

CHINA IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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A SIGNIFICANT STEP TOWARDS THE SINO-ROMANIAN RAPPROCHEMENT: LI XIANNIAN'S VISIT TO ROMANIA (AUGUST 1964)

Abstract:	<p><i>Organized between August 26-27, 1964, in Timiș, the Sino-Romanian talks represented a major step in the direction of achieving a rapprochement between Beijing and Bucharest. The Romanian authorities, taking advantage of the 20th anniversary of the „liberation of the homeland”, will hold secret talks with Li Xiannian, a member of the CCP CC.</i></p> <p><i>During the talks between the two sides, both the RWP leaders and Li Xiannian will resort to an analysis of the differences with the Kremlin, thus creating the premises for a Sino-Romanian rapprochement. Based on documents from the Romanian archives, this article analyzes the main topics of discussion between the two parties.</i></p>
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Li Xiannian's visit to Romania in August 1964, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the "liberation of the motherland", was part of the Sino-Romanian efforts to build closer relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and

the People's Republic of Romania (PRR). By August 1964, the dynamics of relations between the two countries, as well as between the Romanian Workers' Party (PMR) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), had undergone important developments. Thus, on 16 May 1963, a meeting was organized between the PRC ambassador in Bucharest, Xu Jianguo, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRR, Corneliu Mănescu¹.

Subsequently, on 12 December 1963, the Chinese ambassador was to meet Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej at Snagov, the meeting having been requested by the Romanian side². Finally, on 24 January 1963, a series of talks were held in Beijing between the Romanian Ambassador to China, Dumitru Gheorghiu, and the President of the PRC, Liu Shaoqi³. The purpose of convening these meetings was to illustrate the Romanian-Soviet and Sino-Soviet differences. It was in this context that the well-known mediation of the Soviet-Chinese conflict was organized by the Romanian side in March 1964. In reality, the above-mentioned mediation was merely a pretext⁴ which Bucharest used to organise direct talks between the Romanian and Chinese sides. In addition, potential Soviet protests against direct Romanian-Chinese meetings were avoided, as Bucharest assumed the "noble" mission of mediating the conflict between Moscow and Beijing. In reality, however, the Romanian-Chinese discussions on the ideological conflict between Moscow and Beijing took a peripheral place, mainly dealing with the

¹ National Central Historical Archives (hereafter ANIC), Central Committee of the Communist Party of Romania - Foreign Relations Section, file no. 53/1963, ff. 2-20. The document in question has been published. See in this regard: "Document 3: 1963 May 16. Note on the audience of Xu Jianguo, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Bucharest, with Corneliu Mănescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, concerning the Romanian-Soviet differences.", Mihai Croitor (ed.), *În umbra Kremlinului: Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej și geneza Declarației din Aprilie 1964*, Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2012, pp.29-44

² ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file 94/1963, ff. 3-32. The document in question has been published in fragment. See in this regard: "Document 9: 1963 December 12. Note on the Snagov conversation between Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, and Xu Jianguo, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Bucharest, on the Romanian-Soviet differences and the need for Romanian-Chinese rapprochement (fragment)", Mihai Croitor (ed.), *În umbra Kremlinului: Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej și geneza Declarației din Aprilie 1964*, pp. 196-226

³ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file. 93/1963, ff. 23-33. The document in question has been published. See in this regard: Document 10: 1964 January 24. Note on the audience of Dumitru Gheorghiu, Ambassador of the People's Republic of Romania in Beijing, to Liu Shaoqi, President of the People's Republic of China, concerning the organization of meetings between representatives of the Romanian Workers' Party and the Communist Chinese Party, and other international matters", Mihai Croitor (ed.), *În umbra Kremlinului: Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej și geneza Declarației din Aprilie 1964*, pp. 227-235

⁴ Mihai Croitor, *România și conflictul sovieto-chinez (1956-1971)*, Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2009, pp. 271-284

divergences in Romanian-Soviet relations¹. Clearly, such an orientation of the Romanian-Chinese bilateral talks betrays Bucharest's intention to convince Beijing of its distancing from Moscow.

Returning to Li Xiannian's presence in Romania, we must say that after participating in the ceremonies marking the 20th anniversary of the "liberation of the homeland", his programme was a busy one. Thus, the Chinese official was to visit the Brazi Refinery, the "1Mai" and "Red Flag" factories, a Collective Agricultural Farm (GAC), as well as the wine-making complex in Valea Călugărească. Obviously, the Doftana Museum was to be included in the Chinese leader's programme². As a sign that secrecy remained a constant in relations between Bucharest and Beijing, the meetings between the Romanian and Chinese delegations (organized between 26-27 August 1964) would not take place at the headquarters of the Central Committee (CC) of the PMR, as was customary, but at Timiș.

From the very beginning we can identify a pattern in the Romanian-Chinese talks of 26-27 August 1964, similar to the meetings of 16 May 1963³, 12 December 1963⁴, 24 January 1964⁵, namely 3-10 March 1964⁶. Thus, the Romanian delegation (led by Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej) will address the dynamics of Romanian-Soviet relations, trying to convince the Chinese side of the distance

¹ For a detailed overview of the talks held in March 1964 between representatives of the Romanian Workers' Party and the Communist Chinese Party, see: ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file. 29/1964, ff. 1-123. The document in question has been published. See in this regard: "Document 12: 1964 March 3-10, Beijing. Transcript of the talks between the CC delegation of the PMR, led by Ion Gheorghe Maurer, and the CC delegation of the CCP, led by Liu Shaoqi, on Soviet-Chinese differences and Romanian-Soviet differences.", in Mihai Croitor, Sanda Croitor (ed.), *Anul tigrului de hârtie: Dinamica rupturii sovieto-chineze (1964)*, Mega/Școala Ardeleană, Cluj-Napoca, 2019, pp. 277-385

² ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party - Foreign Relations Section, file 40/1964, f.4. The document in question has been published. See in this regard: "Document 32: 1964 August 26-27. Transcript of the discussions in Timiș between the Romanian delegation led by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, and the Chinese delegation led by Li Xiannian, member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Chinese Party, concerning the Romanian-Soviet differences and the Soviet-Chinese differences", Mihai Croitor (ed.), *În umbra Kremlinului: Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej și geneza Declarației din Aprilie 1964*, pp. 348-406

³ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund-Foreign Relations Section, file 53/1963, ff. 2-20

⁴ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund-Foreign Relations Section, file 94/1963, ff. 3-32

⁵ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund-Foreign Relations Section, file 93/1963, ff. 23-33

⁶ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund-Foreign Relations Section, file 29/1964, ff. 1-123

between the PRR and the Kremlin. For its part, the CCP delegation (led by Li Xiannian) will focus on illustrating the main Sino-Soviet differences. In the following we will illustrate the main topics of discussion on the agenda of the two delegations mentioned above.

In the talks of 26 August 1964, Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej stated that "as far as relations with the Soviet Union are concerned, we would like to make another tour of the horizon"¹, stressing also that the leaders in Moscow "continue to be concerned by the tendency to dominate, to control others"². Without necessarily following a chronological line of events that have marked Romanian-Soviet relations, the Romanian leader will bring up the so-called "Valev Plan." In essence, an article signed by Emil B. Valev (article entitled "Problems of the economic development of the Danube districts of Romania, Bulgaria and the USSR") in which he theoretically emphasized the economic benefits of the Danube inter-state complex, comprising territories in Romania, Bulgaria and the USSR³.

The reaction of the Romanian authorities was the publication on 25 June 1964 of the article⁴ signed by Valev in the magazine "Viața economică", together with a caustic commentary. The categorical position adopted by the decision-makers in Bucharest regarding this article led the Moscow authorities to publish an article in the newspaper *Izvestia* criticizing Valev's theoretical approach. Referring to these issues, on 26 August 1964, Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej recalled the events in question in the following way: "Look, for example, at Valev's article. It took them a while because they were stunned, bewildered by our response, like a boxer when he gets stunned and grabs the ring with his hand so that he doesn't fall down, they didn't wait and when they got up they asked the question: what do we do? They had to come and say something in the "Izvestia".

They admitted something to the world, but we don't believe anything they said. That's why we didn't even publish that article in *Izvestia*. And our comrades came to us: look, they wrote an article in *Izvestia* fighting Valev. True, but they were fighting the small sides, not the pilot (sic!) general, they were not fighting the substance of things, the conception behind Valev's article, because the theses are taken from Khrushchev. Valev is not guilty. I told my comrades this - if I have the opportunity to meet Valev, I will shake his hand because he helped me understand what interstate economic complexes are"⁵. The position adopted by the Romanian leader in this matter must not have surprised Li Xiannian, given that, during the

¹ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file40/1964, f.6

² *Ibidem*

³ David Floyd, *Rumania: Russia's dissident Ally*, Pall Mall Press, London, 1965, pp. 105-106

⁴ E.B. Valev, *Problemele dezvoltării economice a raioanelor dunărene din România, Bulgaria și URSS*, "Viața Economică", Vol. II, No. 24, 12 June 1964, pp. 5-7

⁵ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section file40/1964, f.8

meeting with the Ambassador of the PRC in Bucharest, Xu Jianguo, (a meeting held on 5 June 1964), Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej had labeled Valev's theoretical construct as a "plan to dismember Romania"¹. Aware of the CCP's penchant for the cult of personality and Beijing's denial of the process of de-Stalinization, launched by the secret speech delivered by Nikita S. Khrushchev on 25 February 1956,² the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the Romanian leader resorted to an anecdote during the talks of 26 August 1964. "Now he could ask on Radio Yerevan - said the leader of the PMR - if the cult of personality still exists in the Soviet Union, and he would be told: the cult exists, but we have no personality."³ At the time of August 26, 1964, the hottest issue on the agenda of Sino-Soviet differences was the convening of a new meeting of communist and workers' parties. From the Soviet perspective, such a conference would demonstrate the perpetuation of Soviet ideological primacy and the isolation of Chinese ideological "heresies".

As subsequent events were to demonstrate, convening such a meeting would prove difficult, with the Chinese refusal being compounded by the reluctance of the Albanian Labour Party (LMP) and the PMR. During the Romanian-Chinese talks on 26 August 1964, the Romanian leader brought up the meeting between the delegations of the PMR (led by Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej) and the CPSU (led by Anastas Mikoian) on 25 August 1964.⁴ Deliberately, the PMR leader

¹ At the meeting on June 5, 1964, the Romanian leader stated the following: "(...) in a magazine of the Moscow University a material was published by specialists on the establishment of a complex industrial district on the lower Danube. According to the map attached to the material, this district includes a large part of the territory of Romania, part of the territory of Bulgaria and a small part of the territory of the USSR. (...) The planned district has an area of 150,000 sq. km. and a population of 12,000. To it Romania would contribute 42% of the country's area, 48% of the country's population, 48% of its industrial production, 58.5% of its wheat production and 60% of its corn production. We need 2-3 more of these districts and Romania disappears in the name of proletarian internationalism (...) So we are faced with a plan to dismember Romania, to dismantle the state and the nation". See in this regard: ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file.5/1964, ff.32-33

² For a detailed overview of this speech, see: ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file 23/1956, ff. 64-122. The document in question has been published. See in this regard: "Document 5: 1956 February 25, Moscow. Secret report presented to the 20th Congress of the Soviet Union Communist Party by Nikita S. Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union Communist Party, on the abuses committed by Stalin", Mihai Croitor, Sanda Croitor (ed.), *Sub Zodia Dragonului: lungul marș către ruptura sovieto-albaneză (1956-1961)*, Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2020, pp. 107-164

³ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file40/1964, f.9

⁴ For a detailed overview of this meeting see: ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party - Foreign Relations Section, file 16/1964, ff.111-127. The document in question has been published in fragment. See in this regard: "Document 31: 1964 August

will exacerbate the tone of the Romanian-Soviet talks of 25 August 1964 by stressing the categorical refusal of the Romanian side to convene a new conference of communist and workers' parties. According to Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej: "I told them: you know our point of view, our considerations; we regret that things are being forced, we do not see why they are rushing and pushing for a Consultation when the conditions for it are not yet ripe. And with that he got up¹ and left. It lasted half an hour". In fact, at the meeting on 25 August 1964, the Romanian authorities had adopted a visibly watered-down tone, stressing the need to harmonize all positions before the convening of the meeting².

From the plethora of Romanian-Soviet divergences, the integrationist visions promoted by the Kremlin within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CAER) could not be absent. On June 26, 1964, Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej said the following: "We are preventing them, so they said, i.e. a minority is preventing the majority, that because of us they cannot move forward, they cannot adopt more advanced forms, that we are blocking them, that we are using the veto, that this is not possible. But we cannot adopt what they say, and we said: but you know very well that the unanimity principle cannot be violated; you wanted to introduce the majority principle, we cannot. Even Khrushchev himself, when he came to Bucharest³ advocated the principle of unanimity. Has Khrushchev now abandoned this principle? It is possible, but we have not given it up. Do you want to violate the principle of unanimity, to introduce the principle of majority, pointing the finger at us for blocking you, for preventing you from adopting more advanced forms? So it's us again. That's not possible"⁴. But if the Romanian-Soviet economic differences were real, the same cannot be said of the PMR leader's claim

25. Note on the conversation between the Romanian delegation led by Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, and the Soviet delegation, led by Anastas Mikoian, member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union Communist Party, concerning the Romanian-Soviet differences and the convening of a new Consensus of Communist and Workers' Parties (fragment)", Mihai Croitor (ed.), *În umbra Kremlinului: Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej și geneza Declarației din Aprilie 1964*, pp.340-347

¹ Anastas Mikoian

² ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party - Foreign Relations Section, file16/1964, ff.111-127

³ For a detailed overview of Nikita S. Khrushchev's visit to Romania in June 1963, see: ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, Alphabetical, dossier. 16U/1963, ff. 42-116. The document in question has been published. See in this regard: "Document 7: 1963 June 24-25. Transcript of the talks held by the Romanian delegation led by Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, with the Soviet delegation, led by Nikita Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union Communist Party, concerning the Romanian-Soviet differences", Mihai Croitor (ed.), *În umbra Kremlinului: Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej și geneza Declarației din Aprilie 1964*, pp.86-159

⁴ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file40/1964, f.13

that the USSR was seeking to change its borders. "Now you should know," said Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej - that Khrushchev was concerned about the enlargement of the Soviet Union's borders. He doesn't want to die like that, he wants while he's alive to make his dream come true, he wants to be the second after Peter I. But he is too small to be such a big tsar, such a big empire (...) If he were more handsome, more strong-willed, perhaps he would be better suited to be tsar, but his belt doesn't hold him. And then he has to want the countries to become provinces of the Soviet Union. Of course, then Khrushchev's tasks would be much easier, he could command better, solve all the problems in two and three moves, why talk to Dej, why bother with him. (...) Khrushchev is really after that. In my opinion, he is a sick man, he is after the expansion of the Soviet Union's borders"¹. The PMR leader also referred to Nikita S. Khrushchev's speech at Leipzig in 1959, during which the CPSU First Secretary had discussed the question of borders between communist states, stressing the emergence of possible differences. In this context, the CPSU leader also mentioned the potential divergent issues related to Bessarabia and Transylvania². Gheorghiu-Dej considered the statements in question as a result of the great power chauvinism used by Moscow in its relations with the communist states. It was no coincidence that Beijing had repeatedly denounced the Kremlin's great power chauvinism. Ion Gheorghe Maurer will illustrate two other moments when Romania's borders were called into question. According to the Romanian Prime Minister: "When we returned from Peking (in March 1964 - n.d.), as I told you, we stopped at Khrushchev's (in Petunda - n.d.). We had a talk with Khrushchev. During this discussion³, for the second time,

¹ *Ibidem*, ff.16-17

² According to Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej: "Khrushchev in 1959 in Leipzig, at a meeting with workers from both Germanies, there he dealt with territorial issues. There he talked about the Oder-Neisse border, the border between the Soviet Union and Poland, between Romania and the Soviet Union, and in this context he also talked about Bessarabia. He did not talk about Northern Bukovina because they took it as compensation, as interest for the time the Romanians administered Bessarabia. He could have taken all of Romania, then he would have had no one to talk to. But we didn't talk about Bessarabia, he did. And then we had no differences, we had the best of relations. Who made him talk about such things? Worse, he says that Transylvania is a problem, it's a heavy heritage, it's a problem. Who gave him the mandate to refer to a part of Romania's territory and what does he mean by saying that it is a problem, that it is a heavy legacy of the past, that Transylvania has both Romanian and Hungarian populations? We said: it is true that there are 1.5 million Hungarians living in our country, but only 500 000 of them now live in the Hungarian Autonomous Region, which is in the middle of our country, and the rest of the population lives in the middle of the Romanian population", (*Ibidem*)

³ During the discussion on March 15, 1964, Nikita S. Khrushchev said, "What would happen if we revised the borders with Maniuria, Mongolia, etc.? (...) Take Bessarabia, for example. I think we should not discuss this question. Then in socialist countries there should be a plebiscite. If the Romanians were to raise this issue, I personally would be in favor of a plebiscite and let the people belong where they want. But these issues arise for other countries. For example, the border with Poland. If only such a problem arises, the

without us mentioning territorial issues in any way, Khrushchev raised the issue of Bessarabia, saying: look, you too can have claims on Bessarabia. If you do, I am ready to hold a plebiscite. We asked ourselves: what the hell, how did this issue come about? And it passed. When we came to these talks in Moscow (in July 1964 – n.n.)¹ and when Kostyghin raised the issue saying: I don't know the term Bessarabia, there is no Bessarabia, we replied: very well, tell Comrade Khrushchev, because at Pyotunda he told us about Bessarabia. If someone made a mistake, he made a mistake first, and then we made a mistake, and then to show that Khrushchev did not raise the issue of Bessarabia at Petunda, they falsified the transcript, presenting us with a falsified transcript which showed that Bodnach had raised the issue and in what form"².

Indeed, at Pyotunda, Nikita S. Khrushchev had again raised the territorial issues, but had stressed that a withdrawal of the borders would have dire geopolitical consequences³. With regard to the meetings between the delegations of the CC of the CPSU and the CC of the PMR in July 1964, the minutes of the discussions confirm the existence of a polemic between the Romanian and Soviet sides on the Bessarabia question⁴.

In order to be fully sure that the CCP delegation understood and correctly interpreted the positions taken by the Romanian authorities towards the Kremlin, Ion Gh. Maurer was to summarize the conclusions of Bucharest's views. According to the Romanian Prime Minister: "The first conclusion: it is difficult to trust the

Ukrainians and Belarusians will immediately rise up too. These borders cross further east for the benefit of Poland. Poland knows it and everyone knows it. (...) Romania's border with Hungary; there are many problems that arise in connection with this. Hungary's border with Yugoslavia; Tito says there are 700,000 Hungarians living in Yugoslavia, the Hungarians say there are a million. Bulgaria's border with Yugoslavia also presents some problems. If we in general tried to look for the fairest borders it would mean a war and such borders don't exist." See in this regard: ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party - Foreign Relations Section, file 30/1964, ff. 42-43. The document in question has been published. See in this sense: "Document 13: 1964 March 15, Pițunda. Transcript of the talks between the CC delegation of the PMR, led by Ion Gheorghe Maurer, and the Central Committee delegation of the Soviet Union Communist Party, led by Nikita S. Khrushchev, concerning Soviet-Chinese differences", Mihai Croitor, Sanda Croitor (ed.), *Anul tigrului de hârtie: Dinamica rupturii sovieto-chineze (1964)*, pp. 387-444

¹ For a detailed overview of the discussions between the Central Committee delegation of the People's Republic of Romania and the Central Committee of the Soviet Union Communist Party see: ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file35/1964, ff.2-237

² ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file40/1964, ff.19-20

³ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file 30/1964, ff. 2-68

⁴ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file35/1964, ff. 2-237

current leadership of the Soviet Union; it changes its positions as its interests dictate and as circumstances allow. A word said today is broken tomorrow, a thing said today is forgotten tomorrow. No principle and no truth is worthy of respect, everything can be presented according to what is deemed useful for their purposes. This is a first conclusion. The second conclusion: fundamental principles, signed by everyone, have very little value in the eyes of these people. When we said: independence, sovereignty, non-interference, they said and we respect this, but we want a single planning body, joint undertakings and so on. The third thing: At the head of the Soviet state at the moment sits a man who is very much inclined to adventurism. I would say that there are very few limits to what you can expect from this man. It is very hard to say: this is impossible to do. He can do many, many things. He is not only a man inclined to adventures, but also a man who wields power in the Soviet state in ways that make it difficult to assert views other than his own. Of course, by the end of the day, views that are right will be asserted.”¹ Finally, another topic of the Romanian-Chinese talks of 26 August 1964 will be represented by the differences that arose during the visit to the DPR by Nikita S. Khrushchev in June 1962, Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej brought up the rude behavior of the Kremlin leader².

The second day of the Sino-Romanian talks will be devoted to the CCP delegation's presentation of the main Soviet-Chinese differences. Finding "convincing" the analysis of Soviet-Romanian differences by Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, Li Xiannian assured the Romanian side of the CCP's support, labeling the actions

¹ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file40/1964, f.28

² According to the Romanian Workers' Party leader: "Here is the rally at the factory, where there were many workers, they were also on the roof, to listen to what the guest was going to say. And before the rally began, the workers brought him a model of the locomotive and on this occasion they told him: comrade Khrushchev, the workers, the engineers of the Craiova Electric Power Plant, in honor of you, have prepared this gift in memory of your visit to this plant. He didn't even wait for them to finish what they had to say, and like a man of conviction, he said: what a trick, what a Romanian trick that must be. And that's what he said with a loud mouth. Of course, people thought he was joking, but he wasn't joking. This was Khrushchev. Then we take him to the sea, to Constanta. What can I tell you, the whole of Constanta was on its feet, with flowers, with slogans, the local authorities brought out a guard of sailors to welcome him, with music, delegates with bread and salt, as is the custom for welcoming guests. The train slows down and he goes out of the window and sees the sailors' guard on the platform. Angry as he was, he shouted: what have you got the guard out for, do you want to show me that you have sailors? The Soviet Union has hundreds of thousands of times more sailors than you do. This was the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. What should I do? In the train was the first secretary of the party region, and I tell him to get off before the train stops, run to the music, to the guard and stand still, don't give the honor, don't play the music." (*Ibidem*, ff.35-36) For a detailed account of this visit see: Mihai Croitor, *An Episode of the Romanian-Soviet Differences: the medium body weight of slaughtered pigs in Romania*, "Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Historia", Vol. 56, No.2/2011, pp. 105-115

of the decision-makers in Bucharest as fully legitimate. The Chinese official also undertook to convey to Beijing the issues discussed with the Romanian side.¹ On Sino-Soviet relations, the Chinese official will begin his analysis by pointing out the negative impact that the 20th Congress of the CPSU (in February 1956) had on the international communist movement, adding that some of the theses of this Congress "were not very fair"². Clearly, indirectly, Li Xiannian was referring to the secret speech delivered by Nikita S. Khrushchev on 25 February 1956³. In connection with the 20th Congress of the CPSU, two issues were disturbing to the Chinese authorities: the fight against the cult of personality and the formulation of the thesis of a peaceful transition to socialism. For example, a Chinese commentary of September 1963, entitled "The Origin and Evolution of the Differences between the CPSU Leadership and Us", stated: "The 20th Congress of the CPSU was the first step on the path of revisionism adopted by the CPSU leadership. From the 20th Congress to the present, the revisionist line of the CPSU leadership has undergone a process of emergence, formation, growth and systematization. And it is also through a gradual process that people have come to understand more and more deeply the revisionist line of the CPSU leadership (...) In particular, the complete denial of Stalin under the pretext of "combating the cult of personality" and the thesis of "peaceful transition to socialism by parliamentary means" are gross errors of principle"⁴.

¹ According to Li Xiannian: "This analysis is convincing. We fully admire and support this struggle you are waging. We believe that the conclusions you have drawn are entirely fair. The first conclusion is that Khrushchev will not change his views; the second conclusion is that Khrushchev is a plotter and can do anything. In upholding your principles you proceed with caution, elasticity and skill. We think this is a good way to proceed. My task and that of the comrades in the delegation is to report the exposition of Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej and the other Romanian comrades to our Central Committee, Comrade Mao Tze-dun. This is our task, and we will make every effort to do so, to convey exactly to Comrade Mao Tze-dun and the comrades of our Central Committee these problems", (*Ibidem*, f.42)

² *Ibidem*, f.43

³ For a detailed overview of this speech, see: ANIC, Romanian Workers' Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file 23/1956, ff. 64-122. The document in question has been published. See in this regard: "Document 5: 1956 February 25, Moscow. Secret report presented to the 20th Congress of the Soviet Union Communist Party by Nikita S. Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union Communist Party, on the abuses committed by Stalin", Mihai Croitor, Sanda Croitor (ed.), *Sub Zodia Dragonului: lungul marș către ruptura sovieto-albaneză (1956-1961)*, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2020, pp. 107-164

⁴ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party - Foreign Relations Section, file 71/1963, f. 5. The document in question has been published. See in this regard: "Document 21: 1963 September 6, Beijing. Editorial "Origin and development of the differences between the Soviet Union Communist Party leadership and us", published in "Renmin Ribao" and "Hongqi", on Soviet-Chinese differences", Mihai Croitor, Sanda Croitor (ed.), *În umbra tigrului de hârtie: ruptura sovieto-chineză în ecuația*

A second issue on the agenda for discussion on 27 August 1964 was the Soviet proposal to build a long-wave radio station on Chinese territory and to create a joint fleet. According to the Chinese guest: "(...) they proposed through their ambassador to our country - (Pavel - n.n.) Yudin - to control our military maritime fleet. They wanted (sic!) to build a long-wave radio station and Comrade Mao Tze-dun said it is all very well to build a military sea fleet, but isn't it better to give us the equipment for the military sea fleet and the facilities for the radio station and we pay for them? And after we build them they should serve both us and the Soviet Union, because if they want someone else to command this fleet, it would affect our sovereignty"¹. The proposal in question dates back to April 1956, when the Soviet authorities had already forwarded a proposal to Beijing to build the radio station, with 70% of the cost of implementing the project to be borne by the Soviet side.² The Soviet insistence that the proposal should be implemented led Mao Zedong to summon the Soviet ambassador to Beijing, Pavel Yudin, on 22 July 1958. At the meeting, the Chinese leader said: "(...) you have come with the proposal of joint ownership and operation. So, if you want joint ownership and joint operation, how about applying them in all areas - let's move to joint ownership and joint use of the army, fleet, air force, industry, agriculture, culture, education. Can we achieve this? Or you can have China's ten thousand miles of coastline, and leave us to maintain only a guerrilla force. With a few nukes you think you're in a position to control us"³. The project in question had created real difficulties in Soviet-Chinese relations, and it was only Nikita S. Khrushchev's secret visit to the PRC from July 31 to August 3, 1958, that would normalize relations between the two countries and parties⁴.

The third issue raised by Li Xiannian concerned the "Spirit of Camp David". According to the Chinese official, during talks with Dwight D. Eisenhower in September 1959, Nikita S. Khrushchev had maintained a moderate attitude towards the Taiwan question. "In fact," said Li Xiannian, – he⁵ "he agrees with the existence of two Chinas, and he said: in the Soviet Union there used to be a republic in the Far East. That meant why not let Cian Kai-shee make a republic out of Taiwan. We said that this could not be done because the current historical

bipolarismului (1961-1963), Editura Mega/ Școala Ardeleană, Cluj-Napoca, 2019, pp. 289-334

¹ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party - Foreign Relations Section, file 40/1964, f.44

² Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2001, p.73

³ See in this regard: "6. Minutes, Conversation between Mao Zedong and Ambassador Iudin, 22 July 1958", în *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., Issues 6-7, 1995/1996, p.155

⁴ *Document No. 1 First Conversation of N.S. Khrushchev with Mao Zedong, Hall of Huaizhentan* [Beijing], 31 July 1958, "Cold War International History Project Bulletin", No. 12-13, 2001, pp. 250-260

⁵ Nikita S. Hrușciiov

conditions differed fundamentally from the conditions then. Taiwan is an inalienable territory of the PRC"¹. But the Chinese official's account is inaccurate. According to the information sent by the Kremlin to the Communist and Workers' Parties in October 1959, Nikita S. Khrushchev, during the Camp David talks, allegedly stated that Taiwan was "a Chinese province" and stressed the need to admit the PRC to the United Nations². It was not until 2 October 1959 that Nikita S. Khrushchev raised the issue of the Far Eastern republic created by Lenin in his talks with decision-makers in Beijing. According to the transcript of the meeting of 2 October 1959, the following exchange of lines took place:

„**Zhou Enlai**: On the Taiwan issue, we should draw a line between the two aspects of it: relations between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan are a domestic issue, and relations between China and America on the Taiwan issue are the international aspect of it.

Hruščiov: That's right, and that's the way I talked to Eisenhower, as you can see from the excerpts of my conversation with the President. (...) Some time ago, Lenin created the Far Eastern Republic in the far east of the Soviet Union, and Lenin recognized its (sovereignty - ed.). Remember that this republic was established on the territory of the Soviet Union. It was unbelievable, but Lenin for a while did that. Later, as it should, the Far Eastern Republic united with the Soviet Union (...).

Mao Zedong: Although we opened fire on the islands (Quemoy and Matsu in 1958 - ed.) we will not try to liberate them. We also believe that the United States will not start a war just because of these islands and Taiwan”³.

¹ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file40/1964, f.44

² According to Soviet Union Communist Party information, the Soviet leader is quoted as saying, "China is absolutely right on this issue and we are on its side, and the US is not right. Taiwan is a part of China, a Chinese province, and the US should have (sic!) nothing to do with this issue. This is an internal matter of China, part of the revolutionary process that is not yet completed. China is pursuing an absolutely just policy, we understand it and fully support it. (...) As regards the UN's position towards China, we have repeatedly stated that we consider it unfair that the real China does not take its place in the United Nations. It is the US that is to blame. You are taking advantage of your temporary superiority in the UN and not admitting China into this organization". See in this regard: ANIC, Central Committee of the Communist Chinese Party - Foreign Relations Section, file 3/1959, f.13. The document in question has been published. See in this regard: "Document 1: 1959 October [undated], Moscow. Confidential information of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union Communist Party on the visit of Nikita S. Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union Communist Party and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, to the USA", Mihai Croitor, Sanda Croitor (ed.), *Între Spiritul de la Camp David și Zidul Berlinului: URSS și chestiunea germană (1959-1961)*, Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2021, pp. 39-52

³ *Document No. 3 Memorandum of Conversation of N.S. Khrushchev with Mao Zedong, Beijing, 2 October 1959*”, "Cold War International History Project Bulletin", No. 12-13, 2001, p. 265

The border conflict between India and the PRC will not escape the attention of the Chinese guest, who condemns the Soviet declaration of 9 September 1959. "Before it was published in Pravda," said Li Xiannian, "they gave us this statement. We told them to publish this statement later. This statement, at first glance, appears to be neutral, but it gave, as we say, 50 strokes each. In fact, with that statement they were supporting Nehru for adopting a neutral attitude when a socialist country was being overrun by a bourgeois country. It is totally incomprehensible why they supported (sic!) Nehru"¹. Indeed, the publication of the statement by TASS on 9 September 1959, thus on the eve of the Camp David meetings, contributed to the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations. In fact, the Beijing authorities would place the start of the public Soviet-Chinese controversy in September 1959, with the publication of the statement in question². Of course, at the meeting of 27 August 1964, Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej will agree with the Chinese official's opinion, stating the following: "The Indians' backs were itching and they had to be scratched"³.

Another topic of discussion will be the convening of a new meeting of communist and workers' parties. In this connection, the Chinese guest praises the opposition shown by the Romanian side, saying that "the conditions for this meeting are not ripe"⁴. The conclusion of the meeting will be drawn by Li Xiannian: "If we proceed according to Khrushchev's methods, it would mean great power chauvinism, political and economic hegemonism and expansionist

¹ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file40/1964, f.46

² For example, in an editorial published on February 27, 1963, in Renmin Ribao, it was stated that "The truth is that the internal differences between the brotherly parties were first revealed to the public not in the summer of 1960, but on the eve of the Camp David talks in September 1959 - on September 9, 1959, to be exact. On that day, a socialist country, disregarding China's repeated explanations and advice about the real situation, hastily published a statement on an incident on the Sino-Indian border through its official news agency. Making no distinction between what is just and what is unjust, the statement expressed "regret" over the border clash and actually condemned China's just stance. The statement even called the clash "tragic" and "deplorable." It is the first time in history that a socialist country, instead of condemning armed provocations by reactionaries in a capitalist country, has condemned another fraternal socialist country when the latter was faced with such an armed provocation." See in this regard: ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party - Foreign Relations Section, file 38/1963, ff.11-12. (The document in question has been published. See in this regard: "Document 15: 1963 February 27, Beijing. Editorial "Where do the differences come from? A reply to Comrade Thorez and other comrades", published in "Renmin Ribao", on the differences between the Communist Chinese Party and the Communist French Party and the Soviet-Chinese differences", in Mihai Croitor, Sanda Croitor (ed.), *În umbra tigrlui de hârtie: ruptura sovieto-chineză în ecuația bipolarismului (1961-1963)*, pp.146-171).

³ ANIC, Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund - Foreign Relations Section, file40/1964, f.45

⁴ *Ibidem*, f.53

tendencies, annexationist tendencies, and it would end with the revolutionary movement"¹.

At the end of the above analysis we can come to a clear conclusion. The talks of 26-27 August 1964 are a continuation of the Sino-Romanian meetings of 16 May 1963², 12 December 1963,³ 24 January 1964,⁴ namely 3-10 March 1964⁵. In essence, both sides will detail their own differences with the Kremlin decision-makers, expressing their willingness to create the premises for a Romanian-Chinese rapprochement.

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¹ *Ibidem*, f.51

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