moscow; the perplexed Soviets, embarrassed about having failed to restore unity to the international communist movement; and the ambitious Americans, willing to dig into their deep pockets to get what they wanted. Serving as a mediator in these circumstances was no easy task, yet a glimmer of hope showed itself in May 1969. The Chinese now started to warm to the Romanians, especially since they felt increasingly isolated by the rest of the communist bloc. Qiao Guanhua, a Deputy Minister in the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told Aurel Duma, the Romanian Ambassador to Beijing, that

lately, the Soviets have been intensifying military drills along the border. [...] The Chinese government believes that these actions represent intimidation attempts ordered by the Soviet leadership, who believes solely that might is right and who imagines that it could intimidate peoples with the A-bomb. This is wrong; if Romania was not intimidated, how could China [ever] be intimidated?⁴

Faced with the prospects of large-scale military operations and Soviet diplomatic encirclement, the Chinese seemed to have moved an inch closer to rapprochement with the US. While Qiao Guanhua still lashed out at the US for supporting Taiwan, his statements revealed an important change in Beijing's position: "The

⁴ AMAE, Telegrams from Beijing, vol. II, 1969, Telegram from Aurel Duma to Corneliu Mănescu, May 13, 1969, 56201, 24-28, published in Budura, *Relațiile Româno-Chineze*, 918.

Chinese government will assess the US position towards China by judging deeds not just words.”⁵ Bucharest knew that Washington’s interest in normalizing relations with China had to go beyond mere rhetoric; Nixon had to do something to prove to Mao that Washington meant business. The very idea that the Chinese were open to being persuaded with ‘deeds’ was a significant shift.

Beijing had not yet decided to normalize relations with the US. However, it seemed that rumours in the Eastern bloc about Mao’s rationale for stirring up tensions with Moscow became a self-fulfilling prophecy: “This [the attack] is some kind of an offer from China to America, a signal that there is no possibility for an understanding between China and the USSR. This is an offer extended to [US President Richard] Nixon so he can take advantage of it all, especially all the more since Nixon has not yet decided what direction to take in his policy.”⁶ Although these gossips might have overestimated Beijing’s careful planning of events, the Chinese did appear to experience a significant shift in their foreign policy, especially with regards to the US.

So on June 3 the Romanians tested the waters and attempted their first mediation effort between China and the US. The Romanian Ambassador to

⁵ Idem, 919.

⁶ Polish-Soviet Talks in Moscow, March 1, 1969, source: Andrzej Paczkowski, ed. *Tajne Dokumenty Biura Politycznego PRL-ZSRR, 1956-1970*. London: Aneks Publishers, 1996. Translated for CWIHP by Malgorzata K. Gnoinska; available at: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112937>

Beijing informed Qiao Guanhua that a group of American senators wanted to pay an unofficial visit to China.⁷ He replied that “we [the Chinese] are in favour of peaceful coexistence with all countries, even with the United States, but we can’t apply the principles of this policy if the US is hostile towards China.”⁸ The “new” approach adopted by the US, according to Qiao Guanhua, was nothing but old wine in new bottles: “Nixon’s policy is still fundamentally reactionary, war-mongering, and aggressive towards China.”⁹ For tensions between the US and China to subside, Washington had to pull out of Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait.¹⁰ Compared to the bellicosity and intransigence of previous years, Beijing’s new position nevertheless signalled a shift towards ‘constructive criticism’. Long gone were the days when Mao threatened the US with nuclear war, warning that the principle of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) did not apply to China because of its demography. Now Beijing, despite its denunciation of US policies, mapped out the specific steps Washington had to take to make reconciliation possible.

⁷ The archival records in Romania do not specify the names of these senators. It is plausible that the Romanians were acting as a messenger on behalf of Senator Mike Mansfield, who sent a letter to Beijing (written in close coordination with the White House) on June 17. Lüthi, “Restoring Chaos to History,” 388.

⁸ AMAE, Telegrams from Beijing, vol. II, 1969, Telegram from Aurel Duma to Corneliu Mănescu, June 3, 1969, 56228, 74-77, published in Budura, *Relațiile Româno-Chineze*, 921.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

This new thinking emerged from the state of seclusion Mao found himself in after the events of mid-March. “We are now isolated. No one wants to make friends with us.”¹¹ Romania was among the few countries still standing by China, at least on some occasions. At times, Romania caved in to Soviet pressure, or was simply afraid to manifest excessive support for China, a country that was, after all, thousands of miles away. Even though Romania succeeded in blocking the USSR from turning the Warsaw Pact against China in March 1969, as Chapter Six showed, it could not prevent the CPSU from convening an international gathering of communist parties on June 5, in Moscow.¹² On this occasion, Brezhnev launched a scathing attack against the CCP leadership for their “splittist activities” and called for the creation of a new collective security system in Asia similar to the Warsaw Pact, a project which never received enough support to be implemented.¹³ The Romanians, although critical of the Soviets’ attempt to turn the meeting into an anti-China gathering, refrained from any dramatic actions such as leaving the meeting in protest.

Scared of worsening its own isolation within the Eastern bloc, Bucharest urged the CPSU to adopt a more constructive position towards the CCP, instead

¹¹ Quoted in Lüthi, “Restoring Chaos,” 383.

¹² ANIC, CC PCR, *Relații Externe*, 39/1969, Protocol of the Meeting of the Executive Committee, March 16, 1969, 2.

¹³ Lüthi, “Restoring Chaos,” 387.

of attacking it.¹⁴ In a conversation with the recently appointed Chinese Ambassador to Bucharest, Zhang Haifeng, Ceaușescu said that he personally tried to improve the atmosphere at the Moscow meeting, and he implied that it was thanks to his efforts that the final documents did not contain any direct attacks against any party.¹⁵ This faint attempt to mollify the Chinese gained Ceaușescu some ground. Zhang underlined that “China appreciates Romania’s foreign policy and understands the position Romania finds itself in.”¹⁶ In Beijing, Qiao Guanhua was even more appreciative of Romania’s attitude, telling Duma that the Chinese leadership had received Romania’s stance at the Moscow conference with “delight and admiration” and assuring him that the Sino-Romanian friendship would continue to develop.¹⁷

Beijing’s keenness to improve ties with Bucharest was part of Mao’s strategy to counter the Soviet political and diplomatic offensive in Asia and to redress China’s isolation. The CCP leadership also apologized for the violence committed against foreign embassies during the Cultural Revolution and reassigned ambassadors to approximately twenty foreign capitals around the

¹⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 39/1969, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu, Paul Niculescu Mizil, Gheorghe Stoica, Mihai Dalea and Leonid Brezhnev, Nikolai Podgorny, Alexei Kosygin, June 5, 1969, 81.

¹⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 40/1969, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Zhang Haifeng, the Chinese Ambassador to Bucharest, June 24, 1969, 4.

¹⁶ *Idem*, 5.

¹⁷ AMAE, Telegrams from Beijing, vol. II, 1969, Telegram from Aurel Duma to Corneliu Mănescu, June 17, 1969, 56265, 138, published in Budura, *Relațiile Româno-Chineze*, 924.

globe, excepting the usual six opponents: the USSR, the GDR, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Mongolia.¹⁸ Mao also mandated the four marshals (Chen Yi, Nie Rongzhen, Ye Jianying, and Xu Xiangqian) to redo a report on international relations, on which they had started working before the March 2 ambush.¹⁹ The four marshals were, together with Zhou Enlai, part of a group of moderate leaders who were at loggerheads with the radical groups led by Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, and Lin Biao. The four marshals' analysis, submitted on July 11, 1969, concluded that although Beijing should continue to oppose both the United States and the Soviet Union, war with the US was highly unlikely, while a quick Soviet "war of aggression against China" was possible.²⁰ Even if Beijing had not yet decided to pursue Sino-American rapprochement, the foundations for later developments were starting to take shape. It is striking that, even before the four marshals finished the report, the Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister intimated to the Romanian Ambassador Beijing's thoughts about peaceful coexistence with the US.

¹⁸ Lüthi, "Restoring Chaos," 386.

¹⁹ *Idem*, 385.

²⁰ "A preliminary assessment of the possibility of war," Excerpts of the report to Mao by a special group headed by Chen Yi, the Foreign Minister, 11 July 1969; edited by Xiong Xianghui, Beijing, Liaowang, August 1992, published in Barbara Barnouin, Yu Changgen, *Chinese Foreign Policy During the Cultural Revolution* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1998), 139-142.

At his end, Nixon, now US President, adopted several measures meant to ease tensions with China, such as lifting travel and trade restrictions, but he failed to signal these changes to Beijing because he did not want to make his moves public.²¹ In early July, he tasked his foreign policy aides with writing National Security Study Memorandum 63, which dealt with the implications of the Sino-Soviet rivalry. His National Security Adviser, Henry A. Kissinger, had already been briefed (on June 24, 1969) about the positive effects a Sino-American rapprochement could have on US-USSR relations. By playing off Moscow and Beijing against one another, Washington could improve relations with both. It was in this context that in late spring 1969, the RCP leadership invited Nixon to visit Bucharest that summer.

Comrade Nixon

Nixon accepted the invitation in early July 1969 and visited Bucharest a few weeks later, squeezing in a stopover during his return trip from the Southern Pacific, where he had witnessed the Apollo 11 splashdown. A decision on whether or not to loosen US export controls vis-à-vis Romania, including in the field of atomic energy, depended on a variety of factors, including Bucharest's position

²¹ Lüthi, "Restoring Chaos," 389.

on international issues such as the Sino-Soviet confrontation. Since the trip had been planned at such short notice, the NSC had little time to draft proposals and memoranda on how to improve relations with the Romanians. Therefore, Nixon and Kissinger would have to partly continue the policies adopted under Johnson and partly improvise. Kissinger did underline, however, that the Romanians could be useful as conduits to Beijing.²²

On August 2, 1969, Nixon arrived in Bucharest. It was a glorious day: the sun was shining against a clear blue sky, and a gentle breeze made the scorching Bucharest air breathable. The RCP leadership knew the omens looked good as soon as the US President, to everyone's amusement, clumsily tried to pronounce a few words in Romanian. Hundreds of thousands of people lined the boulevards from the airport to downtown Bucharest to welcome the presidential motorcade and show their excitement for the first visit of a US president to Romania. Ceaușescu was beaming with pride: here he was, waving to the ecstatic crowds alongside Nixon, less than one year after the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

When the two leaders sat down for serious negotiations, Ceaușescu did not waste time with pleasantries. He cut straight to the chase, bringing up first and foremost the nuclear energy assistance issue: "I attach great importance to

²² NPM, NSC Files, President's Trip Files, President Nixon's Trip July-August 1969 Country Briefing Book The Philippines, to President Nixon's Trip July-August 1969 Facts Book Thailand Mr Kissinger, Box 454, Memorandum for the President From Kissinger, [July 1969].

cooperation in science and technology, because this field has a decisive part to play in the development of a country,” he pointed out.²³ He then sought to reassure Nixon that Romania did not pose any risks as far as nuclear proliferation was concerned: “[With] regard to physics, we don’t want nuclear weapons, but would wish to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.” He then took the whole issue apart piece by piece. Economic assistance from the US to Romania, including nuclear cooperation, was too low, he said. The US could take specific measures to address this problem. First, it could issue licenses to Romania to import equipment (including nuclear technology). Second, it could relax barriers to trade with Romania, so that Bucharest could earn enough money from exports to pay for the imports of American technology. Those two related matters could be solved with a single “magic bullet”: granting Romania Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status.

Nixon was forthcoming:

I want you to know I favor MFN treatment for Romania. Once the political problems of Vietnam War are gone, we will move expeditiously on this. I, that is the President, can now, without Congressional action, change the status of Romania on direct sales in several areas. I will do that. I will ease export licensing to Romania and Export/Import Bank questions where I can act administratively.²⁴

²³ NPM, NSC Files, Presidential/HAK MemCons, Box, 1023, Memorandum of conversation between President Richard M. Nixon and President Nicolae Ceaușescu, August 2, 1969.

²⁴ As noted in Chapter Four, Romania’s involvement in the Vietnam War excluded it from a series of financial benefits the US could grant.

In return Nixon asked Ceaușescu for help with China: “Frankly, if it serves your interest and the interest of your government, we would welcome your playing a mediating role between us and China.”²⁵ The conditions for this opening, according to Nixon, were ripe:

We know of the Soviet Union’s quarrel with China. That is one we will stay out of. Our policy is to have good relations with Soviet Union and eventually, when China changes its approach to other nations, we want to open communications channels with them to establish relations. One billion Chinese fenced in is a bomb about to explode.²⁶

Ceaușescu accepted the offer, but made sure to cover his back:

As to our willingness to mediate between the US and China—the US has every possibility to talk directly with the Chinese without mediation—

I will say we shall tell our opinion to the Chinese, and of your opinion of this problem. We shall act to establish relations on the basis of mutual understanding.²⁷

The context within which Nixon asked Ceaușescu to be a back channel to Beijing is significant. Shortly before arriving in Bucharest, Nixon had presented the core principles of the Nixon Doctrine at a press conference in Guam. He announced that while the US would keep its commitments to its allies and would continue to provide them with assistance and the protection of its extended nuclear

²⁵ NPM, NSC Files, Presidential/HAK MemCons, Box, 1023, Memorandum of conversation between President Richard M. Nixon and President Nicolae Ceaușescu, August 2, 1969. A similar proposal had been made to Pakistan around the same time. Kulik, *Sovetsko-kitaiski raskol*, 457.

²⁶ NPM, NSC Files, Presidential/HAK MemCons, Box, 1023, Memorandum of conversation between President Richard M. Nixon and President Nicolae Ceaușescu, August 2, 1969.

²⁷ Ibid.

deterrent, it sought to avoid being “dragged into conflicts such as the one we have in Vietnam.”²⁸

Vietnamization prepared the ground for the US withdrawal from Indochina, which, as Nixon reiterated in his conversation with Ceaușescu, was meant to put China at ease and set the foundation for rapprochement: “After Vietnam the US may normalize relations with China.”²⁹ Nixon’s intention to pull out of Vietnam delighted the Romanians, who had long maintained that the only way to end to bloodshed was an unconditional US withdrawal. However, in March 1967, Nixon had told Ceaușescu that the US would stay in Indochina for as long as necessary.³⁰ Now the ‘new’ Nixon had a ‘more realistic’ worldview. At the Politburo meeting that followed the visit of the American delegation, Ceaușescu lauded Nixon’s down-to-earth approach:

[the Americans] do not have this kind of feudal mentality, bureaucratic lordship, that one can see with certain communists [like the Soviets]. [Nixon] did not have the arrogance which afflicts others, even though he is the president of a great power, not just a capitalist country, which today, to be honest, is the greatest economic power in the world. He did not come here from the position of a great power, we went to the market, he shook hands with all the farmers. Of course, he, too, was a farmer; until the age of twenty he sold vegetables. From the point of view of social origins, he has a sounder background than many

²⁸ *FRUS 1969-1976*, Vol. I, Foundations of Foreign Policy 1969-1972, Editorial Note on the Nixon Doctrine, 91-92.

²⁹ NPM, NSC Files, Presidential/HAK MemCons, Box, 1023, Memorandum of conversation between President Richard M. Nixon and President Nicolae Ceaușescu, August 2, 1969.

³⁰ RNPL, Series II: Trip File, Wilderness Years, File: Bucharest, Romania, March 22 – 23 1967, Box 9, Memorandum of conversation between Former Vice President Nixon and Secretary General Ceaușescu, March 22, 1967, 22.

communists. His wife is a miner's daughter... Many called him comrade Nixon.³¹

Ceaușescu's warm endorsement did not stem from a personal sympathy for Nixon, but from the need to justify in front of the RCP Politburo Romania's burgeoning relations with the US. By commending Nixon's 'better than many communists' background, Ceaușescu signalled to some of the Romanian hardliners that Romania was not "selling its soul to the devil," as the Soviet leadership had warned them against.³² The praise Ceaușescu showered on Nixon's 'healthy origins' did not mean in any way that imperialism, and the US, ceased to be Romania's principal adversary.

Actually, through their interactions with Nixon, the Romanians realized why the press called him "Tricky Dicky": underneath the friendliness he displayed towards the Romanian leadership lay a shrewd, versatile, and remorseless politician, whose scripture was Realpolitik.³³ Ceaușescu's positive thoughts about Nixon do not represent evidence of Romania's geopolitical and ideological realignment. Both Ceaușescu and Nixon knew each other's rationale very well. Nixon wanted to tap into the information Ceaușescu's intelligence officers and

³¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 109/1969, Protocol of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, August 4, 1969.

³² See Chapter Four.

³³ NPM, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. I – 8-69 to Rumania Vol. II 9/69 – Jun 70, Box 702, Meeting between President Nixon and a group of departing US Ambassadors, August 20, 1969.

special envoys gathered on topics that were less accessible to the CIA than to the Securitate (such as China), while Ceaușescu wanted advanced technology (including nuclear technology) and capital.

Unfortunately, Ceaușescu did not have an opportunity to communicate with the Chinese leadership right after his meeting with Nixon. He relayed the gist of their conversation to Zhou Enlai through the Chinese ambassador, but he could not convey the most important parts of the conversation – Nixon’s intention to normalize relations with Beijing – probably for fear of leaks.³⁴ The opportunity to talk face-to-face with the Chinese kept slipping through the Romanians’ fingers, as Mao declined Ceaușescu’s invitations to attend the RCP Congress and to celebrate Romania’s National Day in Bucharest, both of which took place in August 1969. The Chinese leadership explained that it wanted to avoid at all costs being in the same room with “traitor cliques led by Soviet revisionists.”³⁵

³⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 40/1969, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Zhang Haifeng, the Chinese Ambassador to Bucharest, June 24, 1969.

³⁵ AMAE, Telegrams from Beijing, vol. II, 1969, Telegram from Aurel Duma to Corneliu Mănescu, July 18, 1969, 56312, 212-213, published in Budura, *Relațiile Româno-Chineze*, 928; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe Alfabetice [Alphabetic], 4C/1966, Letter from Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai to Nicolae Ceaușescu, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, August 20, 1969, 115.

Ho Chi Minh's Funeral

An opportunity finally showed itself on September 7, 1969, when Prime Minister Maurer and Paul Niculescu Mizil stopped over in Beijing, en route to Hanoi to attend Ho Chi Minh's funeral. Meeting in the dead of night, probably to avoid the prying eyes of other diplomats, including the Soviets, Maurer and Niculescu Mizil gave Zhou Enlai an almost verbatim account of Ceaușescu's conversation with Nixon. Maurer began by emphasizing how much Nixon wanted to put past animosities between Washington and Beijing behind him: "First and foremost, Nixon manifested, without any reservations, his desire to find a way to normalize relations with China. He said it loud and clear and he asked us, if possible, for a helping hand."³⁶ To avoid creating the impression that the RCP wanted to meddle in the CCP's internal affairs, Maurer stressed the Romanians' hesitation about playing the mediator. "I don't know what kind of helping hand we could give him," he said smilingly, adding:

We told him that what we can do is to inform the Chinese leadership about this discussion. We also told him that to our mind there are several problems on which the Chinese leadership has a certain position and for which [the Americans] need to find solutions, and maybe, while searching for these solutions, [the US] could find the path to reach out to and normalize relations with China. One of these problems is Taiwan [a statement which made Zhou Enlai burst into laughter].³⁷

³⁶ AMAE, Telegrams from Beijing, vol. II, 1969, Telegram from Aurel Duma, to Corneliu Mănescu, August 22, 1969, 56348, 262-263, published in Budura, *Relațiile Româno-Chineze*, 938.

³⁷ Ibid.

But the most crucial part of the message Maurer delivered did not refer to Nixon's wish to normalize relations with China; indeed, Zhou was already aware of that, since Nixon had made it public after he came into the Oval Office. For Mao and Zhou, the crux of the matter was the possibility of a US-USSR alliance against China, on which they had little if any information. Maurer now sought to reassure the Chinese that, as far as the "deepening Sino-Soviet rift, Nixon categorically stated that he will by no means support the USSR if Moscow nurtures any aggressive intentions against China."³⁸ Maurer underlined that "Nixon did not make a secret of his position towards a Sino-Soviet conflict to the Russians. He did not tell it to their faces, but he said it in such a way that his position was made known to the Russians."³⁹ In replying to Nixon's peace feelers, Zhou played his cards close to his chest. He neither rebuffed the Romanians nor accepted Nixon's invitation to talk:

As far as relations between China and the US are concerned, you know that there are direct contacts between us and the Americans. You [the Romanians] pointed out correctly that the essence is China's seat at the UN and Taiwan. We've been talking with the Americans on these matters for 14 years. In any case, our position is clear to us, and we know theirs. You pointed out correctly that one day, sooner or later, these matters will have to be solved.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 72/1969, Minutes of conversation between Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Paul Niculescu Mizil and Zhou Enlai, September 7-8, 1969, 28.

Yet it seems that the message delivered by the Romanians had an important impact, not only on China's coming in from the cold, but actually on the deepening Sino-Soviet rift. For Mao and Zhou, the message conveyed through the Romanians, together with an approach by Walter Stoessel, the US Ambassador to Warsaw, to the Chinese chargé, Lei Yang, at a reception in the Polish capital, came as gifts from above.

Days later a high-level Soviet delegation, after a dizzying to-and-fro between Hanoi, Calcutta, and Dushanbe, asked to be received by the Chinese leadership.⁴¹ The task of meeting with the 'traitors' fell on Zhou. With his usual tact, he broke the news to Alexei Kosygin: China would normalize relations with the US.⁴² The Soviets' worst fears were materializing: not only had Mao ordered the mobilization of the population in preparation for a war against the USSR, but he was also in cahoots with the Americans. Kosygin went out of his way to persuade the Chinese of Moscow's peaceful intentions.⁴³ When he left Beijing, where the Romanian Ambassador was present, the atmosphere was calm and the two leaders shook hands in the presence of journalists and cameramen. By making

⁴¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 72/1969, Minutes of conversation between Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Paul Niculescu Mizil and Zhou Enlai, September 11, 1969, 31; NARA, RG 59, CFPPF, 1967-1969, Political and Defense, POL 2 ROM to POL 7 ROM, Box 2450, Airgram 260, Political Notes, September 6, 1969.

⁴² Lüthi, "Restoring Chaos," 392.

⁴³ German V. Kireev, *Rossiia-Kitai. Neizvestnye stranitsy pograniichnykh peregovorov* [Russia-China. The secret pages of border talks] (Moscow: Rosspen, 2006), 94-103.

the meeting public, Mao and Zhou not only showed their willingness to negotiate with the Soviets on border issues for the entire international communist movement to see, but also put pressure on the Americans.

After Kosygin's visit, the Kremlin relented and, for a time, the Soviet propaganda machine muzzled its usual outbursts of anti-Chinese broadcasts, while clashes on the border stopped. Yet, revelations by the Western media of Moscow's rumoured intentions to launch a pre-emptive attack against Chinese nuclear facilities made Mao and Zhou doubt Moscow's eagerness to solve the Sino-Soviet border dispute through negotiations.⁴⁴ After all, 'talk and fight' was one of the Soviets' favourite tactics. These developments had a powerful impact on the four marshals, who were, once again, tasked with rewriting their report on what the future course of Chinese foreign policy should be. If in March 1969 they advocated an equidistant approach towards the USSR and the US, the latest military clashes convinced them that Beijing should "play the American card".⁴⁵ Resuming talks in Warsaw was one of the measures advocated by the four marshals, but they made sure to emphasize that no concessions on Taiwan were

⁴⁴ Boris Koloskov, *Vneshnyaya politika Kitaya, 1969-1976* [China's Foreign Policy, 1969-1976] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1977), 66-69.

⁴⁵ Report to the CCP Central Committee, Further Thoughts by Marshal Chen Yi on Sino-American Relations, September 17, 1969, Source: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao, no. 42, 86-87. Translated for CWIHP by Chen Jian, available at: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117155>; Vladimir P. Fedotov, *Polveka vmeste s Kitaem. Vospominaniya, zapisi, razmyshleniya* [Half a century with China. Recollections, letters, reflections] (Moscow: Rosspen, 2005), 375-376; Lüthi, "Restoring Chaos," 393.

to be made. The Romanians had proved instrumental for creating the necessary conditions for the Sino-American rapprochement to begin.

On September 18, the day after the marshals' report, Nixon, taking Ceaușescu's advice about recognizing China's status as a great power, publicly stated at a meeting of the UN Security Council that "the United States would be glad to exchange views even with Communist China if that country changed its policy of self-isolation. We are prepared to talk with the Chinese in the same spirit that we talk with the Soviets."⁴⁶ The Chinese could not have hoped for a better outcome of their strategy: by capitalizing on the contradictions between Washington and Moscow, Beijing managed to force both the US and the USSR to reach out to China. Yet for Mao this important achievement was not enough. After the clashes in August, a state of "war psychosis" took over the Chinese leadership, and as a result Mao ordered the mobilization of the entire population to prepare for an imminent war with the USSR.⁴⁷ His belief that war with the Soviets was imminent stemmed from the fact that the US had not publicly rebuked Moscow's threats of waging nuclear warfare against China, although, as mentioned above, the Romanians had conveyed Washington's opposition to a

⁴⁶ *FRUS 1969-1976*, Vol. XXIX, Eastern Europe; Eastern Mediterranean, 1969-1972, Memorandum of conversation between Richard Nixon and Romanian Foreign Minister Corneliu Mănescu, New York, September 18, 1969, 460-464.

⁴⁷ Oleg B. Borisov and Boris T. Koloskov, *Sovetsko-Kitaiskie Otnosheniya, 1945-1980* [Soviet-Chinese Relations, 1945-1980] (Moscow: Mysl', 1980), 437; Galenovich, *Rossiysko-Kitaiskie Otnosheniya*, 147.

Soviet attack on China's nuclear facilities. Washington's failure to signal its position fuelled Mao's deeply rooted fear that the US and the USSR would strike a deal behind his back and wipe China off the map.⁴⁸

Rewarding the Romanians

While this incremental but important realigning of great power relations was moving slowly, Nixon moved faster on the nuclear deal with the Romanians, keen to reap the benefits of the arrangement struck with Ceaușescu. Nixon dispatched his Science Advisor, Dr Lee DuBridge, and the Chairman of the US Atomic Energy Commission, Glenn Seaborg, to Bucharest; they visited September 24–27 and September 30–October 2, respectively.⁴⁹ It was during Seaborg's visit that Ceaușescu broached the subject of purchasing a nuclear research reactor and a heavy water plant from the United States.⁵⁰

It is necessary here to provide a little technical background. The reactor would allow Romanian scientists to perform tests on nuclear fuel for their future nuclear power stations. The necessary HEU, which could also be used for building

⁴⁸ Lüthi, "Restoring Chaos," 393-394.

⁴⁹ NPM, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. I – 8-69 to Rumania Vol. II 9/69 – Jun 70, Box 702, Telegram from Lee DuBridge for Secretary Rogers, September 29, 1969; LOC, Manuscript Division, Glenn Seaborg Papers, Romania File, Box 736.

⁵⁰ LOC, Manuscript Division, Glenn Seaborg Papers, Romania File, Box 736; ANIC, CC PCR, Economic Section, 19/1969, Memorandum from the Nuclear Energy Committee, September 11, 1969, 13-14.

an atomic bomb (because it was enriched over the level of 93%), would be supplied by the United States government.⁵¹ The heavy water plant would produce the coolant and moderator for a reactor the Romanians wanted to buy from the Canadians. The Romanians knew they could not purchase this facility without the support of the US government.⁵² Heavy water reactors pose higher proliferation risks than their light water counterparts. First, because these reactors use natural (unenriched) uranium, they were, at the time, under less scrutiny from international institutions in charge of monitoring uranium enrichment. Second, the share of plutonium and tritium in the spent fuel produced by these reactors is higher than in light water reactors. These by-products can be used to build a nuclear weapon. Seaborg knew that Romania would not easily obtain these facilities (because of security concerns and red tape in Washington), but he promised to do his best to help Ceaușescu. Both DuBridge and Seaborg became involved in the Washington-Bucharest-Beijing channel, as it appears that Ceaușescu and Maurer informed them about China's intentions.⁵³ Therefore, these two meetings suggest that Ceaușescu's nuclear acquisition

⁵¹ AMAE, 212/1969, The Visit of Dr Glenn Seaborg, the President of the US AEC to Romania, Telegram from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Romanian Embassy in Washington, D.C., October 21, 1969, 9.

⁵² AMAE, 212/1969, The Visit of Dr Glenn Seaborg, the President of the US AEC to Romania, Note from the State Committee for Nuclear Energy to Corneliu Mănescu, September 16, 1969, 3.

⁵³ NPM, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. III Jul 1970 – Dec 1971 to Rumania Vol. IV Jan 1972, Box 703, Memorandum for Mr Henry A. Kissinger, from Theodore Eliot, Jr., July 14, 1970.

strategy (i.e., using Bucharest's mediation between the US and China to persuade Washington to grant it access to nuclear technology) worked.

Following these meetings between American officials and the RCP leadership, Nixon and Kissinger took several steps to show Mao and Zhou that they too now understood actions spoke louder than words. On October 10, Kissinger announced the withdrawal of two US destroyers from the Taiwan Strait, which he portrayed as a considerable concession to Beijing, although the withdrawal seems to have been decided earlier to reduce the Pentagon's expenses. Washington then announced that US naval forces would cease patrolling the Taiwan Strait.⁵⁴ These measures appear to have convinced the Chinese of Nixon's desire to normalize relations with Beijing. On November 16, Zhou advised Mao that "we should pay attention to Nixon's and Kissinger's inclinations."⁵⁵

The US-Romania nuclear deal was progressing in tandem with the Washington-Beijing mediation. In late October, at a sumptuous dinner organized by the Romanian Embassy in Washington, D.C., in honour of the US AEC delegation which had just visited Romania, Glenn Seaborg told the Romanian Ambassador, Corneliu Bogdan, that the US government had approved the sale

⁵⁴ Gong Li, "Chinese Decision Making and the Thawing of U.S.-China Relations" in Robert S. Ross and Changbin Jiang (eds.), *Re-examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973* (Boston: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 337.

⁵⁵ Lüthi, "Restoring Chaos," 395.

of a heavy water plant to Romania. To Bogdan's delight, Seaborg brought some additional good news: there was no problem with supplying the research reactor the Romanians wanted as well.⁵⁶ The Romanians were almost there. The heavy water plant appeared to be a breeze: two weeks after the dinner for Seaborg, the Romanian State Council for Nuclear Energy (CSEN) was already receiving representatives of Lummus Company in Bucharest.⁵⁷ CSEN returned the visit in late February 1970 in order to meet with Seaborg again, visit Lummus facilities, and discuss matters in more detail.⁵⁸ The Romanians opted for a 'one step at a time' approach in their negotiations for nuclear technology with the US: after having made their intentions about the two facilities known, they focused first on the easiest task (the heavy water plant), and left the research reactor for later.

To expedite negotiations on the nuclear deal (and other economic and scientific matters), Bucharest worked hard to deliver on its mediation promises, trying to read between the lines of what the Chinese were saying (and doing) and convey it to Washington as accurately as possible. After carefully observing Chinese behaviour for several weeks, the Romanians signalled to the Americans that Washington needed to do more to get China to the negotiation table.

⁵⁶ AMAE, 212/1969, Washington, The Visit to the Socialist Republic of Romania of Glenn Seaborg, the Chairman of the US Atomic Energy Commission, 11.

⁵⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Economică, 23/1970, Report on the acquisition of nuclear power plants and adjacent facilities, February 2, 1970, 40.

⁵⁸ LOC, Manuscript Division, Glenn Seaborg Papers, Romania File, Box 736.

Mănescu urged the American Ambassador in Bucharest, Leonard Meeker, to change tack with Beijing:

The United States should adopt a practical and realistic policy on China. It is time to provide for the entry of China into the United Nations. China is too large, too populous, and too powerful to leave out of the world organization. There are not two Chinas, but only one. That China must have its proper place and voice in the General Assembly and in the Security Council. The United States has been obstructing the seating of the real China in the United Nations, and Peking has obviously registered this fact. The United Nations Charter contains no provision for the membership of Taiwan. Taiwan's purporting to represent China in the United Nations is as if an imposter were seated in the Foreign Minister's office and saying he was Corneliu Mănescu; the situation might last for a time, but sooner or later the imposter would be thrown out.⁵⁹

The American Ambassador was quick to put the blame on China for isolating itself during the Cultural Revolution and for calling it quits in Warsaw. Ironically, just as the two were discussing who was at fault, Lei Yang, the Chinese chargé d'affaires in Warsaw, was instructed to receive the American Ambassador to Poland, Walter Stoessel. Before Lei Yang got the chance to do so, Stoessel cornered a Chinese interpreter at a diplomatic function and persuaded him to arrange a meeting with the Chinese representative in Warsaw.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ NPM, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. I – 8-69 to Rumania Vol. II 9/69 – Jun 70, Box 702, Memorandum for the Under Secretary of State from the US Ambassador to Bucharest, December 1, 1969, Top Secret.

⁶⁰ Lüthi, "Restoring Chaos," 395; MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao*, 170.

To make sure Nixon got the point, Mao also chose to convey the message through multiple channels, relying on the Romanians and the Pakistanis as go-betweens. As far as the Romanian back channel was concerned, Qiao Guanhua got in touch with the Romanian Ambassador in Beijing. On December 9, in an awkward fashion meant to disguise Beijing's anxieties at the time, Qiao told Duma that "it seems the Americans want to resume talks, which had been suspended in February [1969] for which they were at fault. China's position on international talks in general, including those with the Americans, is known and remains in place."⁶¹ Bucharest understood this as the go-ahead from the Chinese to resume negotiations. Mao got a clue about Washington's view rather quickly, but not through the Romanian or the Pakistani channel. On December 11, before the Romanians could get back to Beijing about Nixon's reply, Stoessel told Lei Yang that the United States wanted "greater communication with the People's Republic of China."⁶²

The Romanians carried out their mediation task with diligence: Deputy Foreign Minister George Macovescu met with Kissinger a week after Duma sent his telegram to convey Beijing's intention to resume contacts with the Americans

⁶¹ AMAE, Telegrams from Beijing, vol. III, 1969, Telegram from Aurel Duma to Corneliu Mănescu, December 10, 1969, 56556, 329-332, in Budura, *Relațiile Româno-Chineze*, 989.

⁶² MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao*, 170.

in Warsaw.⁶³ This meeting gave the Romanians the opportunity to stress, once again, the format of the quid pro quo: Romania would serve as a back channel between Washington and Peking, but in return, it needed the support of the White House with acquiring nuclear technology. Before conveying the message from the Chinese, Mac (as friends called the Romanian Deputy Foreign Minister) pointed out that Romania wanted to buy a heavy water plant from the US and so requested “USG [US government] influence in their behalf”.⁶⁴ Kissinger got the point:

The AEC permitted the US manufacturer (Lummus Co.) to begin preliminary commercial negotiations with the Romanians, and the Romanians accepted the idea of having [IAEA] safeguards on the plant. [...] The only potential difficulty may be financing. The plant will cost in the neighborhood of \$100 million.⁶⁵

These messages about the willingness of both the US and China to resume contacts (passed through the Romanians, the Pakistanis, and Stoessel) served to reassure both the Chinese and the Americans that their efforts were not in vain, and so talks in Warsaw were rescheduled for January 20, 1970. As instructed by Nixon, the American Ambassador told Lei Yang that the US was ready to send

⁶³ NPM, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Macovescu (Romania) to Spain Vol. I thru Feb 70, Box 704, Summary, Points in Mr Kissinger’s Conversation with Macovescu, December 18, 1969. The message was reiterated two days later by the Pakistani Ambassador to the US in a meeting with Kissinger.

⁶⁴ NPM, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Macovescu (Romania) to Spain Vol. I thru Feb 70, Box 704, Summary, Points in Mr Kissinger’s Conversation with Macovescu, December 18, 1969.

⁶⁵ NPM, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Macovescu (Romania) to Spain Vol. I thru Feb 70, Box 704, Talking points.

a high-level official to China if needed. One month later, Lei conveyed Beijing's willingness to receive an envoy to discuss Sino-American relations.⁶⁶ The excitement generated by China's positive response was soon overshadowed by a brawl within the administration (White House versus State Department) sparked by the 'Taiwan question'. As a result of this and also the worsening situation in Cambodia in March 1970, Nixon missed his opportunity. The ousting of Prince Sihanouk from Cambodia by a US-backed general, Lon Nol, triggered a public condemnation from Beijing and resulted in the cancellation of the meeting in Warsaw planned for May 20, 1970.⁶⁷

At this point, the Americans would have been left in the dark had it not been for the Romanians. The Pakistani back channel was not delivering any messages from Beijing, and the Paris channel was not operational, leaving Nixon and Kissinger with very little insight into what Mao and Zhou were thinking. Luckily for them, in June 1970 the Romanian Vice-President, Emil Bodnăraș, stopped over in Beijing on his way to North Korea and, on his return to Bucharest, shared his impressions of developments in Chinese domestic and

⁶⁶ MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao*, 170.

⁶⁷ The Romanians also condemned the US but they did so with a view to keeping "a channel open to communist countries of S.E. Asia in interest of an eventual peaceful solution of conflict; this would enable Romania someday to play a useful role. Romania obviously cannot serve as a US agent, but it could help in securing peace, a peace which Maurer said he knows US also wants." NPM, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. I – 8/69 to Rumania Vol. II 9/69 – Jun 70, Box 702, Telegram from Leonard Meeker to Secretary Rogers, May 8, 1970.

foreign policy with American Ambassador Leonard Meeker, who then quickly sent the message forward to Kissinger.⁶⁸ Bodnăraş told Meeker that in his conversation with the Chinese leadership, Mao and Zhou

carefully downplayed any hostility toward the US, even fudging the record as to who had cancelled the Warsaw meetings in order to avoid seeming intransigent. They remarked that you [Nixon] had made some good pre-election statements, but said that you had chosen the path of war, and that for this reason Sino-US discussions are not useful at this stage. Mao uttered some Delphic aphorisms about the American people not being bad. Despite all this, the Chinese hit very hard at the need for withdrawal of US armed forces from Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait, and otherwise showed no substantive change of position.⁶⁹

The Americans could breathe a sigh of relief: not everything had been lost. As Kissinger noted, the Chinese adopted a “relatively moderate line, with possible elements of flexibility. Zhou Enlai also spoke of a relationship based on the principles of peaceful coexistence.”⁷⁰ The Romanians’ efforts were intended not simply to prove to the US that they were keen to help, but that they had actually delivered information to Washington that was not available through other channels of communication.

⁶⁸ NPM, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. I – 8/69 to Rumania Vol. II 9/69 – Jun 70, Box 702, Memorandum for Mr Henry A. Kissinger, from Theodore Eliot, Jr., July 14, 1970; NPM, NSC, Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. III Jul 1970 – Dec 1971 to Rumania Vol. IV Jan 1972, Box 703, Memorandum for the President from Henry Kissinger, August 4, 1970.

⁶⁹ NPM, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. III Jul 1970 – Dec 1971 to Rumania Vol. IV Jan 1972, Box 703, Memorandum for the President from Henry Kissinger, August 4, 1970.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

To spur the Americans further, Bodnăraș also touched on an apparently new approach adopted by the Chinese vis-à-vis the Soviets: Mao himself asked Bodnăraș “to convey friendly greetings to Kosygin, and Kosygin replied.”⁷¹ Criticizing the USSR on the issue of peaceful coexistence was a thing of the past; the new bone to pick was the Brezhnev doctrine.⁷² Bodnăraș also reiterated Romania’s interest in carrying messages between Washington and Beijing, an opportunity at which Nixon jumped right away. On July 18, 1970, two weeks after Meeker reported on his meeting with Bodnăraș, Nixon met with Foreign Minister Mănescu to discuss prospects for improving relations between the US and China. Mănescu told Nixon that the Romanian Ambassador to Beijing was returning to China under instructions “to take soundings there on this subject. He anticipates that some signs of Chinese thinking would emerge.”⁷³ Sino-American relations were not beyond repair.

To a certain extent, it was now more of the same dynamics that had defined these budding contacts from their inception: a stubborn emphasis on the issue of Taiwan, and China’s representation at the UN. The new element was the presence of Prince Sihanouk in Beijing (in exile), which precluded the Chinese from engaging with the Americans publicly. With the Warsaw talks in the

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ NPM, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. III Jul 1970 – Dec 1971 to Rumania Vol. IV Jan 1972, Box 703, Telegram from Meeker to Rogers, July 18, 1970.

doldrums, the Romanian back channel became ever more important. This explains why Nixon proved so eager to receive Ceaușescu at very short notice for a private meeting in the Oval Office on October 26, 1970. Nixon, while perfectly aware that Ceaușescu was expecting to be compensated for the mediation services he provided, asked him to convey an invitation to the Chinese to exchange high personal representatives.⁷⁴ Ceaușescu readily accepted. Nixon noted that “Ceaușescu’s continued role as a peacemaker is very useful in regard to US-Chinese relations. He can talk to both parties which is very helpful and in the end, in the President’s opinion, this will produce results.”⁷⁵

This expression of gratitude might have given Ceaușescu a chance to push for the nuclear deal, but he decided to save that for later, as there had been a minor change of plans in Bucharest’s nuclear acquisition programme. On October 14, the chargé d’affaires at the Romanian Embassy in Washington, D.C., Gheorghe Ioniță, had informed Seaborg that Bucharest had decided to put on

⁷⁴ NPM, NSC Files, VIP Visits, Romania Ceaușescu Visit Oct. 1970 to Romania Pres Ceaușescu Visit Dec. 1973, Box 936, Memorandum for Mr Kissinger from Helmut Sonnenfeldt, October 25, 1970; NPM, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. III Jul 1970 – Dec 1971 to Rumania Vol. IV Jan 1972, Box 703, Memorandum of conversation between President Nixon and President Nicolae Ceaușescu, October 26, 1970.

⁷⁵ NPM, NSC Files Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. III Jul 1970 – Dec 1971 to Rumania Vol. IV Jan 1972, Box 703, Memorandum of conversation between President Nixon and President Nicolae Ceaușescu, October 26, 1970.

hold its negotiations for the heavy water plant with Lummus Company, without giving any clues about the Romanians' volte-face.⁷⁶

Ceaușescu now channelled all his energy into purchasing the nuclear reactor, and to make sure he obtained it, he stepped up the mediation efforts. In this respect, he sent Gheorghe (Gogu) Rădulescu, the Vice-President of the Romanian Council of Ministers, to Beijing for meetings held November 20–26. The prompt response given by the CCP leadership to disastrous floods that had submerged entire swathes of land in southern and western Romania in the spring of 1970 gave Rădulescu a good pretext to pay a ‘thank you’ visit to the PRC. After dealing with logistical aspects of the economic assistance the CCP had offered as humanitarian relief, Rădulescu moved on to international affairs. He told a chin-stroking Zhou Enlai about Nixon’s and Secretary of State William Rogers’ preoccupation with finding ways to normalize relations between the US and China. Trying to signal the Americans’ flexibility and interest, Rădulescu emphasized Nixon’s availability to “discuss anything, anytime, and anywhere, to improve Sino-American relations.”⁷⁷ Given that holding talks in Warsaw had become problematic due to the Poles’ and Soviets’ constant surveillance of

⁷⁶ As Chapter Six mentioned, in 1970 Ceaușescu decided to buy a nuclear power plant from the USSR, which did not function on heavy water.

⁷⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 98/1970, Report by Gheorghe Rădulescu to Nicolae Ceaușescu regarding the visit of the governmental delegation to the DRV and the PRC, December 12, 1970, 25-26.

American and Chinese diplomats, however, Nixon proposed changing the venue. Zhou Enlai quickly rebuffed the suggestion: the problem was not the venue, but the issue of China's representation at the UN and Taiwan. But the Chinese did pull back from the intransigent position they had adopted in the aftermath of the US invasion of Cambodia. Although they had offered shelter to the deposed Prince Sihanouk, they realized that they could not let the issue of Cambodia derail their entire foreign policy. As a result, Zhou Enlai proved far more accommodating than the Romanians had expected:

If Nixon indeed wants and has the ability to solve this problem, then the Chinese government would salute the coming to Beijing of a US special envoy. Even Nixon, not just a special envoy, can come to Beijing. He went to Bucharest and Belgrade, why not Beijing?⁷⁸

Diplomatic Doldrums

The watershed decision taken by the CCP to invite the US President to visit China (before any president had paid such a visit to the USSR) carried profound implications for the Romanians and the potential rewards they could reap from the Americans for delivering such an important message. Unfortunately, Ceaușescu was on a trip to Morocco, so the message had to wait until he returned. On December 14, two days after submitting the report of the visit to Beijing to

⁷⁸ Ibid.

the registry of the RCP Central Committee, Rădulescu met with the American Ambassador to Bucharest to let him know about his visit to China. The only hint Rădulescu could give Meeker, without Ceaușescu's approval, was that Zhou Enlai would not come to Romania, so a meeting between a US diplomat and the Chinese premier in Bucharest was out of the question.

At that point, Zhou Enlai's invitation had already reached Nixon and Kissinger through the Pakistani Ambassador to Washington, D.C., who delivered the message on December 9. Some scholars see the Romanians' blunder as the reason that Nixon began to opt for the Pakistani channel.⁷⁹ Additional primary documents, however, suggest a different interpretation. Bucharest's delay did not mean Nixon lost interest in the Romanian back channel to Beijing, since the Romanians could offer vital information not only about the Chinese, but also about the Soviets, to whom the Pakistanis had limited access. Two weeks after Rădulescu's meeting with Meeker, Gen. Alexander Haig, one of Kissinger's aides within the National Security Council, met with the Romanian Ambassador to Washington, D.C., Corneliu Bogdan, who had just been summoned to Bucharest to be briefed on Zhou Enlai's message. Haig told Bogdan that the US eagerly awaited Romania's assessment of Soviet reactions to the feelers Nixon had put

⁷⁹ Croitor, *Romania și conflictul soviet-chinez*, 356, 359, 361; Munteanu, "Communication Breakdown?," 627.

out to China.⁸⁰ Haig made sure to dangle the carrot of increased trade with Romania, which included the TRIGA nuclear reactor deal, suggesting that the US was on board with the ‘peace for atoms’ barter Ceaușescu had come up with.⁸¹

The Romanians transmitted Zhou Enlai’s invitation on January 11, 1971.⁸²

The risks of doing so ran high: if the Soviets realized the Romanians had facilitated the Sino-American rapprochement, which to some in Moscow meant the creation of a common front against the USSR, they would come down on Ceaușescu ferociously. In November 1970 there had even been rumours circulating about an assassination attempt against him.⁸³ The RCP leadership, however, decided to play this dangerous game of Russian roulette. First, they delivered Zhou Enlai’s response, and then they asked for the TRIGA reactor, trying to force Nixon’s hand.⁸⁴ The US President, however, played for time, as he wanted

⁸⁰ NPM, NSC Files Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. III Jul 1970 – Dec 1971 to Rumania Vol. IV Jan 1972, Box 703, Memorandum for the record. Visit of Romanian Ambassador Bogdan, December 29, 1970.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² NPM, NSC Files, Presidential/HAK MemCons, MemCon – Kissinger/Ambassador Bogdan January 11, 1971 to MemCon – Kissinger at the Hoover Institute Board of Overseers’ luncheon December 17, 1971, Box, 1025, Memorandum for the President from Henry A. Kissinger regarding Conversation with Ambassador Bogdan, Map Room, January 11, 1971.

⁸³ NPM, NSC Files Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. III Jul 1970 – Dec 1971 to Rumania Vol. IV Jan 1972, Box 703, Telegram from the US Embassy in Washington, D.C., to the Secretary of State, Rumored Assassination Attempt Against Ceaușescu, November 13, 1970.

⁸⁴ NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, Science, AE 6 to AE 10-2, Box 2859, Airgram from the US Embassy in Bucharest to the Department of State, Renewal AEC/CNE Memorandum, January 8, 1971; NPM, NSC Files, Presidential/HAK MemCons, MemCon – Kissinger/Ambassador Bogdan January 11, 1971 to MemCon – Kissinger at the Hoover Institute Board of Overseers’ luncheon December 17, 1971, Box, 1025, Memorandum for the President from Henry A. Kissinger regarding the Conversation with Ambassador Bogdan, Map Room, January 11, 1971.

to extract more from the Romanians before he gave the green light to transfer the nuclear reactor Bucharest wanted. He also tried to keep the Chinese on their toes, so he instructed Kissinger to “cool it”.⁸⁵

If the Pakistani channel proved to be a more reliable conduit between Washington and Beijing, the Romanians remained a useful source of information and Nixon continued to rely on them. Shortly after the January 11 encounter, Kissinger received Bogdan again and inquired about Taiwan, in an attempt to find out how willing the Chinese were to negotiate in earnest. Bogdan remained tight-lipped, and instead, asked about the necessary changes to US legislation that would allow trade with Romania to flourish and eliminate export controls, including the ones that applied to the sale of the nuclear research reactor, hinting that the Romanians would provide the US with the information they coveted only if Bucharest’s demands were met.⁸⁶ Kissinger blamed the bureaucracy for the delay and promised Bogdan that the desired adjustments would be made shortly. The Romanians would soon learn that believing the Americans’ promises could put Bucharest on the spot.

⁸⁵ NPM, NSC Files, Presidential/HAK MemCons, MemCon – Kissinger/Ambassador Bogdan January 11, 1971 to MemCon – Kissinger at the Hoover Institute Board of Overseers’ luncheon December 17, 1971, Box 1025, Memorandum for the President from Henry A. Kissinger regarding the Conversation with Ambassador Bogdan, Map Room, January 11, 1971.

⁸⁶ NPM, NSC Files, Presidential/HAK MemCons, MemCon – Kissinger/Ambassador Bogdan January 11, 1971 to MemCon – Kissinger at the Hoover Institute Board of Overseers’ luncheon December 17, 1971, Box 1025, Memorandum of conversation between Ambassador Corneliu Bogdan, Henry A. Kissinger, David R. Halperin, January 29, 1971.

Towards Visible Successes

Less than a month after this meeting, the military operations the US launched in February 1971 in Laos appeared to imperil the Romanians' mediation efforts once again.⁸⁷ From the very beginning, they had pleaded the case with their Chinese counterparts that Sino-American relations could be normalized because Nixon was "a man of peace".⁸⁸ Now, with Nixon appearing as a warmonger, Beijing questioned Romania's "reliability and good faith."⁸⁹ But this turn of events did not result in the Chinese cutting off the Romanians as a conduit of communications. In March 1971, when Gogu Rădulescu returned to Beijing for additional economic and political negotiations, Zhou Enlai told the Romanian Vice-President that "China has nothing to talk about with the United States," because they were poles apart on key matters such as the situations in Indochina and Taiwan.⁹⁰ The two sides had not made any significant progress since Nixon's

⁸⁷ NPM, NSC, Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. III Jul 1970 – Dec 1971 to Rumania Vol. IV Jan 1972, Box 703, Telegram from the US Embassy in Bucharest to William Rogers, South/East Asia, February 24, 1971.

⁸⁸ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 72/1969, Minutes of conversation between Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Paul Niculescu Mizil and Zhou Enlai, September 11, 1969, 43.

⁸⁹ NPM, NSC, Country Files – Europe, Rumania, Vol. III Jul 1970 – Dec 1971 to Rumania Vol. IV Jan 1972, Box 703, Telegram from the US Embassy in Bucharest to William Rogers, South/East Asia, February 24, 1971.

⁹⁰ AMAE, Telegrams from Beijing, vol. I, 1971, Telegram from Aurel Duma to Nicolae Ceaușescu, March 23, 1971, 56187, 291, in Romulus Ioan Budura, *Politica independentă a României și relațiile româno-chineze: 1954-1975* [Romania's Independent Foreign Policy and Sino-Romanian Relations: 1954-1975] (Bucharest: Arhivele Naționale ale României, 2008), 1057.

response to Zhou Enlai's invitation in December 1970.⁹¹ Then, by a stroke of luck, the Americans had an opportunity to sound out Beijing again. Mao's eagerness to engage in "Ping-Pong diplomacy," manifested in his invitation and warm reception of the US table tennis team to China, signalled to Nixon and Kissinger that not all hope was lost.⁹² For a brief period, public diplomacy put secret negotiations in the shade.

The Romanian channel was used again in late April, when the Americans put forward a bold initiative: a hotline between the Oval Office and Zhongnanhai (an imperial garden where Mao's villa was located at the time). The young Donald Rumsfeld, then the President's counsellor on special trade – whom Nixon described as a "ruthless little bastard" – paid a secret visit to Bucharest on April 27, 1971.⁹³ He asked officials to convey to the Chinese leadership Nixon's desire to carry out negotiations with Beijing through a channel different than the one in Warsaw. Nixon, according to Rumsfeld, had a direct line of communications in mind, outside the purview of the Department of State. A hotline would preclude Rogers (and some members of the pro-Taiwan lobby in Washington,

⁹¹ In the fall of 1970, Mao told Edgar Snow that he would be willing to hold talks with Nixon. The Americans failed to pick up this signal. MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao*, 174; Fedotov, *Polveka vmeste s Kitaem*, 376.

⁹² MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao*, 176-181.

⁹³ Miller Center, University of Virginia, White House Tapes, President Nixon and Bob Haldeman discuss Donald Rumsfeld, March 9, 1971, Conversation no. 464-12, available at: http://whitehousetapes.net/clips/rmn_rumsfeld.html; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 42/1971, Americans requesting the facilitation of contacts between the US and the PRC sent through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 1969 – April 1971, 121.

D.C.) from derailing these incipient contacts.⁹⁴ In addition to preventing leaks and keeping saboteurs at bay, a hotline would also help greatly with the practicalities involved in the exchange of high-level envoys, an initiative which regained impetus with a message that Agha Hilaly, the Pakistani Ambassador to Washington, D.C., delivered on April 27 on Zhou Enlai's behalf. The archival record does not offer any evidence that the Romanians had passed on to the Chinese the message delivered by Rumsfeld. Nixon, however, tried to make sure that Rumsfeld had the Romanians' ear by sending his Secretary of Commerce, Maurice Stans, to Bucharest from April 25 to 27.⁹⁵ Stans broke the good news to Ceaușescu: Nixon had ordered a relaxation of export control regulations that affected Romania.⁹⁶ To Nixon's mind, improvements in trade relations, including the transfer of sensitive nuclear technology, would be enough of an incentive to ensure the Romanians' cooperation on geopolitical issues that concerned Washington, such as the opening to China.

For Ceaușescu, Nixon's shift on trade with Romania was the ultimate proof that his strategy to offer diplomatic services in exchange for nuclear

⁹⁴ In 1973, Kissinger reiterated this proposal to establish a hotline to Zhou Enlai to which the Chinese never responded. William Burr (ed.), *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow* (New York: New Press, 1999), 203-204.

⁹⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe Alfabetice, 8S/1969-1972, Letter from President Richard Nixon to President Nicolae Ceaușescu, April 16, 1971, 283.

⁹⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe Alfabetice, 8S/1969-1972, Letter from Maurice Stans to President Nicolae Ceaușescu, April 26, 1971, 297.

technology worked. As a consequence, when Kissinger asked Ceaușescu, through Ambassador Bogdan, to reiterate Washington's willingness to improve relations with the PRC, Ceaușescu jumped at the opportunity. Unfortunately, Nixon's National Security Adviser was too slow in sending a more substantive message to the Chinese on the occasion of Ceaușescu's visit to Beijing in June 1971.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, Ceaușescu's trip to China provided the Americans with a window into Mao and Zhou Enlai's thinking.

Although at this point the Pakistani channel was the preferred conduit for messages related to Kissinger's visit to Beijing, neither Washington nor Beijing could afford to cast the Romanians aside.⁹⁸ Ceaușescu and his top aides possessed valuable intelligence not only about the intentions of both the Chinese and the Americans, but also about the USSR and other countries that could interfere with the Sino-American rapprochement. Per Kissinger's request, during his visit to Beijing, Ceaușescu repeated that Nixon was serious about normalizing relations with the PRC. Knowing that the situation in Indochina would be a sticking point for any Sino-American direct talks, Ceaușescu also underlined Nixon's desire to

⁹⁷ NPM, NSC Files, For the President's Files – China/Vietnam Negotiations, China's memcons and memos – originals July 1971 to Bruce, Ambassador [memcons], Box 1033, Memorandum from Winston Lord to Henry A. Kissinger, June 4, 1971.

⁹⁸ On April 27, the Pakistanis delivered a message which helped Washington and Beijing overcome the stalemate resulting from the February escalation in Laos. Beijing made an important concession that allowed the talks to move forward: the Chinese dropped the resolution of the Taiwan question as the pre-condition for the visit of a high-level US representative to China. MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao*, 181.

reach an agreement on total withdrawal from Laos and to end the war in Vietnam.⁹⁹ Mao and Zhou Enlai emphasized that they were ready to receive Nixon but warned the Americans that the main problem remained Taiwan. In this respect, Ceaușescu elicited important information from Mao and Zhou Enlai about the Chinese position on Taiwan: China understood that it was not the US but Japan that wanted to occupy Taiwan. Therefore, Beijing's criticism of the US was not so much about the presence of American forces in Taiwan; rather it was directed against Washington's willingness to let the militarist Japanese replace them in Asia.¹⁰⁰ The complicated diplomatic dance now became even more complicated.

So Ceaușescu duly carried out his part of the deal, and the Americans delivered on their promises to help Romania's nuclear programme. In June 1971, seeing that Nixon had relaxed export control regulations vis-à-vis Romania, Gulf General Atomic, the TRIGA nuclear research reactors supplier the Romanians had in mind, sent a delegation to Bucharest for talks.¹⁰¹ The negotiations made headway, leaving the final say with the US government, first with the US AEC and ultimately with the White House. Yet, before giving the go-ahead, Nixon had

⁹⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 40/1971, Minutes of conversation between Zhou Enlai, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, June 3, 1971, 61.

¹⁰⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 72/1971, Protocol of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, June 25, 1971, 16.

¹⁰¹ AMAE, 212/1971 USA, Romanian-American Cooperation in the field of atomic energy, 28.

one more item to tick off his to-do list: finding out what Ceaușescu had talked to Mao and Zhou Enlai about.

Nixon found the Romanians' feedback on behalf of the Chinese very satisfying. Even after his secret trip to Beijing in July 1971, Kissinger still relied on the Romanians to learn more about what the Chinese had in mind for Nixon's upcoming visit, which is why, on August 31, he received Ambassador Bogdan in San Clemente. The omens were good: Ceaușescu and Mao "had talked about the US on a constructive basis," Bogdan reported.¹⁰² Then, Kissinger hunted for clues about China's role in Vietnam, the Taiwan question, Japan, and Beijing's fears of a Soviet attack, which Bogdan dutifully provided.

In exchange for all these efforts, the Romanians finally got their reward when, on September 20, 1971, Glenn Seaborg and Ioan Ursu, CSEN's president, signed the extension of the 1969 Nuclear Cooperation Agreement between the US and Romania. This agreement referred to the transfer not only of nuclear materials and know-how, but also of entire facilities such as the TRIGA nuclear research reactor.¹⁰³ With the agreement signed, Ceaușescu met with Seaborg privately, and provocatively stated that Romania was not planning to undertake

¹⁰² NPM, NSC Files, Presidential/HAK MemCons, MemCon – Kissinger/Ambassador Bogdan January 11, 1971 to MemCon – Kissinger at the Hoover Institute Board of Overseers' luncheon December 17, 1971, Box 1025, Memorandum of conversation between Ambassador Corneliu Bogdan and Henry A. Kissinger, August 31, 1971.

¹⁰³ AMAE, 212/1971 USA, Romanian-American Cooperation in the field of atomic energy, 5

any steps down the military path, at least *not yet*.¹⁰⁴ Apparently unfazed, Seaborg went on to talk about China, asking for advice on how the US should deal with Beijing. The discussion between Ceaușescu and Seaborg underlines the quid pro quo that both Bucharest and Washington had made between Ceaușescu's mediation services and nuclear technology transfers.¹⁰⁵ Shortly after Seaborg's visit to Bucharest, on October 4, 1971, Kissinger confirmed the White House's green light for Romania's purchase of the TRIGA nuclear reactor from Gulf General Atomic.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

Two years of relaying messages between Washington and Beijing paid off: the Romanians were soon to become the first country in the Eastern bloc to buy from the United States a nuclear facility of this size and scope. At the beginning of these negotiations for nuclear technology, the odds were stacked against the Romanians. Romania was not only a member of a military alliance that regarded the United States as the 'principal adversary', but it also embraced a social, economic, and political system that was completely at odds with that of the

¹⁰⁴ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 179/1971, Memorandum of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Glenn Seaborg, September 20, 1971, 3.

¹⁰⁵ *Idem*, 5.

¹⁰⁶ NPM, White House Central Files, Subject Files, Atomic Energy, Box 1, Letter from Henry A. Kissinger to James R. Schlesinger, October 4, 1971.

capitalist US. Moreover, Romania lacked a convertible currency, which meant that its ability to pay for the nuclear reactor depended on the viability of its exports (which could earn it hard currency). The Romanians insisted on including a barter dimension in the nuclear reactor deal, which was rather unpalatable to most suppliers. The mediation services Ceaușescu could provide to an embattled US cancelled out the effect of Romania's military and ideological affiliation and its financial constraints.

Ceaușescu could not have hoped for a better negotiating partner than Nixon. As Gavin shows, “neither Nixon nor Kissinger thought halting nuclear proliferation merited sacrificing other geopolitical goals.”¹⁰⁷ As soon as Nixon threw his weight behind the TRIGA reactor deal with Bucharest, Ceaușescu got his way. The relative ease with which Bucharest persuaded Washington to approve this technology transfer, compared to the difficulties the Romanians had encountered with their Soviet counterparts, emboldened Ceaușescu to want to keep the nuclear option in his pocket. Although he had not started an actual nuclear weapons programme, he did not want to forfeit Romania's ability to build a nuclear bomb later on.

This chapter has showed how Bucharest used its mediation between Washington and Beijing as a bargaining tool for the transfer of sensitive nuclear

¹⁰⁷ Gavin, “Nuclear Nixon,” 127.

technology from the US. Romania's "good offices" helped it punch above its weight and achieve its goals in a time of geopolitical flux. The negotiations were difficult, incremental, and multifaceted, and show the dangers for smaller states who wished to mediate and become players in the wider diplomatic game to pursue their own ambitions. The account above reveals these dangers, as well as the need for key individuals – Ceaușescu himself, as well as his aides – to be motivated to stick with this diplomacy despite the wider currents of international affairs. The next chapter will show how, by playing suppliers off against each other, Romania gained access to a nuclear power plant from Canada and to another sensitive nuclear facility which it purchased from France.

Chapter Eight: Tertius Gaudens II. The Purchase of a Nuclear Power Plant from Canada and of a Radiochemistry Laboratory from France, 1973–1979

The Romanians had put the heavy water nuclear power reactor project on the back burner for three years, but in the spring of 1973, they resumed negotiations with Western suppliers. Three factors account for this volte-face. First, the ease with which the Romanians obtained Washington's approval for the TRIGA research reactor transfer had stoked their hopes that the heavy water nuclear power reactor deal would go through just as quickly. Second, as early as 1971, they had started to reconsider their non-proliferation promises, showing more and more interest in the military uses of the atom. Third, Romania's acquiescence to Soviet demands in the realm of foreign policy had now eased some of the pressure Moscow had been applying on Bucharest since the late 1960s.

This chapter argues that Romania's change of heart had little to do with the stated purpose of the heavy water reactor (i.e., electricity production), because Romania already had its own rich hydrocarbons reserves.¹ The decision

¹ Report of the Central Committee of the RCP regarding the activity of the party in the interval between the 8th Congress and the 9th Congress of the RCP; The Report of Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, July 19-24, 1965, CNSAS,

to attempt again to purchase this technology also pre-dated the energy crisis that rocked the international arena after October 1973, during which many countries, including France and Italy, started to see nuclear energy as the solution for their high dependence on Middle Eastern oil. Romania was impervious to the energy crisis because it relied on oil imports from Iran, which did not join the Arab boycott.²

As the international nuclear market was experiencing a state of flux, small powers such as Romania found some room for manoeuvre. Uncertainty affected all parties, but especially suppliers, since they stood to lose more if their optimism about profits and contracts proved premature. The changes that had been occurring in the international nuclear market since Ceaușescu mothballed negotiations in 1970 now tilted in Bucharest's favour. For decades, the US had maintained a monopoly on nuclear exports, peaking at 90% of nuclear reactor sales in 1972. In the early 1970s, however, nuclear suppliers in Western Europe and Canada started challenging the US's leadership in the field by combining their own experience with American licenses. As the number of nuclear suppliers increased, the competition for new markets naturally intensified. Sensing that the battle for foreign orders could result in lower prices and a disregard for non-

http://www.cnsas.ro/documente/istoria_comunism/documente_PMR_PCR/congrese/1965%20Raport%20la%20Congresul%20IX.pdf

² Ian Skeet, *OPEC: Twenty-Five Years of Prices and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 66–68.

proliferation standards, Bucharest sought to accentuate this rivalry by pitting suppliers against one another, once again applying the principle known as *Tertius Gaudens* in the literature on alliance politics.³ According to an official memo sent by the top decision-makers in Bucharest, the nuclear suppliers Romania set its eyes on, namely Atomic Energy Canada Limited (AECL) and Alsthom-Rateau of France, would be told that their offers were constantly weighed against those made by their rivals.⁴

A Slow Start

At first, the Romanians' strategy did not succeed: not only were their conditions for the nuclear deal unrealistic, but also suppliers were not as desperate as Bucharest had imagined. First, the Romanians tried to compel these suppliers to agree to better terms than the ones reached before negotiations stalled. In 1970, the deal reached with AECL, for example, entailed a loan worth CAD\$99 million (approximately 90% of the value of the contract), payable over a 15-year period at an annual interest rate of 6.5%.⁵ In 1973, Ceaușescu tried to invoke Romania's

³ Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith*, 189.

⁴ AMAE, 1222/1973, The Resumption of Negotiations for the Acquisition of a Heavy Water - Natural Uranium Nuclear Power Plant from Canada, Memo regarding the resumption of negotiations for the heavy water natural uranium power plant, April 2, 1973, 6.

⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Economică, 47/1973, Memo regarding the resumption of negotiations for the heavy water natural uranium power plant, June 21, 1973, 33-38.

self-proclaimed “developing country” status to obtain a more advantageous loan, payable over a 20-year period at an annual interest rate of 2.5–3%.⁶ Moreover, the Romanians proposed that they repay the loan through a barter agreement, exporting goods to Canada in exchange for the nuclear reactor.⁷ The Canadians would have none of it: not only did they reject Romania’s claims to being a developing country, but they had also ceased making “nuclear gifts” as they had done to India and Pakistan.⁸

The terms of the request sent from Bucharest left AECL Chairman Dr James Lorne Gray, a savvy manager with decades of experience in the nuclear industry, befuddled: not only did AECL not have a financial branch to lend Romania the capital needed for this acquisition, but their portfolio also had nothing to do with imports.⁹ For credits, the Romanian authorities would have to negotiate with the Export Development Corporation, while their interlocutor for the barter agreement would be the Canadian Department of Industry, Trade

⁶ AMAE, 1222/1973, The Resumption of Negotiations for the Acquisition of a Heavy Water - Natural Uranium Nuclear Power Plant from Canada, Telegram from the Romanian Embassy in Helsinki to George Macovescu, July 6, 1973, 40.

⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Economică, 47/1973, Memo regarding the resumption of negotiations for the heavy water natural uranium power plant, June 21, 1973, 33-38.

⁸ Canada provided India and Pakistan with atomic reactors under the Colombo Plan, an international development aid programme meant to help underdeveloped countries with resources and expertise. Bothwell, *Nucleus*, 209, 384. AMAE, 1222/1973, The Resumption of Negotiations for the Acquisition of a Heavy Water - Natural Uranium Nuclear Power Plant from Canada, Telegram from Ambassador Bucur Șchiopu to George Macovescu, July 13, 1973, 44.

⁹ For biographical notes on James Lorne Gray, see Bothwell, *Nucleus*, 121-122, 380-381, 407-408, 425-426.

and Commerce. Gray's May 25, 1973, response threw cold water on Ceaușescu's hope to seal a deal expediently: "Romania's chances to obtain a 20-year long loan at a 2-2.5% interest rate were very slim."¹⁰ Therefore, AECL could not move forward with the nuclear power plant deal. The Canadians were not as anxious for orders as they had been in the late 1960s, when AECL was still cutting its teeth in the nuclear exports arena. The Canadian company had just sealed its deal for a nuclear power plant with Argentina, while several other countries, such as Italy, South Korea, and Japan, were assiduously courting it.¹¹ Domestic orders, combined with all the foreign buyers battling for AECL's technology, made Gray fret far less about revenues than about being unable to cope with demand.

The Romanians knew that the odds were stacked against them. Not only did they decide to resume negotiations in a period of rising prices, but they also had irked the Canadians in 1970 when their sudden U-turn on the nuclear reactor purchase cost AECL \$1 million.¹² Despite Gray's attempts to persuade the Romanians that they had little wiggle room in what the Canadians thought was

¹⁰ AMAE, 1222/1973, The Resumption of Negotiations for the Acquisition of a Heavy Water - Natural Uranium Nuclear Power Plant from Canada, Letter from James Lorne Gray to Romenergo, May 25, 1973, 32.

¹¹ AMAE, 1222/1973, The Resumption of Negotiations for the Acquisition of a Heavy Water - Natural Uranium Nuclear Power Plant from Canada, Telegram from Ambassador Bucur Șchiopu to the Third Directorate Liaison, April 18, 1973, 19; Bothwell, *Nucleus*, 426-427.

¹² The sum was considerable, amounting to 1% of the total value of the nuclear power plant. AMAE, 1446/1974, Correspondence Regarding the Long-Term Multilateral Cooperation between Romania and Canada in the Production and Exploitation of Nuclear Power Plants, Telegram from Ambassador Bucur Șchiopu to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 27, 1974, 12.

a 'suppliers' market', in which there were more buyers than suppliers, the Romanians came up with a plan. Not all hope was lost: luckily for them, greed still reigned supreme. What Bucharest had to do was to leak information about West Germany's offer to sell a nuclear reactor to Romania on much more favourable terms than those Canada was willing to offer. The news spiked AECL's interest.¹³ Now, to convey AECL's eagerness to sell a reactor to Romania, Gray arranged to visit Bucharest in September 1973. On that occasion, the Romanians offered to set up a joint venture for the construction of the heavy water nuclear reactors, a suggestion which Gray immediately rebuffed.¹⁴ Getting mired in the politics of the Eastern bloc, especially of the fast-growing yet fragile Romanian economy, was unpalatable to the Canadian company. Instead, Gray suggested the Romanians could partner with Italmimpianti, an Italian industrial colossus, which could offer both better financing terms and an advantageous barter agreement.¹⁵ A joint venture with an Italian company also seemed more practical, given Ceaușescu's visit to Italy and the close ties he established with Prime

¹³ AMAE, 1222/1973, The Resumption of Negotiations for the Acquisition of a Heavy Water - Natural Uranium Nuclear Power Plant from Canada, Telegram from Bucur Șchiopu to Deputy Foreign Minister Vasile Gliga, May 25, 1973, 23.

¹⁴ AMAE, 1446/1974, Correspondence Regarding the Long-Term Multilateral Cooperation between Romania and Canada in the Production and Exploitation of Nuclear Power Plants, Telegram from Bucur Șchiopu to the Vice-Prime Minister, Ion Pățan, November 20, 1973, 48-49.

¹⁵ AMAE, 1222/1973, The Resumption of Negotiations for the Acquisition of a Heavy Water - Natural Uranium Nuclear Power Plant from Canada, Telegram from Bucur Șchiopu to Deputy Foreign Minister Nicolae Ghenea, August 25, 1973, 53.

Minister Giulio Andreotti.¹⁶ But the Romanians had to figure out the capacity they wanted for the CANDU nuclear reactor before the Canadians and the Italians could push ahead with the loans, the barter agreement, and the joint venture.¹⁷ So Bucharest now adopted a ‘wait and see’ tactic, hoping that dragging the Canadians into a war of nerves would pay off. As deadlines passed and 1973 turned into 1974, the Canadians grew increasingly impatient.¹⁸ In February 1974, an exasperated Gray tried to turn tables on the Romanians: unless Bucharest hurried up, AECL would seal a deal with South Korea. Selling a reactor to Seoul implied that the limited resources available to the Export Development Corporation would not suffice to finance the deal with Romania as well.¹⁹

Drawing the British into the Game

The Romanians were not in a hurry because their strategy seemed to work: now that the West Germans and the Canadians had showed interest in selling nuclear

¹⁶ Archivio Centrale dello Stato [Central State Archives, Italy – henceforth ACS], Documenti del Consigliere Diplomatico del Presidente del Consiglio [Documents of the Diplomatic Advisor to the President of the Council of Ministers], Busta 15, 129-137, Promemoria from the Romanian Ambassador to the President of the Council of Ministers, June 20, 1977.

¹⁷ AMAE, 1222/1973, The Resumption of Negotiations for the Acquisition of a Heavy Water - Natural Uranium Nuclear Power Plant from Canada, Note on the talks with J. L. Gray, September 15-17, 1973, 73.

¹⁸ AMAE, 1446/1974, Correspondence Regarding the Long-Term Multilateral Cooperation between Romania and Canada in the Production and Exploitation of Nuclear Power Plants, Telegram from Ambassador Bucur Şchiopu to Ştefan Andrei, Ion Păţan, George Macovescu, February 5, 1974, 1.

¹⁹ Idem, 2.

reactors to Romania, the British were following suit. Luring the UK into the competition for the Romanian market was no small feat, since the eruption of a new war in the Middle East in October 1973 had triggered a surge in nuclear technology prices that decision-makers in Bucharest had not foreseen. The oil embargo imposed by the Arab countries rocked the international energy market to its foundations. Although Romania was only marginally affected by the hike in prices, most other countries took a hard hit. They then turned to nuclear energy to diminish their dependence on Middle Eastern oil.²⁰ Iran, Denmark, Italy, Mexico, Israel, Finland, and China, to mention just a few, started knocking on nuclear suppliers' doors.

In theory, the UK had plenty of customers to pick from. The reality was a lot grimmer. The British nuclear industry had been experiencing some soul-searching of its own after the epic failure of the Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor (AGR) in 1969. Her Majesty's Government (HMG) was torn over which reactor model to adopt in order for the British nuclear industry to preserve its competitive technological edge in the international market. The debate soon turned into a turf war between the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) and the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA). On the one hand, CEGB supported the *filière américaine* – the light water reactor – thanks to the years

²⁰ William Burr, "A Scheme of 'Control': The United States and the Origins of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group, 1974-1976," in *The International History Review*, Vol. 36, Issue 2 (2014), 253.

of experience it had accumulated worldwide, its availability, and, last but not least, the political importance Washington attached to it.²¹ The UKAEA, on the other hand, preferred the Steam Generating Heavy Water Reactor (SGHWR) for its low costs and the votes it promised to bring in the upcoming elections.²² According to the *Financial Times*, Romania's 1974 announcement that it sought suppliers to help it build 10 nuclear power plants (in the hope that economies of scale would reduce costs and increase output) played a role in Britain choosing the SGHWR.²³

Bucharest sought not only a deal that advanced the Romanian economy (by giving indigenous companies a large share of the contracts involved), but one that helped them keep the nuclear option in its pocket. Eager to secure its first contract, the UKAEA tried to lure the Romanians with a partnership through which Romanian firms would participate in producing nuclear equipment, not only for Romania and the UK, but also for third markets. More importantly, the British offered to build a uranium enrichment plant in Romania, using gas centrifuges that the UK had developed jointly with West Germany and the

²¹ AMAE, 871/1974, The visit to Romania of Sir John Hill, the President of the UK Atomic Energy Authority, Telegram from Pretor Popa to CSEN President Ioan Ursu, June 3, 1974, 44.

²² Building Steam Generating Heavy Water Reactors required a lot more workforce (engineers, technicians, unskilled workers) than the LWR, offering the Labour Government, led by Prime Minister Harold Wilson, an opportunity to claim that the nuclear programme it put forward was a job-creating scheme.

²³ AMAE, 871/1974, The Visit to Romania of Sir John Hill, the President of the UK Atomic Energy Authority, Telegram from Pretor Popa to CSEN President Ioan Ursu, April 25, 1974, 31.

Netherlands.²⁴ Such a facility, even under safeguards, would ensure Romania's independence from nuclear suppliers, while also allowing Bucharest to go for a breakout nuclear programme if push came to shove.

With all this interest pouring in not only from North America, but also from Western Europe, Romania's market value as a customer skyrocketed. Nuclear suppliers well knew that selling a reactor to Bucharest presented them with several non-negligible disadvantages. Not only was Romania cash-strapped and in dire need of hard currency, but it was also politically risky. What if the Soviets put pressure on it again, as they had done in 1970? Nuclear suppliers had to make a political bet when providing the Romanians with long-term loans: that the RCP leadership, by maintaining its grip on power, would pay its debt on time. But for nuclear suppliers like Canada, the FRG, or the UK, snatching the deal from the jaws of their rivals seemed to matter more than anything else. Winning the deal with Bucharest became a matter of pride and prestige, "a feather in our cap," as Gray told *The Montreal Star* in an article published on May 8, 1974.²⁵

²⁴ Uranium enrichment plants can produce the fissile material (HEU) needed for a nuclear bomb. On the development of the gas centrifuge, see Memorandum for Mr. Philip J. Farley, Control of and Cooperation in Gas Centrifuge Research and Development Technology, February 19, 1960, Department of Energy MDR release, available at: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115304>.

²⁵ AMAE, 1446/1974, Correspondence regarding the long-term multilateral cooperation between Romania and Canada in the production and exploitation of nuclear power plants, Romania opts

Smiling Buddha

The Indian peaceful nuclear explosion (Pokhran I, also known as ‘Smiling Buddha’), which took place on May 18, 1974, brought the Canadian-Romanian nuclear negotiations to the next loop in their roller-coaster negotiation. The event compelled Ottawa to undergo a re-evaluation of its nuclear exports policy, leaving the Romanians (and all its other suitors) in limbo for almost nine months.²⁶ But the ripple effects of Pokhran I spread well beyond Canada’s nuclear establishment. Because there is technically no difference between a peaceful nuclear explosion (PNE) and a military nuclear explosion, Pokhran I reminded the international community of the risks inherent in civilian nuclear assistance.

for

20 Canadian atomic power plants, May 8, 1974, *The Montreal Star*, 24.

²⁶ Memorandum of conversation, “Indian Nuclear Explosion; World Food Conference; Pacific Coast Tankers; NATO Declaration; Middle East; Trade Bill,” June 18, 1974, in *National Security Archive Briefing Book No. 467*, ed. William Burr, available at: <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb467/>; AMAE, 1446/1974, Correspondence Regarding the Long-Term Multilateral Cooperation between Romania and Canada in the Production and Exploitation of Nuclear Power Plants, Telegram from Ambassador Bucur Şchiopu to the Ministry of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Electricity, Ministry of Heavy Machine Building Industry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 11, 1974, 53; AMAE, 5962/1974, The Position of Some States on the Nuclear Explosion Carried Out by India, Telegram from Geneva to the Deputy Foreign Minister Vasile Gliga, May 20, 1974, 3; Duane Bratt, *The Politics of CANDU Exports* (Toronto, London: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 121-127; George Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*, 186-187; Burr, “A Scheme of ‘Control’,” 254.

All Canada had done in 1956 was to sell India a 40 MW heavy water research reactor.²⁷ The Indians loaded the reactor with fuel rods produced indigenously so that they could not be accused of breaching their nuclear cooperation agreement with Ottawa. However, because the Indian nuclear programme benefitted from the know-how, expertise, and financial aid provided by Canada and the US, the Indian PNE showcased how technology transfers furthered nuclear proliferation. In the aftermath of Pokhran I, suppliers accelerated their efforts to contain the horizontal spread of the A-bomb through a new approach to nuclear exports, based on coordination and cooperation.²⁸

An important role in this new policy was assigned to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), also known as the London Group. At the core of the NSG, the Romanians thought, lay the principle that “you [recipient countries] can trust us [suppliers], but we cannot trust you.”²⁹ The NSG focused on controlling the spread of sensitive nuclear technologies and materials, seeking to limit the access of potential proliferants to uranium enrichment facilities and spent fuel reprocessing plants.³⁰ At the same time, the NSG, somewhat disingenuously,

²⁷ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 27.

²⁸ Burr, “A Scheme of ‘Control’,” 252.

²⁹ AMAE, 3510/1978, Nuclear Suppliers Exports Policy, Telegram from Nicu Bujor, Chargé d'affaires in London, to Ilie Rădulescu, July, 22, 1978, 15.

³⁰ AMAE, 5867/1976, The Control Exerted by the IAEA over Nuclear Activities, Note from the Romanian Permanent Mission at the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations

claimed that it respected the right of non-nuclear powers to use atomic energy peacefully. Yet the US, as one of the main driving forces behind this group, applied considerable pressure on its partners to curtail nuclear exports.

Complying with this tougher line on nuclear technology transfers ran counter to suppliers' interests. In a time of intense competition, tying one's own hands by agreeing that some items were off-limits made little sense. France and the FRG resisted, since they wanted to make some profits after investing heavily in their nuclear industries.³¹ Canada also enjoyed the prospect of filling its coffers. AECL was in high demand, with Romania, Iran, and Denmark now appearing as the most promising customers. Selling a nuclear power plant to Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi appealed to the Canadians because, unlike most other countries, Iran could pay with cash, thanks to the profits made from its oil bonanza. Denmark offered a different, but just as important, opportunity: to spearhead the CANDU design in the Central European market.³² Romania could be the launchpad for Canadian nuclear technology in socialist countries, a bridgehead to Poland and Czechoslovakia. Investing in the Eastern bloc did not seem as risky

Industrial Development Organization to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 28, 1976, 19.

³¹ AMAE, 5867/1976, The Control Exerted by the IAEA over Nuclear Activities, Telegram from Dumitru Aninoiu to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 12, 1976, 8-9.

³² AMAE, 1446/1974, Correspondence Regarding the Long-Term Multilateral Cooperation between Romania and Canada in the Production and Exploitation of Nuclear Power Plants, Telegram from Ambassador Bucur Şchiopu to the Ministry of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Electricity, Ministry of Heavy Machine Building Industry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 11, 1974, 54.

as it had in the aftermath of the August 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, given Moscow's own interest now in cooperating with Canada.³³

Because of the tougher line on nuclear exports which Washington adopted after the Indian nuclear test, the Canadians found themselves caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, the US expected Canada to participate in the NSG, as Ottawa remained one of Washington's closest allies. On the other hand, Henry Kissinger's push for greater coordination in the nuclear exports arena came at a time when the American nuclear industry's grip on the international market was weakening. It ranked high on Washington's to-do list to dispel the suspicion that the new rules of the game were part of a plot to maintain American primacy. Loyal as they were, the Canadians loathed the idea of their rivals getting ahead. Any slip in the talks between Bucharest and Ottawa could result in one of Canada's competitors stealing the deal from under Canada's nose. The Romanians exploited this competition between nuclear suppliers to the fullest extent possible. As the Canadians were pausing to rethink their nuclear exports policy, the Romanians drew closer to the British. By the time the Canadian government lifted the embargo on nuclear exports on December 20, 1974, the

³³ AMAE, 1446/1974, Correspondence Regarding the Long-Term Multilateral Cooperation between Romania and Canada in the Production and Exploitation of Nuclear Power Plants, Telegram from Ambassador Bucur Şchiopu to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Trade, November 29, 1973, 48; AOSP, opis 36/1975, dela 120 & 122, Plan for the Technical-Scientific Cooperation of the Soviet Union with Foreign Countries for 1975.

UKAEA and CSEN had come within an inch of signing a Nuclear Cooperation Agreement.³⁴

Canada's competitors appeared to be gaining ground in their dealings with Romania not least because of the stricter terms Ottawa sought to impose on its potential customers: the Canadian government allowed AECL to resume exporting nuclear technology on the condition that future bilateral agreements would ban the use of Canadian technology for nuclear explosions.³⁵ This shift in Ottawa's nuclear technology transfer policy frustrated Romania's interest in the military uses of the atom.

The Indian peaceful nuclear explosion broke down the psychological prohibition which had reined in other countries until then. India's experience served as a source of inspiration to many countries, including Romania, which realized that a PNE would offer them some protection, at least in theory, against international condemnation.³⁶ First, Article V of the Non-Proliferation Treaty allowed for PNEs, although they were to be carried out by the nuclear powers

³⁴ AMAE, 867/1977, Cooperation in the Field of Nuclear Energy, Telegram from Pretor Popa to CSEN President, Ioan Ursu, November 28, 1974, 27.

³⁵ AMAE, 1446/1974, Correspondence Regarding the Long-Term Multilateral Cooperation between Romania and Canada in the Production and Exploitation of Nuclear Power Plants, Telegram from Ambassador Bucur Şchiopu to the Ministry of Electricity and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 21, 1974, 69.

³⁶ AMAE, 5962/1974, The Position of Some States on the Nuclear Explosion Carried Out by India, Telegram from Stockholm to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 22, 1974; AMAE, 3881/1977, The Activity of the IAEA Ad-Hoc Advisory Group on Peaceful Nuclear Explosions, Proposal from Deputy Foreign Minister Vasile Gliga to Foreign Minister George Macovescu, April 14, 1977, 11.

under international supervision. Second, PNEs nevertheless involved the same procedures, materials, and technology as a military nuclear explosion, which is why they were so controversial.

In the aftermath of the Indian PNE, the Romanian General Secretary acted rather recklessly and chose not to make a secret of his nuclear aspirations. It did not take long for foreign embassies in Bucharest to pick up his intentions, as in September 1974, a draft of the RCP programme asserted that no state needs to refrain from the acquisition of atomic weapons.³⁷ Understanding that such open statements could endanger Romania's prospects of acquiring Western nuclear technology, the RCP scrapped the section on nuclear weapons from its final programme, hoping that nobody had noticed. Now more than ever, Romania needed to extract laxer safeguards from nuclear suppliers, so that it could continue to pursue its nuclear hedging strategy. Therefore, Bucharest had to exacerbate the competition between suppliers even more.

The next step in the Romanians' strategy was to draw in the FRG. In June 1973, the Romanians had signed a Nuclear Cooperation Agreement with West Germany, but no commercial deals ensued, since Bucharest wanted to avoid

³⁷ NARA, AAD, RG 59, CFPPF, Telegram from Secretary of State to the US Embassy in Ottawa, 3 February 1976.

becoming even more indebted to Bonn.³⁸ However, as soon as the Romanians realized they needed another pawn in their game, they immediately resumed negotiations with Bonn for a nuclear reactor, which they had abandoned in 1970.³⁹ Therefore in the spring and summer of 1975, the Romanians approached the West Germans with a request for a nuclear power plant. Romania's interest in West German nuclear technology – i.e., light water reactors (LWRs) using enriched uranium – puzzled the leadership in Bonn because in the late 1960s the RCP had announced its preference for heavy water natural uranium reactors. Now it seemed that the Romanians wanted to get their hands on the West Germans' ultracentrifuge to produce enriched uranium, which could be diverted to a military programme.⁴⁰ The Germans hesitated, as they knew that the Romanians' negotiations with the Canadians had already reached an advanced phase.

Winning over Ottawa

The Romanians' strategy worked. In September 1975, a Canadian high-level delegation visited Bucharest to discuss the nuclear reactors deal with the

³⁸ AMAE, 1222/1973, The Resumption of Negotiations for the Acquisition of a Heavy Water - Natural Uranium Nuclear Power Plant from Canada, Telegram from Bucur Şchiopu to the Deputy Foreign Minister Nicolae Ghenea, August 25, 1973, 54.

³⁹ Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes [Political Archive of the Foreign Office – henceforth PA AA], B 63, 117672, 410.26 RUM, German-Romanian Negotiations for the Construction of a Nuclear Power Plant in Romania, Telegram from Bonn, August 5, 1975.

⁴⁰ PA AA, B 63, 117672, 410.26 RUM, German-Romanian Negotiations for the Construction of a Nuclear Power Plant in Romania, Telegram from Bucharest to Bonn, July 7, 1975.

Romanians. Compared to 1973–1974, AECL had changed course completely. If initially the Canadians rejected the Romanians' exports-based payment scheme, now Ottawa was more than happy to be reimbursed in products, including industrial goods manufactured in Romania.⁴¹ Moreover, thanks to their strategy of pitting the Canadians against other nuclear suppliers, the Romanians managed to obtain the financial support they needed from Ottawa to pay for the reactors. In 1973, the Canadians did not buy into Bucharest's claims that Romania, as a developing country, needed credits to import CANDU technology. In 1975, however, Ottawa not only fully embraced Romania's self-proclaimed developing country status, but also offered a CAD\$100 million loan to fund the purchase.

Most important, despite the impact of the Indian PNE and the efforts of the NSG to contain the spread of nuclear weapons, the Romanians' strategy helped them extract several important concessions on proliferation from the AECL. In his 1976 conversations with the head of AECL, John S. Foster, Ceaușescu gave a thinly veiled hint that Romania would seek to exploit the military uses of the atom. He suggested that Romania could build a nuclear weapon without external assistance, to which Foster replied by politely asking the Romanian leader not to use the reactors that Canada intended to provide to

⁴¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 263/1975, Note on the tasks to be undertaken in preparation of the high-level visit to Canada, November 8, 1975, 114.

Romania for military purposes.⁴² Foster's disparaging remarks about the NSG and his willingness to turn a blind eye to Ceaușescu's remarks about acquiring the A-bomb indigenously seem to suggest that for the Canadians, defeating their rivals in the competition for the deal with Romania weighed more heavily than stemming proliferation. "It's too bad we cannot cooperate freely these days," Foster said in response to Ceaușescu's criticism of the cartel system imposed by the London Club and their attempt to keep the bomb out of other countries' hands.⁴³ Ceaușescu and Foster saw eye to eye on a key issue: that the great powers cannot stop other countries from building nuclear weapons.⁴⁴ When the US started pushing for the creation of the NSG after the Indian PNE, the Canadian authorities eagerly sought to contribute to stemming the nuclear tide. However, AECL's dealings with the Romanians point to the obstacles that the government of Pierre Trudeau had to overcome within the Canadian industrial complex. The AECL's conflicted stance on non-proliferation stemmed from a certain degree of resentment towards Washington's efforts to limit nuclear exports. Had Foster been fully committed to containing and reversing nuclear proliferation, he would have cancelled the deal with Romania after Ceaușescu openly stated his intentions to build a nuclear bomb.

⁴² ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 79/1976, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and John S. Foster and A.M. Aikin, June 26, 1976, 10.

⁴³ *Idem*, 4.

⁴⁴ *Idem*, 7.

Luckily for the Canadians, Foster did not call the shots on Ottawa's non-proliferation policy. When Romania and Canada negotiated the safeguards agreement one year after the Ceaușescu-Foster encounter, officials in the Canadian Foreign Ministry made it very clear to the Romanians that they could not reprocess the spent fuel from the CANDU reactors, at least for a while. Canada had not given permission to any of the countries with which it was in negotiation to do this, so the Romanians could not invoke a precedent. Also, to Ceaușescu's chagrin, IAEA safeguards had to apply to the equipment Romania wanted to produce based on Canadian licenses.⁴⁵ So, with one move, it appeared that Ottawa's decision dealt two serious blows to Ceaușescu's nuclear hedging strategy.

Hot Cells

But the new conditions Canada imposed did not mark the end of the story. Ottawa could keep an eye on the CANDU reactors, but it could not stop Ceaușescu from buying a radiochemistry laboratory to be used for post-irradiation examinations. Such a facility, in the eyes of the Romanians, represented a

⁴⁵ AMAE, 3880/1977, Imports and Exports of Nuclear Material and Equipment. Nuclear Transfers. IAEA Safeguards, Telegram from Barbu Popescu to the Vice-Prime Minister, Ion Pășan, September 27, 1977, 99-100.

promising start for building a spent fuel reprocessing plant. The success of the Tertius Gaudens tactic, which made the Canadians, the West Germans, and the British clamber over each other to supply Romania with a nuclear power reactor, emboldened Ceaușescu in his pursuit of a military nuclear option.

The reactors Canada agreed to transfer to Romania, together with the TRIGA reactor supplied by the US, represented only the first phase of what the RCP leadership envisaged as the path to the bomb.⁴⁶ The higher percentage of plutonium produced in CANDU reactors was one of the main reasons why Romania opted for the Canadian technology.⁴⁷ By 1970, the Romanians had arrived to the idea that they should build a pilot reprocessing plant with a capacity of 40 tons/year.⁴⁸

Despite making his nuclear ambitions known to the world, Ceaușescu realized Romania still needed an official cover for its nuclear programme, so as to prevent foreign interference and debilitating sanctions from its trade partners. The Romanians found inspiration in the way West Germany and India, two threshold nuclear powers, structured their nuclear programmes. Both Bonn and

⁴⁶ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Economică, 22/1975, Memorandum from CSEN to Nicolae Ceaușescu, July 17, 1975, 17.

⁴⁷ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Economică, 23/1970, Romania's Nuclear Power Plant Acquisition Programme, February 2, 1970, 32.

⁴⁸ AMAE, 241/12.A.39/1970-1971, Setting-up a Nuclear Technology Institute in Romania, Note from CSEN Vice-President Emilian Rodean to the Deputy Foreign Minister Nicolae Ecobescu, December 29, 1970, 30, 36.

New Delhi justified their reprocessing facilities as part of their plans to build breeder reactors (which use plutonium as fuel) in the future.⁴⁹ Quick to learn from the experience of their more advanced partners, the Romanians claimed to have an interest in developing fast breeder reactors for electricity, for which they needed plutonium.⁵⁰

The first step in mastering the full fuel cycle was to build a laboratory-scale fuel reprocessing facility, similar to the one at the Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology (PINSTECH).⁵¹ At the core of this laboratory lay hot cells, shielded nuclear radiation containment chambers vital for the chemical recovery of plutonium from spent fuel (through the PUREX method, for example).⁵² The TRIGA research reactor from General Atomic (Gulf changed its name in 1973) opened the door for the acquisition of hot cells. Since the TRIGA reactor served as a fuel testing reactor, hot cells were needed to examine the effect of irradiation on fuel bars. Therefore, the Romanians' interest in

⁴⁹ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Economică, 35/1969, The Report of the Nuclear Energy Committee Delegation visit to India, November 20 – December 1, 1969, 4-5, 10-11; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 125/1967, Bulletin from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Foreign Relations Section of the Central Committee, May 17, 1967, 114-116.

⁵⁰ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 147/1967, Meeting of the Executive Committee, October 17, 1967, 35-40, 103-126.

⁵¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Economică, 22/1975, Memorandum from CSEN to Nicolae Ceaușescu, July 17, 1975, 17; For the Pakistani facility, see Jeffrey T. Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb. American Nuclear Intelligence from Nazi Germany to Iran and North Korea* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 339.

⁵² NARA, AAD, RG 59, CFPPF, Telegram from Henry Kissinger to the US Embassy in Ottawa, 3 February, 1976.

reprocessing technology raised no suspicions. The Romanians wanted to learn not only how to utilize reprocessing facilities, but also, by reverse-engineering them, how to produce them indigenously, so as to build a plant with as little help as possible from the outside.⁵³ Bucharest envisaged the construction of a fuel reprocessing plant with a capacity of 40 tons per year, by 1980.⁵⁴

The Romanians rightly anticipated that the path to plutonium would be long, especially as nuclear suppliers became increasingly sensitive about other countries developing the full nuclear fuel cycle. As Chapter Five has showed, the Romanians had put out feelers with the French and the British on a reprocessing plant as early as the 1960s. Bucharest knew not to put the cart before the horse, so it focused primarily on establishing the basis for a reprocessing plant (i.e., the acquisition of reactors). They kept searching for reprocessing technology to stir the interest of suppliers. The pawns in Bucharest's game were, as usual, France, West Germany, Sweden, the UK, and the US. To secure reprocessing technology on favourable terms (i.e., with as little outside interference as possible, so that Romanian scientists could pursue military applications of nuclear energy

⁵³ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 49/1979, Note to Ilie Verdeț, Virgil Cazacu, Ștefan Andrei from the Chancellery of the Central Committee, June 24, 1979, 214.

⁵⁴ AMAE, 241/12.A.39/1970-1971, Setting-up a Nuclear Technology Institute in Romania, Note from CSEN Vice-President Emilian Rodean to the Deputy Foreign Minister Nicolae Ecobescu, December 29, 1970, 36.

undisturbed), the leadership in Bucharest resorted to pitting suppliers against one another.

Just as in the 1960s, Romania started by targeting the weakest link, which at the time was Sweden. Since the late 1960s, AB Atomenergi, the Swedish national nuclear company which the Romanians were courting for hot cells, had been struggling financially because of the fierce competition put up by its rivals in Western Europe and North America. In the 1970s, the situation turned so sour that the government of Prime Minister Olof Palme had to privatize AB Atomenergi. The Romanians immediately got involved, arranging a visit by a CSEN delegation for December 1970. The Swedes, who were excited at the prospects of gaining a foothold in the international nuclear market, and oblivious to Romania's manipulative tactics, took the bait. As a result, a flurry of exchanges ensued. Delegations from the two countries met not only on neutral ground, in Geneva (in September 1971), but also in Bucharest (in July 1971 and February 1972) and Stockholm (in March and October 1971, as well as in March 1972). With every visit, the Swedes' hopes that they could seal a deal with Romania soared higher. Yet, for Bucharest, Sweden represented little more than a lure for other suppliers.

The Romanians in fact preferred American reprocessing technology, as the US had the most advanced nuclear industry and was also the farthest away

geographically. Hoping that its burgeoning relationship with Sweden might draw the Americans into the game, in July 1972 CSEN approached its American counterpart (the US AEC) for a laboratory-scale reprocessing facility.⁵⁵ To the Romanians' frustration, Bucharest soon discovered that it lacked the necessary leverage, as it needed more than just one other supplier to convince the Americans to supply the hot cells. Romania realized that pushing Washington on the issue of reprocessing technology could backfire, so the leadership in Bucharest decided to put this on the back burner until the TRIGA reactor had been built. The spent fuel from the TRIGA reactor would provide the Romanians with an excuse for its interest in the radiochemistry lab. Therefore, it was not until late 1975 that Bucharest resumed its talks with the US for the hot cells.⁵⁶

The French Connection

Having learned their lesson from the 1972 failure, the Romanians now applied a more aggressive strategy, reaching out to as many suppliers as possible.⁵⁷ The

⁵⁵ NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973. Science, From AE 13 Japan to AE Swe-US, Box 2870, Airgram A-7379 from the US Department of State to the US Atomic Energy Commission, July 21, 1972.

⁵⁶ NARA, AAD, RG 59, CFPPF, Telegram from Henry Kissinger to the US Embassy in Ottawa, 3 February, 1976; AMAE, 4229/1976, Visit Exchanges and the Cooperation between the National Council for Science and Technology, CSEN, and Intertechnology for the Establishment of a Joint Scientific Research Institute, Telegram from the Romanian Ambassador to Washington, D.C., Corneliu Bogdan, to the CSEN Vice-President, Emilian Rodeanu, January 26, 1976.

⁵⁷ AMAE, 528/1976, Correspondence Regarding the Collaboration between Romania and the United Kingdom, Telegram from the Romanian Embassy in London to the Minister of the

UK, France, and West Germany responded to Bucharest's overtures, making the US nervous about losing the deal with Romania.⁵⁸ The profits, influence, and prestige the American nuclear industry could gain from the gigantic nuclear programme Ceauşescu sought to build compelled them to get involved.⁵⁹ As a consequence, Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger gave the green light for the transfer of hot cells in August 1976.⁶⁰ This decision underlines his ambivalent position on non-proliferation. While "Super K" viewed nuclear weapons as "a means to an end", he also helped slow down the spread of the A-bomb by playing a "slightly reluctant but nonetheless highly influential role in establishing the Nuclear Suppliers Group."⁶¹ Kissinger's interest in sealing a deal with Romania suggests that in the post-Pokhran I era, non-proliferation and the quest for relative gains stood on equal footing. Washington applied pressure on its allies to forego sensitive nuclear technology transfers to other countries, only to undertake the very actions it tried to proscribe. This strategy served two related goals:

Machine-Building Industry, Ion Avram, August 18, 1976; NARA, AAD, RG 59, CFPF, Telegram from Henry Kissinger to the US Embassy in Ottawa, 3 February 1976.

⁵⁸ NARA, AAD, RG 59, CFPF, Telegram from Henry Kissinger to the US Embassy in Ottawa, 3 February 1976.

⁵⁹ The US Department of State rightly noted that the nuclear programme represented Romania's biggest investment. The leadership in Bucharest planned on building 20 nuclear reactors. NARA, AAD, RG 59, CFPF, Telegram from Henry Kissinger to the US Embassy in Ottawa, 3 February 1976.

⁶⁰ NARA, AAD, RG 59, CFPF, Telegram from Henry Kissinger to the US Embassy in Bucharest, 'US-Romanian Nuclear Cooperation: Hot Cell End-Use Statement, 24 August 1976.

⁶¹ Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft*, 105, 117, 118; *National Security Archive Briefing Book No. 467*, ed. William Burr, available at: <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb467/>.

managing the decline of the US nuclear industry, and thus preserving America's position of power in the international system.

Challengers did not take long to emerge. Under the leadership of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who breathed new life into the French nuclear industry, France resisted Kissinger's plans for closer coordination among nuclear suppliers.⁶² Giscard feared that the NSG would threaten France's status as a first-rank nuclear energy power and compromise its relations with its Third World clients.⁶³ In August 1976, the simmering tensions between Washington and Paris over non-proliferation erupted in public, when Kissinger pressured Giscard's Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, to give up a deal for a reprocessing plant with Pakistan.⁶⁴ For the Romanians, the Franco-American spat over Pakistan came as a blessing in disguise. On the one hand, Washington's muscle-flexing came as a warning to the Romanians that the US took non-proliferation seriously. If Bucharest fell out of favour with the US, something similar might happen to Romania's nuclear acquisition plans. On the other hand, the quarrel also signalled

⁶² Pierre Lellouche, "Giscard's Legacy: French Nuclear Policy and Non-proliferation," in Robert Boardman, James F. Keeley (eds.), *Nuclear Exports and World Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 33; Memorandum to the Secretary of State from ACDA Director Fred Ikle and Policy Planning Staff Director Winston Lord, "Analytical Staff Meeting on Non-Proliferation Strategy," July 31, 1974, in *National Security Archive Briefing Book No. 467*, ed. William Burr, available at: <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb467/>.

⁶³ Edward A. Kolodziej, *Making and Marketing Arms: The French Experience and Its Implications for the International System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 121-123.

⁶⁴ Samina Ahmed, "Franco-Pakistan Relations – II: The Issue of the Nuclear Reprocessing Plant," in *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (1978), 41-42.

to the Romanians that the French could be pitted against the Americans. Paris became even keener to enter new markets to make up for the losses incurred from cancelling the deal with Pakistan. Therefore, the Romanians rightly expected, France could be manipulated into offering better financial terms and less stringent safeguards.⁶⁵

After the 1976 presidential elections, which brought Jimmy Carter to the White House, Bucharest realized that the window of opportunity could soon close.⁶⁶ Its skilful strategy of playing the French against the Americans would not work anymore because of Carter's determination to curtail sensitive nuclear technology exports and to apply NSG guidelines on dampening the negative effects of competition among suppliers.⁶⁷ During his time in the US Navy, Carter had been deployed with the US AEC Division of Reactor Development in Schenectady, NY.⁶⁸ His experience in Admiral Hyman Rickover's nuclear submarine programme was thenceforth to shape his views about atomic energy.

⁶⁵ AMAE, 3883/1977, Reactions and Comments on the Secret International Agreement Regarding the Export of Nuclear Reprocessing Plants, Telegram from the Romanian Ambassador to Paris, Corneliu Mănescu to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 21, 1977, 34.

⁶⁶ AMAE, 3883/1977, Reactions and Comments on the Secret International Agreement Regarding the Export of Nuclear Reprocessing Plants, The New Nuclear Policy of US President Carter, Telegram from the Romanian Permanent Mission to the IAEA and the UNIDO to Deputy Foreign Minister Vasile Gliga, April 16, 1977, 3.

⁶⁷ AMAE, 3883/1977, Reactions and Comments on the Secret International Agreement Regarding the Export of Nuclear Reprocessing Plants, Telegram from the Romanian Permanent Mission to the IAEA and UNIDO to Romulus Neagu, April 16, 1977, 16-29; AMAE, 5868/1976, The Nuclear Suppliers Group Meeting in London, Telegram from Popa Pretor to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 23, 1976, 17.

⁶⁸ Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 58.

Unlike Nixon and Kissinger, Carter saw nuclear weapons as a destabilizing force in global politics. To curb nuclear proliferation was to strengthen international security. At the centre of Carter's non-proliferation policy stood the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act which Congress passed in 1978, enforcing stricter standards than previous American administrations.⁶⁹ The new measures the US put in place did not allow the Romanians to divert hot cells for military purposes. As the French were willing to offer a much better price and less intrusive inspections, the Romanians ended their negotiations with General Atomic and swiftly sealed a deal with Ateliers et Chantiers de Bretagne (ACB).⁷⁰ The Romanians escaped Carter's new nuclear exports policy by a whisker through the well-timed agreement with the French. The radiochemistry laboratory supplied by ACB offered Romania the perfect justification for pursuing plutonium separation from spent fuel, serving as a shield for Ceaușescu's nuclear ambitions.

⁶⁹ Jimmy Carter, "Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act of 1978 Statement on Signing H.R. 8638 Into Law," March 10, 1978. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, available at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=30475>.

⁷⁰ NARA, AAD, RG 59, CFPF, Telegram from the Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to the US Embassy in Ottawa, February 28, 1977; NARA, AAD, RG 59, CFPF, Telegram from the US Embassy in Bucharest to the Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, June 14, 1977; Telex to Mr. Robert Chesworth, from the US Embassy in Bucharest, April 29, 1977, available at: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1977BUCHAR03165_c.html; Interviews with Dr Eng Lucian Biro, former President of the National Commission for Nuclear Activities Control, February 8, 2013; Interview with Dr Eng Șerban Valeca, former Deputy Director of the Romanian Authority for Nuclear Activities, February 18, 2013; Interview with Robert H. Chesworth, former Managing Director of General Atomic, March 15, 2013.

Aftermath

The Romanians had benefitted substantially from their nuclear cooperation with the West. However, after purchasing the radiochemistry laboratory from France, Ceaușescu deemed it was high time Romania turned over a new leaf and so brought the Romanian nuclear procurement programme to an abrupt end. In 1979, the authorities in Bucharest decided to stop purchasing nuclear technology from abroad.⁷¹ The reasons behind this decision were driven by both internal and external factors. With regard to external factors, the windows of opportunity that international détente had opened were now quickly closing. As superpower relations entered a phase of renewed tensions, Moscow and Washington both expected their allies to close ranks. Romania hesitated at first, but when push came to shove, Ceaușescu came back into the fold.⁷² As for internal factors, Ceaușescu believed that Romanian scientists and engineers had now gained enough experience to start producing their own facilities. The numerous scholarships the Romanian nuclear establishment had benefitted from in the West

⁷¹ ANIC, CC PCR, Cancelarie, 49/1979, Note to Ilie Verdeț, Virgil Cazacu, Ștefan Andrei from the Chancellery of the Central Committee, June 24, 1979, 214.

⁷² ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 128/1979, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Leonid Brezhnev, August 1, 1979, 4-5; ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 129/1979, Nicolae Ceaușescu's handwritten notes on the margins of his meeting with Leonid Brezhnev, August 1, 1979, 5-9.

improved what international experts regarded as an excellent scientific basis.⁷³ Relying on indigenous expertise provided an added benefit: it could protect the Romanian nuclear programme against foreign intervention. The stricter rules put in place by the new administration in Washington, together with the increasing degree of compliance from America's Western partners, now posed a serious threat of interference. Above all, the Romanians feared full-scope safeguards, which were meant to include nuclear facilities and materials developed and obtained without foreign assistance.⁷⁴

But these measures did not deter Ceaușescu from his plans to become a nuclear hedger. Determined to move ahead, he ordered Romanian scientists in 1983 to use the ACB radiochemistry laboratory to extract plutonium.⁷⁵ A series of steps taken earlier made this task possible. According to the special inspections report, the Romanians used HEU provided by the United States in 1974, which

⁷³ ANIC, CC PCR, Relații Externe, 203/1975, Minutes of conversation between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Sir Arnold Weinstock, Director of General Electric, November 1, 1975, 1-5; AMAE, 3882/1977, Scholarships Awarded to Romanian Scientists by the IAEA, Telegram from the Romanian Permanent Mission to the IAEA and UNIDO to the CSEN Vice-President, Emilian Rodean, January 14, 1977, 11.

⁷⁴ Nuclear powers, including the USSR, had placed great emphasis on this provision, since the days of the NPT negotiations. Roland Timerbaev, *The Nuclear Suppliers Group: Why and How It Was Created (1974-1978)* (Moscow: Center for Policy Studies in Russia, 2000), 49-51. Romania fiercely fought against any attempt to make Article III of the NPT, which deals with safeguards, more specific and inclusive. AMAE, 5867/1976, The Control Exerted by the IAEA over Nuclear Activities, Telegram from the Romanian Permanent Mission to the IAEA and UNIDO to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 12, 1976, 7-9.

⁷⁵ ANIC, CC PCR, Secția Economică, 327/1983, Note from the Central Committee Chancellery to D. Dăscălescu, Ștefan Andrei, and Florin Dumitrescu, June 6, 1983, 10-21; Petre T. Frangopol, "Mihai Bălănescu," in *Revista de Politică Științei și Scientometrie*, Vol. 1, Issue 4, December 2012, 358; Dunn, "The NPT," 154.

was blended with natural uranium and transformed into two test rods.⁷⁶ The test rods were then irradiated inside the TRIGA reactor “sometime between November 1981 and November 1982 and were discharged sometime between November 1984 and November 1985.”⁷⁷

The next step involved separating plutonium from the irradiated rods, a procedure which the Romanians ought to have informed the IAEA and their international partners about. Instead of complying with the terms of the safeguards agreement, the team of Romanian scientists charged with extracting plutonium sought to conceal their activities from the IAEA. Knowing that IAEA inspectors were unlikely to visit Romania twice in the span of a month (especially during the Christmas and New Year’s holiday), the scientists set up the equipment “shortly after the [IAEA] inspection and the experiment was carried out during the last two weeks of December 1985. It was further determined that the equipment was removed from the hot cells during the first few weeks of 1986.”⁷⁸

The successful extraction of plutonium was filmed on camera, perhaps for future reference. As the narrator in the recording notes, “although the

⁷⁶ Archives of the International Atomic Energy Agency [henceforth Archives of the IAEA], Sven Thorstensen and Garry Dillon, Report on Special Inspection in Romania, May 14, 1992, 4.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

experimental setup was very modest in scale, it could nonetheless demonstrate the separation technique, which would represent a major technological step for the Romanian nuclear industry.”⁷⁹ The 1985 hot cell experiments suggest an effort to ascertain how close Romania was to having a breakout capability. To prevent the international community from discovering these activities, the Romanian government passed a general decree “prohibiting access of foreign nationals to Romanian technological installations,” and adopted a “denial of access” policy vis-à-vis the IAEA.⁸⁰

Shortly before being overthrown in 1989, he claimed that Romania had the capability to produce nuclear weapons, a bluff which was meant to scare the Hungarians, whom Ceaușescu perceived as fomenting civil unrest in parts of Transylvania.⁸¹ The change of leadership in Bucharest in December 1989 brought about an end to Ceaușescu’s nuclear ambitions, which the new authorities reported to the IAEA only in 1992.⁸² Until then, the new authorities had denied and tried to prevent the IAEA from learning about the 1985 experiments. The Romanians had the opportunity to come clean in 1990, when during consultations in Bucharest the IAEA representatives pointed out that “any irregularities be

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 5.

⁸¹ Leonard S. Spector with Jacqueline R. Smith, *Nuclear Ambitions. The Spread of Nuclear Weapons, 1989-1990* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 133-135.

⁸² Frangopol, “Mihai Bălănescu,” 358.

made known at that time. The advice was repeated.”⁸³ The Romanians, including Mr. M. Ciocănescu, who was the Reactor/Hot Cell Manager in 1985 and involved in the experiments, remained silent. Uncertainty about the future can probably explain the 2-year delay between the fall of the regime and the Romanians’ decision to reveal the 1985 irregularities. Luckily for the new government in Bucharest, in 1994 IAEA Director General Hans Blix cleared Romania of any wrongdoing, allowing for the advancement of the civilian nuclear power program.⁸⁴

Conclusion

This chapter examined Romania’s pursuit of nuclear technology from the West, specifically a nuclear power plant from Canada and a radiochemistry laboratory from France. Bucharest achieved its goal thanks to its ability to pit suppliers against one another. Romania’s successful application of the *Tertius Gaudens* principle, which, as explained, implies that a third party stands to benefit from the conflict between two others, is surprising given the choppy international waters the Romanians had to navigate. Economic forecasts for the 1970s

⁸³ Archives of the IAEA, Sven Thorstensen and Garry Dillon, Report on Special Inspection in Romania, May 14, 1992, 6.

⁸⁴ “Russian Report Cited on ‘Nuclear Program’,” *Der Standard*, April 7, 1995, FBIS-EEU-95-070.

predicted an excess of demand over supply in the field of atomic energy, giving nuclear powers a boost of confidence in their dealings with buyers. The Indian peaceful nuclear explosion made matters worse, as it prompted the creation of a cartel-like organization, the Nuclear Suppliers Group. The strict rules for technology transfers this nuclear club implemented spelled trouble for recipient countries such as Romania. This exclusive club served as a forum for suppliers, who tried to coordinate their nuclear export policies and minimize the negative effects their competition had on non-proliferation. Through the NSG, Washington, London, Moscow, Paris, Bonn, and Ottawa sought to escape the race to the bottom into which their customers wanted to draw them.

However, by exploiting the suppliers' quest for profits and capitalizing on the rivalries between them, the Romanians managed to overcome these obstacles. Greed and lack of unity among Western powers helped Ceaușescu acquire facilities and materials which were later used to probe into the military uses of the atom. Bucharest's commercial manoeuvring worked because Western nuclear companies worried more about their rivals winning the deal than about Ceaușescu's nuclear ambitions. Some governments, such as the Trudeau administration, strove to undo the damage the private sector had created by imposing tougher standards and more intrusive safeguards. But what Ottawa worked hard to protect in one area of nuclear exports, France exposed in another.

The wide panoply of technologies Bucharest pursued simultaneously made it difficult for suppliers to secure every nook and cranny of the international nuclear market and develop a proliferation-proof joint export policy. The Westerners' eagerness to advance their nuclear industries proved Ceaușescu right: a state can hardly be prevented from pursuing nuclear weapons if it chooses to do so. The implications of this decades-long narrative about the place and significance of Romania's nuclear acquisition policies over time will now be considered in the next and concluding chapter.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have sought to answer the specific questions about Romania's nuclear acquisition programme that I posed in the Introduction, but I have also aimed to address some of the broader debates concerning how and why non-nuclear states seek and obtain nuclear technology. My approach is driven by the obvious assumption that scholars need to look at the negotiations between suppliers and recipients of nuclear technology. Historical research can help uncover these dynamics in ways that much of the existing literature has as yet been unable to. I have, using recently released material and a multi-archival, multi-lingual, poliocentric approach, identified levers that *recipient* countries use in their dealings with nuclear suppliers.

This analysis is thus the first historical account of how Romania negotiated during the years under consideration with suppliers on both sides of the Iron Curtain to build its nuclear programme. By piecing together evidence from twenty archives, this thesis aimed to shed light on the interplay between supply and demand in the case of Romania's nuclear technology acquisitions. These documents reveal motivations, decisions, and actions undertaken by leaders in Bucharest, Moscow, Washington, London, Ottawa, Paris, Beijing, and Hanoi. It is through the prism offered by these sources, many of which are here used for the first time, that I hope I have been able to add to our understanding of the

internationalization of nuclear technology and of nuclear politics in the Cold War and beyond.

This thesis unpacks the causal mechanisms at play in the technology transfers that established Romania's nuclear programme. In the *Introduction* I set out the puzzle of my research: 'How was it possible for Romania, a member of the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), to obtain dual-use nuclear technology from Western nuclear suppliers and thus pursue a nuclear hedging strategy?' According to the dominant theory of nuclear assistance, as typified by the work of Matthew Kroenig and Matthew Fuhrmann, one would have expected the leadership in Bucharest to capitalize on an 'enemy of the enemy' strategy to obtain Western nuclear assistance.¹ This approach neglects the fact that Romania remained in a military and economic alliance with the USSR. Indeed, it sought to buy nuclear technology from the actor which the theory regarded as its enemy. I proposed a different concept, namely that of the 'international nuclear entrepreneur'. In this role, Romania actively sought suppliers; it capitalized on its position as a mediator to encourage the suppliers to provide nuclear assistance; and finally, it identified suppliers' vulnerabilities and exploited them to its advantage. If the 'enemy of the enemy' model had been valid, we might have seen Western suppliers pursuing Romania so as to sell it

¹ Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb*; Fuhrmann, *Atomic Assistance*.

nuclear technology; Bucharest would have only its enmity with Moscow as a bargaining chip with Western nuclear suppliers; and lastly, the Romanians would have worked together with the West to develop a constructive nuclear partnership.

How did the record of Romania's nuclear negotiations with the West between 1963 and 1979 sit with these two concepts of 'enemy of the enemy' and 'international nuclear entrepreneur'? The answer that emerges from this thesis is that, in the 1960s and 1970s, Romania obtained nuclear assistance from the West thanks to its 'international nuclear entrepreneur' strategy. *Chapter One* discussed the decision-making process involved in elaborating this nuclear acquisition strategy. It examined the main political and scientific actors, their interactions, mind-sets, visions, backgrounds, and decisions.

Chapters Two and *Three* explained why Romania turned to the West. *Chapter Two* elucidated how the ideological alliance between Moscow and Bucharest shaped their bilateral relations and resulted in the foundation of the Romanian nuclear programme. However, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, growing ideological divergences between the Romanian Workers' Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, combined with changes in Moscow's strategic orientation, led to a Soviet denial of nuclear technology and nuclear weapons deployments on Romania's territory. This rejection prompted Romania

to seek alternatives that would allow it to keep its options open, or in other words, to produce both atomic energy and nuclear weapons.

Chapter Three looked at the highly complex and fast-moving multilateral and multi-actor environment in which Bucharest sought to use the NPT to apply pressure on the nuclear powers, particularly on the USSR. At first, Romania was a vehement opponent of the NPT, which it regarded as the enshrinement of ‘nuclear apartheid’. Then, Bucharest pursued three goals: a nuclear sharing arrangement within the Warsaw Pact; nuclear technology from the Soviet Union; and general disarmament. Pressured by the East Germans and the Poles, the Soviets rebuffed Romania’s proposals. As a result, Romania capitalized on its membership in the Warsaw Pact to oppose the other East Europeans’ non-proliferation efforts. Eventually, the Soviet Union bore down on Bucharest to sign the treaty. However, as *Chapter Seven* later pointed out, Romania’s endorsement of the NPT was enough to secure a nuclear cooperation agreement (NCA) but not sufficient to have that NCA materialize into a nuclear technology transfer (either from the West or from the East).

Chapter Four examined how political considerations turned the tide in Romania’s favour. Transfers of Western nuclear technology hinged on Washington’s approval. Bucharest began by identifying the core of the problem: domestic legislation prohibiting nuclear transfers to a country supporting an

enemy of the US. In this case, Romania was supporting the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, with which Washington was at war. Luckily for Romania, the Vietnam War grew increasingly unpopular with the American electorate, forcing U.S. President Lyndon Johnson to start looking into ending the conflict through a negotiated settlement. In this respect, the US needed mediators who could communicate with both Washington and Hanoi. As one of the few countries able to do this, Romania caught the attention of Johnson's Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, who asked the RCP leadership for help to reach out to the North Vietnamese. The Romanians conditioned their mediation between the US and the DRV on Washington's approval of nuclear technology transfers from the West to Romania. Rusk accepted the quid pro quo and rewarded Romania by endorsing the sale of a Canadian nuclear power reactor. This chapter underlined how Romania could benefit from the linkage it created between nuclear assistance and international diplomacy. It was thanks to this entrepreneurial approach, which exploited Romania's unique position as the 'friend of a foe', rather than the assumed 'enemy of the enemy' role, that Romania could turn a liability into an advantage and get what it wanted. Recipient countries manage to force the hand of nuclear suppliers by appealing to their strategic considerations; however, in an emerging multipolar world, nuclear suppliers may find themselves providing nuclear assistance to their 'frenemies', not just to their allies and to 'enemies of

enemies'. Proliferation by a 'friend of a foe' was a price the US was willing to pay to end the Vietnam War.

Chapter Five looked at how Bucharest also stirred the interest of Western suppliers by playing them off against one another. Bucharest first exploited Anglo-French rivalry, by dragging Paris and London into a bidding war. The Romanians actively sowed discord between them, alternating flattery with snubbing. Faced with the prospect of France getting an edge in the international nuclear market, the UK dropped its initial hesitancy about negotiating with the Romanians and sold them a nuclear research reactor – the first piece of Western nuclear technology to cross the Iron Curtain. Bucharest then started courting other suppliers, such as West Germany, Sweden, and Canada. As the *Tertius Gaudens* principle predicts, suppliers lowered prices and offered laxer safeguards. This chapter suggested that thanks to this tactic, Romania managed to switch the suppliers' focus from absolute to relative gains, and therefore from cooperation amongst themselves to conflict between themselves.

Chapter Six returns to relations with the Soviet Union to set the context and explain what prevented a nuclear agreement between Romania and Western suppliers from taking place in the late 1960s. Concerned about Romania's nuclear weapons ambitions and the availability of Western assistance, Moscow now put pressure on Bucharest to adopt Soviet technology for its atomic energy

programme. As a consequence, negotiations with Western nuclear suppliers were put on hold for three years. The Soviets' non-proliferation strategy, however, relied on a 'denial by postponement' logic: the lesson they drew from the development of the Chinese nuclear programme was that an outright refusal would only embolden the Romanian leadership to seek help elsewhere or to develop the necessary know-how and hardware indigenously. Instead, they chose to deny the Romanians access by perpetually postponing the transfer of the actual reactor they had promised. Moscow did not want to abrogate its nuclear cooperation agreement with Romania, yet it did not want to implement it. This approach let the Soviets have a foot in the door of the Romanian nuclear programme.

Chapter Seven detailed how political manoeuvring allowed the Romanians to score a major victory in their pursuit of American nuclear technology in particular, and Western nuclear assistance in general. The weak spot Bucharest identified this time was Nixon's desire to normalize relations with China. Romania possessed a competitive advantage in this respect, being one of the few countries that had close contacts with the Chinese Communist Party leadership. Just as with the Vietnam War in the late 1960s, the Romanian leadership offered a quid pro quo, linking its mediation with Beijing to the transfer of a US nuclear research reactor and HEU. Nixon accepted the arrangement and contacted the

Chinese through the Bucharest back channel. Although the Romanians were not fully successful in their mediation, they made no small contribution to the Sino-American rapprochement, especially as they also had access to the third key factor in Washington's and Beijing's calculations: the Kremlin. Nixon duly repaid the Romanians for their efforts, giving the go-ahead for the transfer of the research reactor. This episode is particularly important since without this research reactor the Romanians could not have, later on, secured a radiochemistry laboratory from France. Once again, Washington proved willing to provide nuclear assistance to a 'friend of a foe' (a 'frenemy'). To Nixon's mind, the salience of normalizing relations with China dwarfed the risk of having nuclear weapons spread to yet another country.

Chapter Eight showed how Romania pitted suppliers against one another once again, thus managing to seal the deal for a nuclear power reactor with Canada and obtain hot cells from France. The Westerners' vulnerabilities, as in the late 1960s, were their lack of unity and their greed, of which the Romanians took full advantage. Bucharest shuttled from one Western capital to another, accentuating the sense of insecurity felt by each supplier about its chances of winning the deal. One by one, Canada, the UK, and West Germany fell into the trap, each trying to outbid the others to win the contract with Romania. Owing to this tactic, the Romanians obtained the financial and inspection terms they

wanted from Ottawa. Then, the RCP leadership employed the same methods to purchase a radiochemistry laboratory, manipulating the competition between the US and France to drive down prices and eschew the restrictions imposed by the Nuclear Suppliers Group. This chapter outlined how Romania used nuclear transfers to drive a wedge between Western allies and so achieved its own goals.

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This thesis has aimed to contribute to three strands of literature. First, it adds to scholarship on Romanian foreign policy; second, to Cold War international history and Romania's role in the central phase of the Cold war; and third, to nuclear studies.

Romania's nuclear acquisition strategy is an integral but understudied dimension of its foreign policy. This topic has never before been studied in its entirety because of the inaccessibility of primary sources. The secrecy surrounding Romania's acquisition of foreign nuclear technology is testimony to its importance. It is not surprising that the Romanian authorities, like their counterparts in many of the world's nuclear powers – the US, Britain, France, Russia, China, Israel, India, and Pakistan – have kept the records related to nuclear technology under lock and key. Despite numerous practical difficulties, this thesis has benefitted enormously from a 2012 push in Romania for openness and accountability, which established a 10-year rule for several key archival

collections dealing with negotiations for nuclear technology. These documents revealed the centrality of the nuclear programme for Bucharest's foreign policy. Materially speaking, the resources the Romanian authorities allocated for purchases of reactor licenses and nuclear equipment and materials eclipsed those put into any other project. Symbolically speaking, sitting at the table with major nuclear suppliers and negotiating deals worth hundreds of millions of dollars bestowed prestige upon the Romanian leadership. Most important, the pursuit of nuclear technology appears as a thread connecting Romania's most important international initiatives, under both Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu. The new concept this thesis puts forward – namely, that Bucharest was an international entrepreneur – overcomes the limitations inherent in the 'dependent/independent' debate on the nature of Romania's foreign policy and so helps answer the outstanding questions about Bucharest's role in the Cold War. The quest for nuclear technology anchored Romania into the arena of global politics, turning an otherwise minor power into an international actor.

What should we now make of Romania's nuclear programme, situated as I have argued at the apex of Bucharest's foreign policy? The existing literature largely presents the nuclear programme as the result of Western efforts to contain Soviet influence. The West picked up on the frequent flare-ups of tension between Bucharest and Moscow, and sought to take advantage of Romania's position as

a thorn in the Soviets' side. The 'enemy of my enemy is my friend' logic lay at the root of the Westerners' rationale for transferring their nuclear technology to Romania. Bucharest's defiant moves, such as the April 1964 declaration in which the Romanian Workers' Party proudly proclaimed its independence, its 1967 recognition of the Federal Republic of Germany, and its reaction to the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, earned Romania great admiration in the 'free world'. Romania's actions seemed to corroborate the West's hopes that Bucharest could be used to weaken the communist camp and annoy the Soviets. This view implies that the Romanians were an unsuspecting customer, a mere instrument of Western strategy, a pawn on the international political chessboard. This approach seems to neglect Bucharest's agency in its negotiations for nuclear technology with the West. It also cannot explain how Romania could really have been a genuine 'enemy of the enemy' while still a member of the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. This thesis argues that Romania was in fact not simply 'the enemy of the enemy', but a skilled and ingenious negotiator with real agency – in other words, an 'international nuclear entrepreneur'.

When looking at nuclear assistance and, implicitly, at nuclear proliferation, it is therefore time to switch from an approach focused almost exclusively on suppliers to a research agenda that investigates the interactions between buyers and suppliers. Such a shift, by recognizing the ability of smaller actors to

manipulate, manoeuvre, and navigate the international system, may offer surprising findings about the globalization of nuclear technology during the détente period; atomic assistance; and the role of politics and economics in non- and counter-proliferation. Seen through this different lens, Romania appears as anything but a passive recipient of Western nuclear technology. Quite the contrary, thanks to their own ingenuity, the Romanians gained access to technology, expertise, and materials that would have otherwise been unavailable.

Nuclear weapons are an integral but often understudied part of Cold War international history. The specific jargon associated with the study of nuclear strategy has created a divide between the literature on proliferation and that on the global Cold War. But in reality, nuclear history is part and parcel of Cold War international history. This is not only because nuclear weapons have shaped much of the post-war picture, but also because the quest for nuclear technology is linked to some of the key developments in the global Cold War. Nuclear technology reunites the three paradigms articulated by Westad in his 2000 Bernath Lecture: ideology; technology; and the developing world. This thesis has discovered previously little-known connections between the pursuit of nuclear technology by developing countries and major events such as Khrushchev's thaw, the 1956 Hungarian uprising, the tensions that shaped the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the Warsaw Pact from the late 1950s and early 1960s

until the early 1970s, the Sino-Soviet split, the Vietnam War, détente in Europe, the Sino-American rapprochement, and the emergence of economic multipolarity. This thesis examines the deeply rooted rivalries in both Eastern and Western Europe that, for a long time, were largely analysed through the lens of the superpower competition or, ironically, the threatening spectre of superpower collusion hovering above small and medium actors on the international stage. By integrating nuclear history into Cold War international history, this thesis can hopefully make a contribution to our greater understanding of what the détente era was about, and the role nuclear technology played in it.

In the field of nuclear studies, this thesis has sought to make a contribution to the scholarship on nuclear assistance and proliferation. The existing literature seeks to answer the following question: ‘Why do nuclear suppliers provide atomic assistance to other countries?’ The underlying assumption of this approach is a ‘give-take’ model, which presupposes that power rests solely with nuclear suppliers, thus leaving little room for exploring the role of recipient countries. But it is a mistake to think that buyers, usually medium and small powers, have no agency. Also, it is misleading to imply that there is a perfect match between suppliers’ motivations and recipients’ acquisition strategies. A nuclear technology transfer is the result of years, sometimes decades, of negotiations between buyers and suppliers. These contacts allow recipient countries to realize what the

suppliers' vulnerabilities are and how to exploit them to their own advantage. Therefore, this thesis puts forward a new approach, asking instead: 'How and why do countries obtain nuclear assistance from nuclear suppliers?'. I specify four levers that could be deployed to persuade nuclear suppliers to sell technology: ideology, institutions, politics, and economics. The historic episodes I have presented in this thesis have enabled me to show the varying effectiveness of these levers at different times. For instance, playing nuclear suppliers against one another brought Romania very close to signing a reactor deal in 1970, but Moscow's interference stalled the negotiations for three years. Addressing the political and strategic concerns of both superpowers cleared the path to nuclear transfers. This argument falsifies the dominant theories of atomic assistance, which posit that suppliers transfer nuclear technology only to their friends or to 'enemies of enemies'.

A counterintuitive finding of this thesis, made possible by the focus on nuclear acquisition strategies, is that nuclear suppliers also offer assistance to 'friends of foes' (or 'frenemies'). A 'frenemy' is more cooperative than an enemy but more hostile than a friend, so it might be argued that providing nuclear technology to a country that is, to a certain extent, an adversary does not make much sense according to the dominant theory. The inability to explain cooperation with rivals stems from a 'you are with us or against us' logic. If we

start by recognizing that in the 1960s and 1970s, the international system and, implicitly, the nuclear market were in a state of flux, we can better understand not only suppliers' strategic considerations, but also recipients' ability to manoeuvre, or in other words, their entrepreneurship. This new conceptual framework centred on nuclear acquisition strategies allows researchers to explore the recipient's agency, to trace its thinking, decisions, and planning, and, most importantly, to study the interactions between suppliers and buyers. It is by analysing these dynamics that we can now approach anew the nuclear proliferation puzzle.

With respect to the connection between nuclear assistance and proliferation, this thesis has found that nuclear transfers emboldened Romani's nuclear pursuits . Several scholars argue that nuclear assistance hampers a country's ability to pursue and acquire nuclear weapons.² These scholars contend that international cooperation encourages scientific and technical workers to dissent or to defect; in addition, the inflow of foreign technology impairs the recipient country's nuclear programme because of the discrepancy between the poor quality of domestic capabilities and the advanced nature of the supplier's equipment and know-how. In contrast to this scholarship, this thesis has showed that foreign intervention posed a greater threat to the Romanian nuclear

² Hymans, *Achieving Nuclear Ambitions*; Montgomery, "Stop Helping Me," 177-202.

programme than domestic factors. Moscow's interference dampened Romania's nuclear ambitions. Assuaging the Soviets' concerns by granting Moscow access to the nuclear programme, the Romanians could move forward with the acquisition of nuclear technology from the West. Romania then bought the Westerners over with political quid pro quos, to prevent suppliers in capitalist countries from creating similar problems. Western nuclear suppliers actually advanced Romania's nuclear ambitions by offering it technology and materials that Bucharest could not afford to invent indigenously. As a matter of fact, reverse-engineering imported equipment gave the Romanian nuclear programme a boost. The web of relations and exchanges linking Romania to its nuclear suppliers also seems to pose a challenge to those theories of nuclear proliferation which posit that the more integrated into the global economy a country's economy is, the less likely it is to proliferate. On the contrary, it appears that the more Romania became enmeshed in the global market, the more chances it seemed to have to obtain nuclear technology for its dual-purpose programme, and therefore the more inclined it was to proliferate.

Directions for Future Research

This thesis opens several avenues for further research. The argument I propose – namely, that political and economic manoeuvring, not so much ideas or institutions, help recipient countries secure nuclear assistance – can be further refined with the help of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. With respect to quantitative methods, large-N studies may benefit in two ways from the conceptual framework and the narrative this thesis offers. First, the primary sources used in my work and the story that results from their interpretation can correct the miscoding of the Romanian nuclear programme in the datasets political scientists use. Rodney W. Jones, Mark G. McDonough, Toby F. Dalton, and Gregory D. Koblentz were the first scholars of nuclear proliferation to mention Romania’s nuclear aspirations.³ However, the evidence they presented to support their statements was scant. Other nuclear experts, such as Ariel Levite, admit that “the determination and intensity with which [Romania] pursued nuclear weapons remain uncertain.”⁴ Sonali Singh and Christopher Way put together the first dataset which takes into account Romania’s exploration of the military uses of the atom, work then supplemented by Dong-Joon Jo and Erik Gartzke.⁵ Most subsequent quantitative studies of nuclear proliferation are based

³ Rodney W. Jones et al., *Tracking nuclear proliferation: A guide in maps and charts, 1998* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1998), 11.

⁴ Ariel Levite, “Never Say Never Again: Nuclear Reversal Revisited,” in *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Winter 2002/2003), 62.

⁵ Singh and Way, “The Correlates of Nuclear Proliferation,” 859-885; Dong-Joon Jo and Erik Gartzke, “Determinants of nuclear weapons proliferation,” in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*,

on these two initial datasets or on two dubious ‘primary’ sources, perpetuating an incomplete chronology.⁶

Therefore, we have had an incomplete picture of Bucharest’s nuclear pursuits. It is true that correcting a handful of observations in large datasets may not make a difference. However, this thesis proposes another change to how political scientists code their data: adding an additional phase – namely, hedging – to the usual three-stage coding of nuclear programmes: exploration, pursuit, and acquisition. This thesis showed that Ceaușescu’s nuclear hedging strategy unfolded over a long stretch of time, and the ebb and flow of his ambitions reflects the influx of foreign nuclear technology. Perhaps the inclusion of hedging behaviour may deal with the many problems involved in simplifying complex or erratic nuclear programmes.

Moreover, this thesis also offers political scientists a solution to the existing one-dimensional approach to atomic assistance. I argued that instead of examining only why suppliers provide assistance, studies ought to take into account the acquisition strategies of recipient countries in order to have a full

Vol. 51, No.1 (2007), 167-194; Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb*; Fuhrmann, *Spreading Temptation*; Jo and Gartzke, “Determinants of nuclear weapons proliferation.”

⁶ These two sources are the memoirs of Ion Mihai Pacepa, Ceaușescu’s National Security Adviser and Deputy Chief of Foreign Intelligence who defected to the United States in 1978, and a report written by the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation, whose authenticity cannot be checked. Russian Federation Foreign Intelligence Service, *The nuclear potential of individual countries: Romania*, 1995, available at: http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/svr_nuke.htm#romania

picture of nuclear technology transfers. To date, more than 2000 nuclear cooperation agreements have been signed between suppliers and recipients, and 30 countries have developed nuclear weapons projects.⁷ This provides a large enough universe of cases for advanced statistical methods to be employed. Political scientists can add the four levers this thesis identifies to their datasets as four separate dichotomous variables, and apply a hazard model to determine which tactic used by recipient countries is most likely to result in a nuclear technology transfer. Then, they can compare these results with the findings of supply-side-focused studies to see if the direction and magnitude of the relationship between cause and effect are the same. On the basis of such large-N studies, more subtle generalizations may be made about the causes of nuclear assistance.

As far as a small-N study is concerned, parallels may be considered between Romania's Cold War nuclear acquisition strategy and those of France, West Germany, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Finland, India, Brazil, and Egypt, to mention just a few cases. First, by making comparisons and exploring the differences and similarities with other countries we can assess how unique Romania's nuclear acquisition strategy really was; for example, Chapter Eight

⁷ Furhmann, "Taking a Walk on the Supply Side," 181; Philipp Bleek, *Does Proliferation Beget Proliferation? Why Nuclear Dominoes Rarely Fall* (PhD Dissertation, Georgetown University, Government Department, 2010), 266.

pointed out how the RCP leadership and the Romanian scientific establishment sought to copy the nuclear programmes of India and West Germany.

Second, contrasting the nuclear acquisition strategies of the countries mentioned above can tell us more about the nature of alliances during the Cold War. Middle powers, it seems, found innovative ways to carve out wiggle room for themselves. The superpowers, who on occasion resembled giants with feet of clay, were outmanoeuvred by these smaller actors. As Robert Jervis explains in his seminal book, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution*, tensions during this period have been generated not by the superpowers, but by second-tier actors.⁸ Jervis also notes that second- and third-wave proliferators, such as Romania, proved less restrained than the US and the USSR.⁹ Bucharest's proposals for reforming the Warsaw Pact offer a good example of the tumult an obstructionist small power can cause, in sharp contrast with the more secure and status quo-oriented Soviet Union. It was to control these troublesome allies, whom this thesis referred to as 'frenemies', that Washington and Moscow joined hands, pursued détente, and created the international institutional setting for stemming the nuclear tide. At the time, this superpower cooperation created the impression that the Cold War had ended, triggering great alarm among middle powers. In the past, as Jervis notes, the balance of power could be upset if a significant actor

⁸ Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution*, 35.

⁹ *Idem*, 26.

shifted from one camp to the other, as the major powers' security interests were often deeply involved with those of their allies.¹⁰ Now, middle powers realized they were losing their bargaining leverage, which is why so many countries flirted with the A-bomb. By looking at how each of these second- and third-wave proliferators sought to build its own nuclear arsenal, we may discover that, perhaps, the *détente* period represented a far more unstable and dangerous phase in the Cold War than previously assumed.

Third, a qualitative analysis of the most prominent nuclear weapons programmes undertaken by middle powers during the *détente* period can offer an answer to one of the key questions in nuclear studies: 'How do states acquire nuclear weapons?' It is only through the examination of nuclear transfers to different countries that we can grasp the magnitude and direction of nuclear technology diffusion – for instance, by comparing Libya's failed attempt to purchase nuclear power reactors from Belgium, France, and Canada with the successful acquisitions of atomic power plants by Romania, Iraq, and Yugoslavia. Using the lessons these cases provide, suppliers can adjust their nuclear exports policies to avoid being manipulated by their clients. Further qualitative research can therefore help uncover new facets of nuclear proliferation and make policy-relevant recommendations for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

¹⁰ *Idem*, 35.

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