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A Calculated Risk: The Effects of Nicolae Ceaușescu's Denunciation of the 1968 Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia on US-Romanian Relations

Paul R. Hebert
University of New Orleans, prhebert@uno.edu

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A Calculated Risk: The Effects of Nicolae Ceaușescu's Denunciation of the 1968 Warsaw Pact
Invasion of Czechoslovakia on US-Romanian Relations

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
In partial fulfillment of the
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in
History

by

Paul Hebert

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Dedication

For My Mother, Yvonne Christine Vinson Hebert (1955-1997)

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I would like to thank, first and foremost, my committee members, for their advice, patience, and constructive criticisms as I worked to bring this thesis to completion. Dr. Günter Bischof, my committee chair, has given me more help along the way than I could possibly hope to adequately put into words, constantly pushing me to make my thesis better. He was always right, too- it always could be better. Dr. Allan Millett, Dr. Andrew Goss, and Dr. James Mokhiber have also helped me along the way, not just through their valuable criticisms of my work, but through giving me the benefit of the doubt and agreeing to be on my committee in the first place, despite full knowledge of my sometimes lacking work ethic!

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Abstract

For most of the Cold War, the United States attempted to maintain friendly relations with the Communist nations comprising the Eastern Bloc, but with no other Soviet satellite was the relationship as close as it was with Romania. No other member nation of the Warsaw Pact took to the United States' overtures so eagerly. Diplomatic relations between the United States and the Romanian Communist government were established relatively early, almost immediately following the end of the Second World War. However, it was not until 1968, when Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu denounced the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, that the Romanians finally gained the Americans' trust. Ceaușescu's 1968 speech attacking the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the diplomatic maneuverings surrounding it, was the pivotal moment in the relationship between the two nations, fostering an amicable relationship that would last well into the 1980s.

Keywords: Romania; Prague Spring; Ceausescu; Warsaw Pact; Communism; Cold War

1. Introduction

In 1968, the Brezhnev Doctrine¹ had its first trial run, with the military forces of the Warsaw Pact invading Czechoslovakia in response to a wave of liberalization known as the “Prague Spring”. Two member nations of the Warsaw Pact abstained from the invasion: the German Democratic Republic, which was told by the Soviets to remain on standby², and Romania, which not only refused to take part, but openly denounced the invasion.³ This denunciation, on first glance, seems astonishing: a socialist republic in the Soviet sphere of influence openly rebelled against Moscow’s line, immediately after the very real threat of Soviet reprisal for such deviations demonstrated that day in Czechoslovakia. This seemingly suicidal gesture becomes much more understandable when the motivations of Romania’s dictator, Nicolae Ceaușescu, are taken into account. Ceaușescu had a desire to establish Romania as an independent nation, breaking with its previous role as a Soviet satellite state. In order to accomplish this, he needed to appease the West, and demonstrate that, like the Yugoslavian dictator Josip Broz Tito, he was one of the ‘good’ Communists. Furthermore, his dislike of the invasion can be seen as a sort of condemnation in advance of any Soviet intervention in Romania. If Czechoslovakia, which had been sending constant reassurances of loyalty to Moscow,⁴ was not safe from invasion, what guarantee did an increasingly independent Romania

¹ The Brezhnev Doctrine was the Soviet practice of defending their satellite regimes in Eastern Europe from popular uprisings by any means necessary, up to and usually including the use of military force. While the Doctrine is named for Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet leader in power during the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, it had been in force for far longer, being implemented by Nikita Khrushchev in 1956, who used the Soviet Army to put down popular uprisings in Hungary.

² Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler, “Introduction”, in *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, ed. Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler (Lanham: Lexington Books), 16-17

³ Edward Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite: The Rise and Fall of the Ceaușescus* (New York: Villard Books, 1991), 158

⁴ Mark Kramer, “The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine”, in *1968: The World Transformed*, ed. Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, 1998), 121-127

have? Unknown to Ceaușescu and the United States,⁵ the Romanians actually risked very little, as Brezhnev was more concerned with ideological, rather than economic, rebellion. As long as Ceaușescu's *internal* policies remained devoutly Stalinist, then he stood in little danger of Soviet intervention, regardless of his *external* policies.⁶

⁵ Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Leddy) to Secretary of State Rusk, 24 August 1968, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1964-1968*, Vol XVII: *Eastern Europe*, ed. James E. Miller and Glenn W. LaFantasie (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1996), 450 [FRUS]

⁶ It is worth noting that Ceaușescu, far from betraying Stalinism, only proved himself to a consummate student of the philosophy's namesake. Stalin himself had often misrepresented the USSR to outsiders in the 1930s, in order to secure access to Western economic developments and the implementation of Western manufacturing methods in the USSR.

2. Historiography

While much has been written about the Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact invasion which followed, not nearly so much has been written about Romania's role in either.⁷ It typically warrants little more than a passing mention. Some scholars, however, are keener to examine the role Romania played in the events.

Mark Kramer's essay, "The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine"⁸ does not focus on Romania exclusively; it does, however, give Romania greater attention than do many essays written on the subject, treating it as a major player in the unfolding diplomatic crisis. Kramer acknowledges the effects of Ceaușescu's endorsement of Dubček⁹ had within the Warsaw Pact, and of his dissention in general (an example Kramer cites in particular being Ceaușescu's diplomatic acknowledgement of West Germany, an action which infuriated the East German regime).¹⁰

Interestingly, Edward Behr's biography of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite: The Rise and Fall of the Ceaușescus*, pays great attention to Ceaușescu's actions during both the Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. He acknowledges that these months in 1968 were to serve as a defining moment for Ceaușescu, where he was able to showcase his rebelliousness for the West to see, while doing very little himself to emulate Dubček's reforms in Romania.¹¹ Behr also describes Ceaușescu's behavior right before his speech denouncing the Warsaw Pact's invasion: the dictator was pacing

⁷ This applies to English-language works only; works written in German and Romanian have paid greater attention to Romanian reactions to the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia.

⁸ Kramer, "The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine"

⁹ The leader of Czechoslovakia who initiated the reforms which led to the Prague Spring

¹⁰ Kramer, "The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine", 127-129

¹¹ Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite*, 155-158

constantly, and obviously sweating.¹² Descriptions like this, taken from sources close to Ceaușescu, provide a useful insight into his excitable state of mind, and thus, into exactly how great he estimated the threat of Soviet retaliation to be.

While not at all about the Prague Spring or Romania's response to it, Mihai Pacepa's memoir *Red Horizons* provides an interesting look at Ceaușescu himself.¹³ Pacepa portrays Ceaușescu as a very calculating figure, obsessed with not only an increasingly unrealistic fantasy of an important, powerful Socialist Romania, but also with his own role in it. It is important to keep in mind, however, that Pacepa was describing a different Ceaușescu than was acting in 1968, a Ceaușescu that had been influenced for the worst by his visits to North Korea and the People's Republic of China, and over a decade of being surrounded by sycophantic followers. While there are echoes of the earlier Ceaușescu present (his cunning and political acumen hadn't yet begun to deteriorate), they remain just that, echoes.

It is also important to note that scholars have taken differing views of *Red Horizons*. In *Ceaușescu and the Securitate*, Dennis Deletant praises Pacepa's recollections, finding them to be largely accurate in their portrayal of the Ceaușescus and their minions.¹⁴ John Sweeney, however, disagrees, deriding *Red Horizons* as "no better than Bucharest secret policemen's gossip: sordid, dully pornographic, intrusive, morally repugnant, incoherent, and yet endlessly fascinating."¹⁵ Yet, despite such a strong statement, Sweeney is not entirely dismissive of *Red Horizons*, quoting Ceaușescu's translator Sergiu Celac as saying "in essence it is accurate."¹⁶ It is interesting to note that the Romanians Deletant and Celac seem to have a higher view of

¹² Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite*, 155-158

¹³ Mihai Pacepa, *Red Horizons: Chronicles of a Communist Spy Chief* (Regnery Gateway: Washington, D.C., 1987)

¹⁴ Dennis Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (M.E. Sharpe: Armonk, New York, 1995)

¹⁵ John Sweeney, *The Life and Evil Times of Nicolae Ceaușescu* (Hutchinson: London, 1991), 84

¹⁶ Sweeney, *The Life and Evil Times of Nicolae Ceaușescu*, 85

Pacepa's recollections than the British Sweeney. While this could indicate a bias towards believing the worst of Ceaușescu out of resentment for his crimes, the scholarship behind Deletant's work and Celac's close relationship with the Ceaușescus seem to indicate otherwise.

Deletant's aforementioned book, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate*, provides an excellent view of what the Romanian people lived through during Ceaușescu's reign, going into great detail as to the operations and methods of Ceaușescu's security apparatus. While Deletant discusses Ceaușescu's speech, he does so largely from a security perspective, remarking on how the Securitate immediately went to work designing an escape route for Ceaușescu in the event of a Soviet invasion.¹⁷

While not explicitly about the Prague Spring or its aftermath, Vladimir Tismaneanu's *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* is a curious example of how Ceaușescu's actions during this period are often given very little attention. Despite his cementing of his reputation as a so-called "maverick" communist in Western eyes, Tismaneanu only dwells on this period of Ceaușescu's reign for four pages.¹⁸ However, he does give these events due credit in cementing the internal architecture of Ceaușescu's Romania, citing the failure of the Prague Spring as "justify[ing] the dogma of the indestructible unity of party, leader, and nation."¹⁹

Also, while not at all about the Prague Spring or Ceaușescu's reaction, Elena Dragomir's article "The perceived threat of hegemonism in Romania during the second détente" is quite useful in analyzing Ceaușescu's actions during both the Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact

¹⁷ Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate*, 84

¹⁸ Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 200-203

¹⁹ Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 203

invasion which followed.²⁰ She argues for a Romania which sought to steer a course that was best for Romania, rather than simply pro-Soviet or pro-Western. This neatly explains the dictator's mindset, and helps in understanding why Ceaușescu did what he did at any given moment.

Of great utility in describing events outside of Romania is *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, a collection of essays edited by Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler. The topics vary widely, covering almost every country involved in the events in its own essay- except for Romania. Romania and/or Ceaușescu are given passing mentions in the introduction²¹ and in Nikita Petrov's contribution to the collection,²² while Günter Bischof gives the subject greater attention, discussing Washington's fears about of a spillover from the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia into both Romania and Yugoslavia.²³

Romania's omission from many English language sources on the Prague Spring and the invasion which followed is an interesting gap in the literature, one which I have no explanation for thus far. One of the few authors to focus on US-Romanian relations during this time (and the only one I have found who specifically focuses on the nuclear reactor negotiations) is Eliza Gheorghe.²⁴ Using archival sources from the United States, Romania, and Russia, she argues that

²⁰ Elena Dragomir, "The perceived threat of hegemonism in Romania during the second détente", *Cold War History* 12, no. 1 (February 2012): 111-134

²¹ Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler, "Introduction" in, *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, ed. Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 16-17

²² Nikita Petrov, "The KGB and the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968: Preconditions for the Soviet Invasion and Occupation of Czechoslovakia", in *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, 149

²³ Günter Bischof, "The Johnson Administration and the Warsaw Pact Invasion" in, *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, 221-223

²⁴ Eliza Gheorghe, "Atomic Maverick: Romania's negotiations for nuclear technology, 1964-1970", *Cold War History* 13, no. 3 (August 2013): 373-392.

Ceaușescu used diplomatic maneuvering as a backchannel for negotiations between the United States and North Vietnam, pretending to be more helpful than he actually was in order to gain American support for his acquisition of a nuclear reactor. While she argues her point well (and has certainly conducted exhaustive research), I disagree that Romanian diplomatic efforts in regards to Vietnam were ultimately responsible for the good relations Romania came to enjoy with the United States in the 1970s and early 1980s; instead, I take the view that this was accomplished by Ceaușescu's speech denouncing the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

3. US-Romanian Relations Prior to August 1968

Romania had always been a sort of outlier in the Warsaw Pact. Not considered essential to the military cohesion of the alliance, and with a very low level of industrialization compared to other Communist nations, Khrushchev attempted to assign Romania the role of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance's (CMEA) breadbasket in 1961.²⁵ Rather than giving the Romanians the same level of industrial aid that other CMEA members were receiving, the Soviets simply wanted the Romanians to feed the other members of the CMEA, and to import all industrial goods. The initiative failed, but the fact that it had been attempted prompted Romania's dictator, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, to begin to form a Romanian foreign policy independent of Moscow's directives.

It is important to note that until this time, Romania's relationship with Moscow under Gheorghiu-Dej had been (for the most part) amicable. During the Hungarian uprising of 1956, he dutifully followed the Moscow party line, and ordered the Department of State Security (Securitate), to crack down on all dissenters. As a reward for showing such an eagerness to obey Moscow's directives, Khrushchev ordered the withdrawal of all Soviet Army units stationed in Romanian territory.²⁶

On the one hand, Gheorghiu-Dej followed the Moscow line when it suited him. On the other hand, he rejected Moscow's directives in regards to the Romanian economy and its role in the greater CMEA plan. Doing so had little, if anything, to do with actual economic development. Following the CMEA directives most likely would have led to a thriving economy. The CMEA called for Romania to harvest its abundant natural resources for export to other,

²⁵ Mark Kramer, "The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine", 119

²⁶ Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite*, 128-129

resource-poor members of CMEA in exchange for industrial goods that the Romanians would be unable to produce themselves.²⁷ However, in Gheorghiu-Dej's eyes, this would lead to a loss of independence for Romania, an independence that was already flimsy, given the nature of Romania's patrons in Moscow. Furthermore, the exports would be primarily to other socialist nations, not to the West, and thus would not garner the hard currency that was perennially in short supply among the Eastern Bloc nations. For these reasons, Romania's foreign policy began to veer off the Soviets' favored course, and began to be more about Romania and its national interests, rather than Romania, cog in the great CMEA/Warsaw Pact machine.

It was during this time that Gheorghiu-Dej appointed a new foreign minister, who was to have an important effect on U.S.-Romanian relations in the years to come, Corneliu Mănescu. Mănescu was to form a close working relationship with U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk.²⁸ Both men, and their masters, would go to great lengths to improve relations between their respective countries, particularly in the area of trade.

President John F. Kennedy had shown great interest in expanding trade with Eastern Europe, and Secretary Dean Rusk made sure to inform Mănescu that President Lyndon B. Johnson was not only inclined to continue this policy, but to single out Romania for preferential treatment, given the "stress over [the] past year on "national independence and sovereignty" in pursuit [of] its economic policy and other objectives". The message was unmistakable: keep moving away from the Soviet sphere, and the U.S. will be more inclined to engage in trade. The precedent had clearly been set by Yugoslavia, which had been receiving significant economic, agricultural, and military aid from the United States since the 1950s, despite opposition from

²⁷ Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite*, 130-131

²⁸ Telegram From the Legation in Romania to the Department of State, 26 February 1964, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 381-385

such illustrious anti-Communist hardliners as Senator Joseph McCarthy.²⁹ Between the inroads made by American trade and the relatively relaxed communism practiced under Josip Broz Tito,³⁰ Yugoslavia was by the 1960s engaged in Western trade amounting to 68 percent of its total foreign trade.³¹ Whether Romania was hoping to follow this example in order to gain access to American military technology, simple civilian trade, or perhaps even something else, would be revealed in due course.

The next major event in furthering relations between the United States and Romania was the 1965 death of dictator Gheorghiu-Dej, who had ruled since 1948. Despite not being named as his successor, Nicolae Ceaușescu followed the precedent set by Stalin (who had also not been named as Lenin's successor) and was elected General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party.³² At first, no noticeable effect could be discerned from the American standpoint: a meeting of the Export Control Board held in April of 1965 never even mentioned the change in leadership, and the attendees concerned themselves with petroleum trade, the ongoing struggle for MFN recognition, and other issues from the Gheorghiu-Dej era.³³

Ceaușescu's rise to power was hardly a foregone conclusion. A peasant's son, he joined the Communist Party in his teens, and spent much of World War II in a fascist Romanian prison camp, serving another detainee as his manservant. That detainee was none other than the communist Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, who never forgot about Nicolae once he became the

²⁹ Memorandum from Gerald R. Siegel to Senator Johnson, 21 June 1956, LBJA Subject File [Foreign Relations] [Yugoslavia], Box 69, Lyndon Baines Johnson Archive, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library [LBJL]

³⁰ Yugoslavian partisan leader (1941-1945) and Communist dictator (1945-1980)

³¹ Tvrtko Jakovina, "Tito, the Bloc-Free Movement, and the Prague Spring", in *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, ed. Bischof, Karner, and Ruggenthaler, 397

³² Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite*, 137

³³ Minutes of Meeting of the Export Control Review Board, 1 April 1965, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 405-413

dictator of communist Romania.³⁴ He was placed in charge of the political department of the Romanian army in 1948, supervising a true-to-form Stalinist purge of its officer corps and being granted the rank of major general, despite never having served so much as a day in the armed forces prior to this appointment.³⁵

In order to fulfill his new duties, Ceaușescu was sent off to study in the U.S.S.R., at the elite Frunze Military Academy; given what his job entailed, this is hardly surprising. What is surprising is that his contemporaries assert that, even at this early stage, “he couldn’t stand the Russians.” Given how fanatical the young Ceaușescu was in serving his masters in Bucharest and Moscow, it would make more sense for him to have adored Stalin’s servants, but even at this stage, his Romanian nationalism appeared to be surfacing alongside his dedication to the communist ideal. It was this combination, in a more mature form, that was to have a significant impact, for better and for worse, on Romania during his reign.

Ceaușescu continued his ascent through the Communist Party ranks, backed the entire time by Gheorghiu-Dej, who eventually appointed him to oversee all Party organizations and cadres.³⁶ In effect, anytime someone received a promotion, it went through Ceaușescu’s office, allowing him to build up a considerable power base for himself, one which would allow him to assume the post of General Secretary after Gheorghiu-Dej’s death, even against his mentor’s deathbed objections to such an eventuality. That this occurred at all represents an interesting

³⁴ Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite*, 86

³⁵ Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite*, 119

³⁶ Ibid 126

parallel with the political career of Joseph Stalin, who also slowly acquired absolute power over the objections of the previous leader.³⁷

While Ceaușescu was hardly the man Moscow wanted as General Secretary of an allied state, he lacked the desire for true reform which would later characterize his Czechoslovakian counterpart Dubček, which is perhaps why Ceaușescu was not invited to step down by the Soviet Army. Ceaușescu continued his predecessor's policies, and was possessed of an even greater independent streak than Gheorghiu-Dej had been. His policies, both domestic and foreign, would annoy the Soviets enough to lead the First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party, Petro Shelest, to deride Ceaușescu as “at the very least extremely suspect as a communist.”³⁸ While Ceaușescu was, at times, more Machiavellian than Communist ideologue, the two did tend to dovetail: Ceaușescu had a vision of a Communist Romania, made by Romanians for Romanians, with himself at the helm. That he would often temper his idealism with cold pragmatism hardly made him any less of a diehard Stalinist, as his rampant use of secret police to crush dissent and lack of reform in the 1980s readily attest to.

Ceaușescu was also rather active in attempting to build up Romania's industrial might. To achieve this end, he decided that he needed to do a little shopping. However, rather than approaching the Soviet Union, which would most likely be uninterested in assisting its rebellious satellite drift ever-further away from its ordained economic role in COMECON, Ceaușescu instead turned to the West. In a 1967 meeting with US Ambassador to Romania Richard H.

³⁷ In Stalin's case, the objections came not from the deathbed, but from beyond the grave, in the form of Lenin's Testament. Given that the document condemned nearly the entire Soviet leadership, Stalin had no difficulty in finding allies to help suppress the document, most of whom he would later have executed during his bloody rise to power.

³⁸ Nikita Petrov, “The KGB and the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968: Preconditions for the Soviet Invasion and Occupation of Czechoslovakia”, in *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, ed. Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler, 149

Davis, Ceaușescu made a personal appeal for the strengthening of trade relations between the two countries, going to far as to liken them of having a love affair.³⁹ That Ceaușescu would make this appeal in person, rather than allowing Mănescu to handle it, speaks to the importance he attached to this meeting.

Ceaușescu did not, however, confine his cultivation of American political figures solely to those who currently walked the corridors of power. In early 1967, former Vice President Richard M. Nixon, having been denied a Polish visa, was allowed entry into Romania. Expecting a cold reception, Nixon was quite surprised to be welcomed with open arms by a friendly populace, being received personally by Ceaușescu.⁴⁰ That Ceaușescu would seek to cultivate Nixon, who at that time was still a down and out politician,⁴¹ was evidence of Ceaușescu's keen political acumen. This foresight was to pay big dividends in years to come, as Nixon transitioned from yesterday's news to President of the United States— and he never forgot that “when others had turned their backs on him, Ceaușescu and the Romanians had treated him royally.”⁴²

In retrospect, it is obvious that he was angling for something, with his ‘love affair’ remark being particularly revealing: here he seems to have been behaving like a gold-digging lover, buttering up a wealthy partner in anticipation of asking for a present. Trade relations alone were not going to provoke this behavior out of Ceaușescu, but something else certainly would. The dictator was after something bigger: a nuclear reactor plant and several state-of-the-art IBM computers.

³⁹ Airgram from the Embassy in Romania to the Department of State, 3 February 1967, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 422-426

⁴⁰ Richard M. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), 281-282

⁴¹ Having lost the 1960 Presidential and 1962 California Governor's elections

⁴² Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician 1962-1972* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 108

The first mention of Mănescu broaching the issue of acquiring a nuclear reactor was in April of 1968, right in the middle of the Prague Spring.⁴³ However, there is a reference to a previous attempt by the Romanians to purchase a heavy water reactor in the United States that was blocked by the U.S. government.⁴⁴ In this second attempt, the Romanians had decided to purchase a Canadian reactor, but were seeking U.S. approval for the sale. This demonstrates that all was not well between Romania and its Soviet allies. After all, the Soviets had extensive nuclear experience— why did the Romanians not ask for Soviet assistance? This question would not have been lost on the Americans, which perhaps explains their hesitance to provide/agree to their ally providing nuclear technology to a nation that was, technically, in the Soviet sphere of influence.

Before any further discussion of the reactor deal took place, Secretary Rusk, growing more and more concerned by developments in Czechoslovakia, sought out Mănescu to grill him for any insider information he could provide about a possible Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia.⁴⁵ This demonstrates the U.S. view of the Romanians, especially of Foreign Minister Mănescu, quite clearly: while they were still communists, they were also becoming *trusted* communists, and had the advantage of being in the Warsaw Pact, something the U.S.'s other communist friend, Yugoslavia, was not. Mănescu was more than happy to cooperate, indicating that unless denials were issued from Prague and Moscow about Soviet troop

⁴³ Memorandum of Conversation, 11 April 1968, FRUS 1968-1968, XVII, 440-443

⁴⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, 11 April 1968, FRUS 1968-1968, XVII, 440-443; “The Ambassador recalled that Romania had approached a US concern sometime ago in connection with obtaining heavy water technology, but that this apparently had encountered some problems on the part of the American Government.”

⁴⁵ Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Romania, 10 May 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 443-444

movements towards Czechoslovakia, he felt that there was definitely some credence to the rumors, and that the situation had become “very serious”.⁴⁶

The situation was not so serious, however, that the Romanians weren’t right back at work presenting their wish list to the American Santa Claus. No longer was the reactor good enough; now, the Romanians were in negotiations with Goodyear to build a rubber processing plant, and also wanted to purchase a circuit plant from IBM. Romanian Ambassador to the U.S. Corneliu Bogdan was informed that the reactor was under consideration, but no reply was made regarding the new requests. When asked about the situation in Czechoslovakia, Bogdan opined that the situation would remain under control, and discussed the differences between the Prague Spring and the Hungarian uprising in 1956. In 1956 the Hungarians had abjured communism and left the Warsaw Pact, whereas Czechoslovakia had done neither. He did admit, however, that he had no information regarding the five-nation summit in Moscow in May of 1968, which was debating on how exactly to respond to the increasingly liberal reforms in Czechoslovakia.⁴⁷

The Czechoslovakian situation was put on the backburner for the time being, in the context of discussions between the U.S. and Romania. The Romanian Deputy Prime Minister, Alexandru Birladeanu, visited the U.S., and joined his voice with Mănescu’s and Bogdan’s in petitioning the United States government to allow the sale of a heavy water reactor to Romania.

⁴⁶ Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Romania, 10 May 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 443-444

⁴⁷ Memorandum for the Record (Subject: Luncheon Conversation with Ambassador Corneliu Bogdan of the Romanian Embassy), 15 May 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 444-446

Secretary Rusk informed him, strictly off-the-record, that the prospects for such a sale were improving, and that approval could be possible before September.⁴⁸

Birladeanu then proceeded to add another item to the Romanian wish list. No longer were the factories and nuclear power plant enough, now the Romanians wanted to purchase computers. This turned out to be fairly easy. Secretary Rusk informed Birladeanu to contact the manufacturer in question, who would in turn know the proper protocol to get the Department of Commerce to approve the sale. Furthermore, preliminary discussions about a possible student exchange program were opened up by Birladeanu, receiving a positive response from Secretary Rusk.⁴⁹

Everything seemed to be looking up in between the two nations, with trade set to increase, the long sought reactor supposedly close to approval, confident assurances by Romanian diplomats that the Czechoslovakian crisis was going to be resolved peacefully, and a possible student exchange in the works. Then the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia happened, and with uncertainty as to who, if anyone, would be the Soviet's next target, everything that had been achieved thus far was placed in jeopardy.

⁴⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, (Subject: US-Romanian Relations; Participants: Romania- Deputy Prime Minister Alexandru Birladeanu, Ambassador Corneliu Bogdan, Romanian Embassy Third Secretary (Interpreter) Mihai Croitoru; U.S.- Secretary Dean Rusk, George R. Kaplan) 9 July 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 405-413

⁴⁹ Ibid

4. The Prague Spring

In order to fully explain what happened in the latter half of 1968, it is necessary to revisit the first half of that year, and examine just what happened in Czechoslovakia. As has been demonstrated by the conversations between American and Romanian diplomats, by May of 1968, the series of reforms in Czechoslovakia which had become known as the “Prague Spring” was being discussed the world over. High-level Western diplomats sought any information they could get about the Prague Spring from their Eastern Bloc counterparts.

What became known as the Prague Spring began in January of 1968, when Alexander Dubček was elected to the post of First Secretary of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, replacing the unpopular hardline Stalinist Antonín Novotný.⁵⁰ Following an almost immediate implementation of economic reforms and liberalization of the economy, Dubček also initiated political liberalization and almost entirely restored freedom of the press. Almost immediately, the Soviet leadership called Dubček to Moscow for consultations, demanding that he rein in the storm he had unleashed within the Warsaw Pact. Dubček attempted to comply with Moscow’s wishes, but to no avail; the Prague Spring had quickly grown beyond the ability of the communist leadership to control. Demonstrations demanding similar reforms occurred in Poland in March of 1968.⁵¹ That same month, the KGB reported that similar ideas were spreading among disaffected Soviet youth; astonishingly, reports from as late as November of 1968 claim that Soviet university students were interested in “replicating the Czechoslovak experience in [the Soviet Union].”⁵²

⁵⁰ Kramer, “The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine”, 121-127

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid 143

Considering the rapid spread of what Walter Ulbricht labeled the Czechoslovak “contagion”⁵³, Soviet concerns quickly grew to considerable alarm. Hardliners were ousted from government and party positions, and both the Czechoslovakian army and secret police, both traditional power bases for communist governments, were overhauled, significantly curtailing direct Soviet influence over both.

By mid-March, KGB chief Yuri Andropov stated that the Prague Spring was “very reminiscent of what happened in Hungary”⁵⁴, a sentiment no doubt echoed by much of the Soviet leadership. In fact, the Hungarians themselves found uncomfortable parallels between the ongoing Prague Spring reforms and those which had taken place in Hungary in 1956. Hungarian party boss János Kádár observed that the reforms were “extremely similar to the prologue of the Hungarian counterrevolution... we ask you to give that some thought.”⁵⁵ Leonid Brezhnev, the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, who had earlier supported Dubček, now began to take a dim view of him, feeling that he had no real interest in implementing the Soviet directives at all.⁵⁶

Among other members of the Warsaw Pact, Dubček’s reforms proved to be even less popular. Walter Ulbricht of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Władysław Gomułka of Poland, fearing similar events in their own countries⁵⁷, screamed the longest and the loudest, making increasingly alarmist claims about the supposed virulence of the ‘counterrevolutionary’

⁵³ Kramer, “The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine”, 128

⁵⁴ Ibid 125

⁵⁵ Manfred Wilke, “Ulbricht, East Germany, and the Prague Spring”, in *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, ed. Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler, 349

⁵⁶ Kramer, “The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine”, 125

⁵⁷ What both dictators were really fearful of was losing their own positions the way Novotný had (both were hardline Stalinists, just like the deposed Novotný), and rightly so: Ulbricht would be replaced in 1971 by his protégé, Erich Honecker, while Gomułka would be ousted in 1970.

Prague Spring reforms.⁵⁸ Ulbricht and Gomułka had a point, too— Polish authorities were forced to put down multiple student protests in Warsaw and elsewhere, where banners were carried demanding a Polish equivalent of Dubček. Gomułka was not amused, and became the first Warsaw Pact leader to openly denounce the reforms in Czechoslovakia. Ulbricht was not very far behind; with Ceaușescu’s increasingly independent Romania having established diplomatic relations with West Germany, he did not want Dubček’s Czechoslovakia to become the second Warsaw Pact member to do so.⁵⁹

As yet more reform programs were adopted by Dubček in the spring of 1968, the Soviet military began drawing up invasion plans, in the event that a peaceful solution to the Czechoslovakian crisis could not be reached. Perhaps more importantly, Brezhnev had become convinced that an example would need to be made of Czechoslovakia, and that after such an end had been accomplished, “everyone will know it’s not worth fooling around with us.”⁶⁰

The American approach was initially hands-off. With the memories of the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 still fresh in many peoples’ minds, no one wanted to encourage another anticommunist revolution only to watch it crumble before the Soviet army.⁶¹ Dubček encouraged this policy, not wanting to give the other members of the Warsaw Pact (especially the Soviets) any pretext for an invasion. For his part, Secretary Rusk informed Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin,

⁵⁸ Kramer, “The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine”, 127-129

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid 132-133

⁶¹ Thomas Alan Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) 214-215; Günter Bischof, “United States Responses to the Soviet Suppression of Rebellions in the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 22, No.1 (2011): 74

as the situation in Czechoslovakia deteriorated, that any use of military force by the Soviet Union against the Dubček regime would seriously damage U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations.⁶²

Meanwhile, in Romania, Ceaușescu praised Dubček and his fellow reformists to the stars. While Ceaușescu was a dyed-in-the-wool Stalinist, and had no intentions of following Dubček's reforms in Romania, he had no trouble hopping on the bandwagon in the hopes of garnering Western favor, while at the same time not truly annoying the Soviets with any major internal changes that could be construed as 'counterrevolutionary'. More importantly, he made clear that any attempt by a foreign power, even the U.S.S.R., to interfere in Romania militarily would be met with armed resistance.⁶³

Such a strong declaration that Romania would defend itself, even against fellow socialist states, was hardly the end of Ceaușescu's mischief. On August 16, only a few days before the invasion, Ceaușescu and Dubček signed a treaty of "Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance" in Prague. The question many were asking at this point was not how far Romania was willing to go to defend its sovereignty, but how much assistance it was willing to lend Czechoslovakia in the event of a Soviet invasion. The world would get its answer within five days, when Warsaw Pact forces crossed into Czechoslovakian territory.

⁶² Memorandum of Conversation (Subject: Czechoslovakian Situation; Participants: Anatoly F. Dobrynin, Ambassador of U.S.S.R., Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Deputy Under Secretary Charles E. Bohlen), 22 July 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 212-214

⁶³ Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite*, 155-158

5. The Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia

On the night of August 21, a coalition of Soviet, Polish, Bulgarian, and Hungarian forces crossed the border into Czechoslovakia; the East German army, while on standby, was excluded from the invasion, much to Ulbricht's fury.⁶⁴ Romania did not participate. Far more than the Soviets, the other members of the Warsaw Pact invasion were almost rabid in their denunciation of the Dubček regime, calling for the imposition of martial law by Soviet forces, who had very quickly (and with no opposition from the Czechoslovakian military and security forces) seized control of Czechoslovakia.⁶⁵ Dubček and his fellow leaders were placed under arrest and airlifted to Moscow, while the Soviets scrambled to put an interim government into place and undo the damage that the Prague Spring had wrought.⁶⁶

In all fairness to Brezhnev and the U.S.S.R., he was more or less goaded into the invasion by his Warsaw Pact allies. Every time he would attempt to reach a concession with Dubček, Ulbricht and Gomułka would belt out another diatribe against the man. Dubček's own hesitance to implement even the mildest Soviet 'suggestions' did not help matters. Following a series of conferences, held in the cities of Čierná nad Tisou in Hungary and Bratislava in Czechoslovakia in early August, Brezhnev still held out hope that Dubček would acquiesce, and that a peaceful resolution to the situation might yet be found. He stayed in contact with Dubček during a sojourn to the Crimea, where the scales tipped in favor of an invasion once and for all.⁶⁷

While Brezhnev was screaming at Dubček that he had "blatantly sabotag[ed] the agreements reached in Čierná and Bratislava", Dubček informed the Soviet leader that he should

⁶⁴ Bischof, Karner, and Ruggenthaler, "Introduction" in *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, ed. Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler, 16-17

⁶⁵ Kramer, "The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine", 155-159

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 152

“adopt whatever measures” Brezhnev felt were necessary. In a tragic misunderstanding, Brezhnev took this to mean that Dubček would tolerate Soviet military intervention, and was perhaps asking for it. So, with what was mistaken for a plea for help on the one hand, and the yapping dogs Ulbricht and Gomulka baying for Dubček’s blood and an end to the reforms of the Prague Spring, Brezhnev gave the order to proceed.⁶⁸

In the wake of the invasion, Ceaușescu saw his chance to finally cement his ‘maverick’ credentials to the West (particularly the Americans). Whereas the other Warsaw Pact leaders had praised the invasion, and called for still greater measures to be taken against the Dubček regime, Ceaușescu completely broke ranks and formally denounced the invasion in a public speech in Bucharest the morning after the invasion.⁶⁹ He held nothing back, denouncing the invasion not just in the name of peace, but in the name of the worldwide socialist movement: “[T]he entry of the forces of the five socialist countries into Czechoslovakia is a great error and a serious danger to peace in Europe and to the fate of socialism in the world.”⁷⁰

Ceaușescu’s phrasing couldn’t have been better. Ceaușescu’s criticism of the Soviets in a fashion that they would find particularly reprehensible– denouncing them as having done great harm to the worldwide socialist movement– would play well with other socialist states that wished for greater self-determination, while simultaneously drawing Western attention to yet another a potential split within the Eastern bloc. Even if unintentional, Ceaușescu’s statements accomplished the former admirably, given Ceaușescu’s later alliances with semi-rogue

⁶⁸ Kramer, “The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine”, 154-155

⁶⁹ Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite*, 158

⁷⁰ Nicolae Ceaușescu, “Balcony Speech by Nicolae Ceaușescu on Czechoslovakia”, in *Winter in Prague: Documents on Czechoslovak Communism in Crisis*, ed. Robin Alison Remington (The M.I.T. Press: Cambridge, 1969), 359. For full text of Ceaușescu’s speech, see Appendix.

communist leaders such as North Korea's Kim Il-Sung.⁷¹ He certainly achieved the latter, if the amount of foreign aid and investment which was to pour into Romania in the coming years is any indication.

Ceaușescu was not content at stopping there. He went on to claim that “[t]here is no justification whatsoever, and there can be no excuse for accepting even for a moment the idea of military intervention in the affairs of a fraternal socialist state.” On the face of it, he appears to be talking about Czechoslovakia. But much of that last statement, in Ceaușescu's mind, was most likely actually about Romania and his own deviation from the Moscow line, not about Dubček's. Ceaușescu had deviated from the Moscow line since he took power, as had Gheorghiu-Dej before him.⁷²

Ceaușescu went on elaborate: “...choosing the ways of socialist construction is a problem of each party, of each state, and of every people, and nobody can set himself up as an adviser and guide for the way in which socialism must be built.” This message was intended not just for Washington, but for Moscow— stay out of Romanian affairs. Ceaușescu wanted to make clear that it was for the Romanian people (by that, read Ceaușescu) to decide exactly how Romania would proceed in its affairs, and no one— not even the Soviet Union— had any right to tell them what to do. Such a bold statement would only further Ceaușescu's credentials as a “maverick” communist.⁷³

⁷¹ This alliance is particularly important, as until Ceaușescu visited North Korea in 1971, his rule had thus far been fairly liberal by the standards of Communist states. In the years following his Pyongyang trip, Ceaușescu was to attempt to foster a cult of personality akin to that which the Kim family enjoyed in North Korea, complete with grandiose, kitchy titles for himself (“Genius of the Carpathians”, to wit) and unearned scientific credentials for his wife, Elena.

⁷² Ceaușescu, “Balcony Speech by Nicolae Ceaușescu on Czechoslovakia”, in *Winter in Prague*, 359

⁷³ Ibid, 360

In what was perhaps Ceaușescu's boldest statement, he presumed to decry the Soviet Union and the invading Warsaw Pact nations as not only having hurt the worldwide communist movement, but as not being communist themselves: "We are convinced that no Communist can be found who can accept this military action in Czechoslovakia, that all the Communists would raise their voices to ensure the triumph of freedom, the triumph of the Marxist-Leninist principles, so that Czechoslovak people, so that the peoples, may be able to build socialist society as they themselves want it."⁷⁴

While Ceaușescu's deviations were not quite in the same league as Dubček's, being primarily foreign policy oriented, they still represented deviance. With the Soviets clearly in a mood to clean house, and return its European satellites to full compliance with the gospel of Marxism-Leninism as preached from their pulpit in Moscow, could he afford to remain unrepentant and continue in his dealings with the West? Refusal to do so ran the risk of prompting a Soviet invasion, it also seem to hint at a better future for Romania (and, by extension, Ceaușescu himself), while a return to unquestioning compliance with Moscow would only condemn Romania to 'enjoy' the same lackluster economics and mediocre living standards as the rest of the Eastern Bloc. Facing these paths, Ceaușescu chose to wager what independence his country had managed to acquire thus far, and publically sided against the Soviets that August morning.

There is every sign Ceaușescu knew exactly what risk he was taking; sources close to the dictator state that prior to his speech, he was pacing constantly, and obviously sweating.⁷⁵ He knew that, should his speech touch a nerve in Moscow, Romania might be next in the Soviet

⁷⁴ Ceaușescu, "Balcony Speech by Nicolae Ceaușescu on Czechoslovakia", in *Winter in Prague*, 361

⁷⁵ Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite*, 158

crusade to restore Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy (or at least the Soviet view of it) in its satellites. He was also aware, however, that this was a golden opportunity, a chance to now and forever secure Romania's right to shape its own foreign policy and make economic decisions free of interference from Moscow. If Ceaușescu knuckled under, or if Romania was subject to an invasion, it would almost certainly revert to the status it had held in the 1950s, with its foreign and economic policy dictated by Moscow, as had happened in Hungary following the 1956 uprising.

In Washington, Ambassador Bogdan met with Deputy Under Secretary for European Affairs Charles Bohlen, where he reiterated Ceaușescu's denunciation of the invasion, but also made clear that Romania had no intention of leaving the Warsaw Pact.⁷⁶ Romania choosing to remain in the Warsaw Pact makes a certain sort of sense; while Ceaușescu may have engaged in negotiations with the West to secure economic and technological gains, he remained essentially a Stalinist leader, displaying no hints of leaving the Warsaw Pact, unlike Czechoslovakia. So long as Ceaușescu maintained his commitment to the Warsaw Pact, and avoided any true liberalization, he most likely would be safe from Soviet invasion.⁷⁷

While early intelligence reports predict that Ceaușescu would indeed be safe from invasion, they did not rule out the prospect altogether,⁷⁸ and rumors of a Soviet invasion of Romania were to persist until the end of the year. Following Ceaușescu's speech, National Security Advisor Walt W. Rostow alerted President Johnson that United Press International was reporting a Soviet ultimatum to Bucharest: "Ceaușescu must resign or [the Warsaw Pact] will

⁷⁶ Memorandum of Conversation (Subject: Eastern European Situation; Participants: Romania- Ambassador Corneliu Bogdan; US- Deputy Under Secretary Bohlen, George R. Kaplan), 23 August 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 449-450

⁷⁷ Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite*, 157

⁷⁸ CIA Directorate of Intelligence Memorandum (Subject: Possible Soviet Military Threat to Rumania), 23 August 1968, Rumania Cables Volume III 10.66 - 1.69 [1 of 2], Box 204 [1 of 2], NSF Country File, Rumania, LBJL

invade.”⁷⁹ The next day, even more sensational news was reported by Radio Free Europe, which claimed a Hungarian news outlet was reporting that the invasion had begun.⁸⁰

On August 24, a memorandum was forwarded to Secretary Rusk regarding possible American actions following a Soviet invasion of Romania.⁸¹ No plans were made to interfere or to provide any sort of assistance to Romania if the Warsaw Pact decided to bring its other wayward member back into line. Such plans *were* made, however, in the event that, not content with bringing Romania back into the fold, Moscow decided to move on Yugoslavia next, restoring almost all of Stalin’s postwar empire.⁸²

If Romania were to be invaded, then the fourth recommendation in the memorandum called for “preparations permitting us to extend military assistance to Yugoslavia if Tito requests it.”⁸³ This demonstrates the pecking order of the United States’ communist friends immediately following the Prague Spring: while Romania was a good friend, and Ceaușescu had become the man of the hour with his denunciation of the invasion, it was still a member of the Warsaw Pact, and ultimately lay within the Soviet sphere of influence established at Yalta in 1945.⁸⁴ If Brezhnev decided to invade, the United States was hardly going to stand in his way. The same

⁷⁹ Memorandum from Walt Rostow to the President, 23 August 1968, Rumania Cables Volume III 10.66 - 1.69 [1 of 2], Box 204 [1 of 2], NSF Country File, Rumania, LBJL

⁸⁰ Memorandum for the Record (Subject: Intervention in Romania) 24 August 1968, Rumania Cables Volume III 10.66 - 1.69 [1 of 2], Box 204 [1 of 2], NSF Country File, Rumania, LBJL

⁸¹ Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Leddy) to Secretary of State Rusk, 24 August 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 450

⁸² Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Leddy) to Secretary of State Rusk, 24 August 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 450

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Günter Bischof, “United States Responses to the Soviet Suppression of Rebellions in the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol. 22 No. 1, (2011): 63-64

could not be said for Yugoslavia, which had apparently been out of Moscow's orbit for long enough⁸⁵ as to qualify for American assistance.

While this seems to be a poor reward for Ceaușescu's defiant stand against the Soviet juggernaut, it is important to remember that not even a week had passed since the invasion of Czechoslovakia when Rusk received this memorandum. In Washington, D.C., the new perception of Ceaușescu had yet to take hold, but when it did, it was to be unshakable for nearly two decades. Even when Ceaușescu abjured the limited liberal reforms that had characterized his early reign, and transformed Romania into what was arguably⁸⁶ "the most totalitarian of the entire Eastern Bloc"⁸⁷, Western leaders still invited him to prestigious events in the West. As late as 1983, Vice President George H. W. Bush referred to him as "the good communist".⁸⁸

By August 27, Ceaușescu's diplomats had begun working their magic in Washington. Whereas before, CIA reports had described the reports made by the Romanians as "typical of Bucharest... when under pressure"⁸⁹, Walt Rostow was now insisting that President Johnson "think hard" about an "ominous" Romanian proposal to intervene on Romania's behalf by telling Moscow that they had gone far enough, and that further invasions could "interrupt" the American policy of détente.⁹⁰ As outlined in that memo, US Ambassador George Ball met with Foreign Minister Mănescu, who was still in New York for the UN General Assembly, the following day. While Mănescu was curious as to what the American response would be in the

⁸⁵ Since Tito's break with Stalin in 1948

⁸⁶ Behr asserts that, by 1978, Romania had become the most totalitarian state in the Eastern Bloc. The author respectfully disagrees, finding the GDR, with its dreaded Stasi, to be the possessor of the dubious honor of 'most totalitarian state in the Eastern Bloc', with Romania being a close second.

⁸⁷ Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite*, 163

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ CIA Directorate of Intelligence Memorandum, Subject: Possible Soviet Military Threat to Rumania, 23 August 1968, Rumania Cables Volume III 10.66 - 1.69 [1 of 2], Box 204 [1 of 2], NSF Country File, Rumania, LBJL

⁹⁰ Memorandum from Walt Rostow to the President, 27 August 1968, Rumania Cables Volume III 10.66 - 1.69 [1 of 2], Box 204 [1 of 2], NSF Country File, Rumania, LBJL

event of an invasion- and what pressures the US would exert to prevent such an eventuality- he and Ball agreed that the threat of military force was not an option.⁹¹

Mănescu got his answer two days later. President Johnson, while following the established policy of non-intervention in the Soviet sphere (Eisenhower had allowed the Soviet army to crush uprisings in the GDR in 1953, and again in Hungary in 1956)⁹², denounced the invasion publically in a speech delivered in San Antonio, Texas, on August 30, 1968. In his speech, he hinted at the possibility of further invasions in Eastern Europe, and clearly spelled out American opposition to a continuation of Moscow's military interventionism.⁹³ The President's speech was not, however, bellicose; on the contrary, Johnson called for a peaceful resolution to the situation, stating that he knew of "no questions that ... cannot be settled and should not be settled by peaceful means."⁹⁴ While Johnson delivering his speech, however, the CIA was receiving reports on Warsaw Pact troop movements which, while not a guaranteed indicator of an imminent invasion of Romania, were hardly encouraging either.⁹⁵

Johnson certainly got the Romanians' attention with his not-so-subtle hints about "rumors" that "this action might be repeated elsewhere". The very next day, Ambassador Bogdan was on the phone with Secretary Rusk, asking what exactly the Americans knew that the Romanians did not. Rusk explained that the President's remarks about Eastern Europe had been prompted by ambiguous Soviet troop movements, and that the Americans knew nothing

⁹¹ Memorandum of Conversation (Subject: Romania; Participants: Romanian Foreign Minister Corneliu Mănescu, US Ambassador to the UN George Ball) , 28 August 1968, Rumania Cables Volume III 10.66 - 1.69 [1 of 2], Box 204 [1 of 2], NSF Country File, Rumania, LBJL

⁹² Bischof, "United States Responses to the Soviet Suppression of Rebellions", 64-73

⁹³ Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks in San Antonio at the Annual Convention of Milk Producers, Inc." in *The American Presidency Project*, 30 August 1968 <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29096>> (11 April 2013)

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Memorandum from the White House Situation Room to the President (Subject: CIA's Report Possible Soviet Military Threat to Rumania), 31 August 1968, Rumania Cables Volume III 10.66 - 1.69 [1 of 2], Box 204 [1 of 2], NSF Country File, Rumania, LBJL

conclusive, but had made inquiries regarding the situation to Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin. Bogdan expressed appreciation for the President's consideration, and informed Rusk that Mănescu would be remaining in New York until Soviet intentions became known.⁹⁶

Mănescu did not have long to wait; Dobrynin got back to the Americans within a day, informing them that the Soviet leadership had no plans for any additional invasions, against Romania or otherwise.⁹⁷ Ambassador Davis conveyed this to a very relieved Romanian Acting Foreign Minister Sandru, who thanked Davis for the information and gave his assurance that Ceaușescu would “appreciate it.”⁹⁸ That Ceaușescu would appreciate this information seems obvious. Not only had he publically condemned the actions of a Soviet leader that he detested, and escaped from Soviet retaliation, but he had done so in a way which played very well with the United States, and with the world as a whole. He was no longer just another Eastern European communist dictator; now, he was one of the “good communists”.⁹⁹

Still, even though he had American assurances that Romania was safe, Ceaușescu remained wary, and understandably so. The American assurances were, in fact, based on Soviet assurances that Romania was safe. Between this rather paltry evidence, and the continuing presence of multiple Warsaw Pact divisions stationed dangerously close to the Romanian border, Ceaușescu felt far from safe. He sent Foreign Minister Mănescu, recently returned from New York to Bucharest, around to see U.S. Ambassador Davis. Davis reported that he had, “little

⁹⁶ Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Romania, 31 August 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 453-454

⁹⁷ Telegram From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson, 1 September 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 454-455

⁹⁸ Telegram From the Embassy in Romania to the Department of State, 1 September 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 455

⁹⁹ Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite*, 157

doubt that Mănescu came from seeing Ceaușescu... as he was five minutes late for our appointment.”¹⁰⁰

Mănescu came under orders to convey not just Ceaușescu’s personal gratitude to President Johnson for his support, but also the gratitude of the Romanian people. He praised Johnson’s speech on August 30, which he felt had had a “cooling effect” on the tense situation in Eastern Europe following the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. He further thanked Davis for the U.S.’s discretion in assuring the Soviets that President Johnson’s statement was *not* made based on information provided by the Romanians. Davis reported that when he told Mănescu that Johnson’s support was not just that of his administration, but was a U.S. policy that should continue, Mănescu “did not presume to advise on how this could be done”¹⁰¹, but indicated the full support of the Romanian government towards such an end. There was hardly another answer that Mănescu could give; Ceaușescu clearly wanted to continue to enjoy American goodwill, if only long enough to obtain his long-sought after nuclear reactor, computer equipment, and other economic benefits.

¹⁰⁰ Telegram From the Embassy in Romania to the Department of State, 6 September 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 456-457

¹⁰¹ Telegram From the Embassy in Romania to the Department of State, 6 September 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 456-457

6. US-Romanian Relations, September-December 1968

The backlash of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia would dominate Eastern Bloc politics for the remainder of 1968 (and, indeed, all the way until 1989). Amidst all the conflicting reports that Washington was receiving was an interesting piece of intelligence passed along by a source within the Romanian Communist Party's Central Committee: Soviet leaders Kosygin, Suslov and Ponomarev had "[admitted] their error in opposing military intervention in Czechoslovakia."¹⁰² While the Americans were speculating that these men would be dismissed in due course, what went unsaid is that this represented a drift towards a more hard-line stance within the Soviet Union; if such high-level officials were being compelled to change their opinions in such a public fashion, then the Brezhnev Doctrine was there to stay, and there was no telling when the Soviets would choose to enforce it again. However, it must be noted that throughout the crisis, the Soviets maintained that Romania was safe from any threat of invasion.¹⁰³

Mănescu continued to work at keeping American paranoia high even before this announcement, with his meeting with Ambassador Davis on September 6 leading Davis to warn that the "danger was not entirely over."¹⁰⁴ Indeed, as late as November 22, US intelligence was still putting out detailed reports of imminent invasion, including units slated to participate from Warsaw Pact member nations.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Telegram From the Embassy in Bucharest to the Secretary of State (Subject: Rumors of Imminent Soviet Leadership Changes), 19 September 1968, Rumania Cables Volume III 10.66 - 1.69 [1 of 2], Box 204 [1 of 2], NSF Country File, Rumania, LBJL

¹⁰³ Paris Domestic Service In French, 2 September 1968, Rumania Cables Volume III 10.66 - 1.69 [1 of 2], Box 204 [1 of 2], NSF Country File, Rumania, LBJL

¹⁰⁴ Note from W. W. Rostow to President Johnson, 6 September 1968, Rumania Cables Volume III 10.66 - 1.69 [1 of 2], Box 204 [1 of 2], NSF Country File, Rumania, LBJL

¹⁰⁵ Telegram (Subject: Report of Warsaw Pact Invasion of Romania Nov. 22), 22 November 1968, Rumania Possibility of Warsaw Pact Invasion of Rumania 11.22.68, Box 204 [1 of 2], NSF Country File, Rumania, LBJL

Ceaușescu continued pushing all the right buttons to win his way even further into the United States' good graces, while also engaging in limited appeasement of Moscow. While Soviet demands for adherence to Warsaw Pact guidelines were flatly rejected¹⁰⁶, Ceaușescu did tone down his rhetoric, and abandoned his outspoken denouncement of the invasion altogether.¹⁰⁷ Davis reported that Ceaușescu was in the process of liberalizing the Romanian economy, albeit slowly, and was allowing for greater freedom of expression and civil rights than ever before. Old political prisoners were being rehabilitated¹⁰⁸, and the Securitate were being held in check. From the American standpoint, Ceaușescu was turning out to be more of a benevolent despot than an oppressive Stalinist dictator. Rusk and Davis were almost certainly aware that these reforms did not represent a change in Ceaușescu's personal convictions. Ambassador Davis noted that he believed Ceaușescu would only go along with reforms until they conflicted with his hold on power.¹⁰⁹

As the disastrous year of 1968 drew to a close, there were very few winners left on the field. The United States had received a black eye in Vietnam during the Tet Offensive early in the year, and had proven to be all talk with its condemnation of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, which in turn proved to severely tarnish Moscow's image worldwide. Czechoslovakia, despite experiencing a brief thaw, was plunged back into a Stalinist winter that would last until the fall of the Eastern Bloc in 1989. Ceaușescu, however, had come out on top: he had succeeded in redefining Romania's relationship with the West in general and the United

¹⁰⁶ Intelligence Information Cable, 21 November 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 461-462

¹⁰⁷ Airgram From the Embassy in Romania to the Department of State, 9 December 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 463-464

¹⁰⁸ One can easily assume that this grand amnesty, applied only to (certain) people sentenced in the 1950s, was due only to the fact that they posed no threat to Ceaușescu, and that their release was only to cozy up to the Americans- Ceaușescu did nothing out of kindness.

¹⁰⁹ Airgram From the Embassy in Romania to the Department of State, 9 December 1968, FRUS 1964-1968, XVII, 463-464

States in particular. He also managed to fully assert Romania's right to an independent political system without provoking a second invocation of the Brezhnev Doctrine, with its foreign, domestic, and economic policies delivered from Bucharest rather than Moscow. The little dictator's stand against the Soviet monolith would end in paying off more than Ceaușescu could have ever dreamed of.

7. US-Romanian Relations Post-1968

In 1969, following a rather decisive election, a war weary America waved goodbye to President Johnson and welcomed President Nixon to the White House. Nixon was to continue Johnson's support of Romania, not merely because it represented good policy, but in gratitude for the warm reception given to him during his 1967 visit. Ceaușescu's cultivation of Nixon paid off, as the President paid an official state visit to Romania in August 1969.¹¹⁰ Nixon had other motives for visiting Bucharest than simply thanking Ceaușescu for his earlier hospitality, however. Nixon wanted to signal the Soviet government that the United States could be making a change in policy regarding the People's Republic of China, by visiting not just a European Communist nation (in fact, Romania was the first Communist nation to be visited by any U. S. President following the end of World War II),¹¹¹ but the only member of the Eastern Bloc which maintained friendly relations with the PRC. Nixon also availed himself of Romania's strong relations with North Vietnam, repeating an earlier ultimatum to Ceaușescu in the sure knowledge that it would be passed on to the North Vietnamese.¹¹²

Nixon's visit further cemented the relationship between the United States and Romania. Following Nixon's departure, Ceaușescu stated at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party that, "...Nixon's visit was good and useful... for the expansion of relations between Romania and the United States". Ceaușescu also remarked that, given the United States' recent actions towards securing better relations with the various communist states

¹¹⁰ Behr, *Kiss The Hand You Cannot Bite*, 160

¹¹¹ While Nixon is often cited as being the first American President to visit a Communist nation, that honor in fact belongs to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who attended the Yalta Conference in the Soviet Union (not merely a Communist nation, but at the time, *the* Communist nation) in 1945. However, as *Vice-President*, Nixon had visited the Soviet Union in 1958, and engaged Nikita Khrushchev in the infamous "kitchen debate" when the Soviet Premier doubted the ability of an average American worker to own the kitchen being displayed to him. See Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 208-209

¹¹² Ambrose, *Nixon*, 289

in the world, that Romania would, “have a lot to gain, generally vis-à-vis relations with socialist countries and world peace.”¹¹³

Ceaușescu’s words turned out to be prophetic, albeit in a far more materialistic sense than with which he spoke them. In 1969, Ceaușescu got American approval of his acquisition of a Canadian nuclear reactor.¹¹⁴ While construction would not begin until 1979, it cannot be emphasized enough that without the events of August 1968, it is extremely unlikely that Ceaușescu would have received his reactor at all.¹¹⁵

It must be noted that American trust of Ceaușescu only extended so far, however; a cable from the US Mission in Paris to the US Embassy in Ottawa made mention of the reactor sale, and that the Canadians had been informed (unofficially) that US approval hinged on the reactor being sold with IAEA safeguard built in, and that the reactor be of such a type as to not give away advanced Western technological secrets to the Romanians. Only then would the US support the reactor sale to the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (CoCom).¹¹⁶

It must be further noted that the negotiations which took place during the Nixon and Ford administrations coincided with another development in East-West relations: détente. Although Johnson lost his chance to cement détente in the aftermath of the Warsaw pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, Nixon proved to be much more fortunate, meeting with Brezhnev in 1972 and

¹¹³ Ambrose, *Nixon*, 289

¹¹⁴ Eliza Gheorghe, “How To Become A Customer: Lessons from the Nuclear Negotiations Between the U.S., Canada, and Romania in the 1960s”, in [www.wilsoncenter.org](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/npihp_issue_brief_2_us_canada_romania_nuclear_negotiations_1960s.pdf), <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/npihp_issue_brief_2_us_canada_romania_nuclear_negotiations_1960s.pdf> (11 April 2013)

¹¹⁵ CNE Cernavodă, “Istoric”, in *cne.ro*, November 20 2012, <<http://www.cne.ro/m.aspx?id=36&it=2>>, (14 Feb. 2014)

¹¹⁶ “Cable: 1975OECDP07813_b”, in *wikileaks.com*, March 27 1975, <https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975OECDP07813_b.html>, (17 Feb. 2014)

1973, signing the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) on the occasion of the former visit.¹¹⁷ Such developments in overall relations with the Soviet Union (as well as the thawing of relations with the People's Republic of China) would only have made Ceaușescu's case easier to sell. Earlier reactor deals were not allowed to proceed during a period of reduced, but still present Cold War tensions. With said tensions passing away, at least for the moment, allowing the sale of a nuclear reactor to a member of the Warsaw Pact became much more agreeable.

Not only did Ceaușescu succeed in getting exactly what he wanted from the West- and in avoiding a Soviet attack- he also managed to outlast those champions of archconservatism, Gomulka and Ulbricht: facing massive civil unrest, Gomulka was dismissed on Moscow's orders in 1970, with Ulbricht following a year later.¹¹⁸ His speech condemning the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia continued to deliver dividends, both in the form of trade deals with the Americans and other Western powers, and in the Western willingness to extend him credit. This last benefit, however, was to end in costing him far more than it was worth.

During the 1970s, Romania attempted to modernize its economy, borrowing heavily from the U.S. and other Western nations. Following the lackluster performance of Romanian goods in Western markets, Romania found itself heavily indebted. Ceaușescu, quickly losing his earlier popularity due to his liberal use of the Securitate to enforce policy, further decreased his popularity when he adopted austerity measures in 1980 and continuing to enforce them until the end of his reign. By 1989, Romania had paid off its Western creditors,¹¹⁹ but at great cost: the

¹¹⁷ Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 617-618

¹¹⁸ Anthony Kemp-Welch, "Eastern Europe: Stalinism to solidarity", in *The Cold War*, Volume II: *Crises and Détente*, eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge University Press: New York, 2011), 228-229; Wilfred Loth, "The Cold War and social and economic history", in *The Cold War*, Volume II: *Crises and Détente*, eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, 519

¹¹⁹ Stephen Kotkin, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment* (New York: Random House, 2009), 70-71

standard of living was abysmal after years of forcible export by the Romanian government of vitally needed goods. Public resentment against the self-proclaimed “Genius of the Carpathians” was so great¹²⁰ that he became the only communist dictator to be violently overthrown and executed in the wave of revolutions which swept Eastern Europe that year. The United States did not allow its relationship with Romania to suffer the same death as Ceaușescu, however. By the end of December, the United States Air Force was busily airlifting medical supplies and other aid to Bucharest, in dire need of them following the violence at the end of the Ceaușescu era.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Just how far Ceaușescu had fallen in public opinion is neatly summed by an account from an eyewitness at the base where he was executed, where the commanding officer first left his corpse to rot where it fell, but was then obliged to have it removed, as his soldiers kept taking pot-shots at it.

¹²¹ SSGT Perry Heimer, “DF-ST-92-05305”, in *DefenseImagery.Mil*, 31 December 1989, <<http://www.defenseimagery.mil/imagery.html#a=search%chk=6efe0&dsa=12%2F31%2F1989&dsb=12%2F31%2F1989&guid=22f57c1f26ec96f2afbad1c5d9bf7cf994e25ac7>> (12 April 2013)

8. Conclusions

Nicolae Ceaușescu, more than any other person, advanced the cause of U.S.-Romanian relations through the deliverance of his speech on August 21, 1968, in which he denounced the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. It was the crowning achievement of years of hard work in cultivating good relations not just with the U.S. government, but with American politicians both in and out of office. Ceaușescu, at this stage in his political career, was a very charismatic man, and was able to win the support of both his people and of Western governments. While his people's support was not quite so long-lived (much of this being his own fault), his support in the West proved to be far more enduring. The image of Ceaușescu in his prime, delivering his fateful condemnation of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia from a balcony in Bucharest in 1968 would not be swept aside until 1989, when the old, bitter dictator Ceaușescu lost control of his people, weary from nearly a decade of starvation and severe repression, from that same balcony.

Ceaușescu, for all his faults (and they are glaring), is one of the key players in the history of Romania's industrialization. Without his sometimes frightening ability to sense shifting political currents and ability to capitalize on the chances fate placed in front of him, it is very likely that the gains of the Gheorghiu-Dej era would not have been so surpassed in the decades following. Gheorghiu-Dej never received anywhere near the Western support that Ceaușescu did, nor, for that matter, gained Romanian access to Western nuclear technology.

However, it must be stated that Ceaușescu did not achieve this all on his own; while the recognition of his moment to make a public break with the other members of the Warsaw Pact was his, the diplomatic exchanges in the years preceding his speech were what made it possible in the first place. Due credit must be given to Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Foreign Minister

Corneliu Mănescu, whose mutual trust was able to serve as a bridge between the two countries on opposite sides of the Iron Curtain during the 1968 crisis. The fact that close relations persisted well after both men left their respective offices demonstrates just how strong the diplomatic ties that they forged were. In the end, however, it was left to Ceaușescu to put the finishing touch on their hard work, creating a relationship between the United States and Romania which would last beyond the end of the Cold War.

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Appendix

Balcony Speech by Nicolae Ceaușescu on Czechoslovakia

August 21, 1968

Dear comrades, citizens of Romania. In this difficult moment for the situation in Europe and for the fraternal Czechoslovak people, in the name of the Central Committee, of the State Council, and of the government, I wish to address myself to you and express myself to you and express our confidence in our people, who are aspiring to ensure the peaceful construction of socialism.

We know, comrades, that the entry of the forces of the five socialist countries into Czechoslovakia is a great error and a serious danger to peace in Europe and to the fate of socialism in the world. It is inconceivable in today's world, when the peoples are rising to the struggle to defend their national independence and for equality in rights, that a socialist state, that socialist states, should violate the freedom and independence of another state. There is no justification whatsoever, and there can be no excuse for accepting even for a moment the idea of military intervention in the affairs of a fraternal socialist state.

Our party-state delegation which last week visited Czechoslovakia convinced itself that the Czechoslovak people, the Czechoslovak Communist Party, and the Czechoslovak workers' class, old people, women, and young people, unanimously support the party and state leadership in order to put right the negative state of affairs in Czechoslovakia inherited from the past, in order to ensure the triumph of socialism in Czechoslovakia.

The problem of choosing the ways of socialist construction is a problem of each party, of each state, and of every people, and nobody can set himself up as an adviser and guide for the way in which socialism must be built. It is the affair of every people, and we deem that, in order to place the relations between the socialist countries and Communist parties on a truly Marxist-Leninist basis, it is necessary to put an end one and for all to interference in the affairs of other states and other parties.

The measures which the Central Committee, the Council of Ministers, and the State Council have decided to adopt aim at submitting to the General National Assembly a declaration in which we would set out clearly the relations we mean to build, our relations with the socialist countries and with all the countries of the world, based on respect for independence and national sovereignty, full equality in rights, and noninterference in internal affairs, and to base those relations on a truly Marxist-Leninist collaboration which would contribute to the triumph of the ideas of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, to the triumph of communism, and to restoring the authority of and confidence in Marxist-Leninist ideas.

We have today decided to set up armed patriotic guards made up of workers, peasants, and intellectuals: defenders of the independence of our socialist fatherland. We want our people to have their armed units in order to defend their revolutionary achievements and in order to ensure their peaceful work and the independence and sovereignty of our socialist fatherland.

In our activity, we proceed from the responsibility we have towards the people, towards all the working people regardless of nationality- Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, and other nationalities; we all- Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, people of other nationalities- have the same destiny and the same aspiration: the forging of communism in our fatherland. We are determined that in complete unity we shall ensure the attainment of our goals.

It has been said that in Czechoslovakia there was danger of counterrevolution; perhaps tomorrow they will say that our meeting has mirrored counterrevolutionary tendencies. If so, we answer to all that the Romanian people will not permit anybody to violate the territory of our fatherland. Look comrades: Our whole Central Committee, the State Council, and the Government are here. We are all determined to faithfully serve the people in socialist construction and in defense of the revolutionary achievements and its independence. Many of those here are Communists and antifascists who have faced prisons and death but have not betrayed the interests of the workers' class and our people. Be sure, comrades, be sure, citizens of Romania, that we shall never betray our fatherland, that we shall not betray our people's interests.

We are confident that the Communist and workers' parties will know how to find the way to put the speediest end to this shameful event in the history of the revolutionary movements. We are convinced that no Communist can be found who can accept this military action in Czechoslovakia, that all the Communists would raise their voices to ensure the triumph of freedom, the triumph of the Marxist-Leninist principles, so that Czechoslovak people, so that the peoples, may be able to build socialist society as they themselves want it.

We are determined to act with all our force and with all our responsibility in order to contribute to the finding of ways for the speediest solution of this situation created by the entry of foreign forces into Czechoslovakia, and so that the Czechoslovak people can carry out their activity in tranquility. We are firmly determined to act to that together with the other socialist countries and with other Communist and workers' parties we shall contribute to the elimination of the divergences and to the strengthening of the unity of the socialist countries and of the Communist parties because we are convinced that only in this way are we serving the interests of the people and the interests of socialism in the whole world.

We ask the citizens of our fatherland that, having complete confidence in the leadership of the party and the state and in our Communist party, they should give proof of complete unity and act calmly and firmly, with everyone at his place of work, to increase his efforts and to ensure the implementation of the program for the development of our socialist society, and to be ready, comrades, at any moment to defend our socialist fatherland, Romania.

I thank you, all the citizens of the capital and all the citizens of our fatherland for your confidence, for this warm manifestation, and for the attention to which you are watching our party's policy; and we wish you comrades good health and success in your activity for the triumph of socialism in our fatherland.

We request you, comrades, that you return to your work and have confidence that we shall keep you informed regarding the unfolding of events. Good-bye.¹²²

¹²² Nicolae Ceaușescu, “Balcony Speech by Nicolae Ceaușescu on Czechoslovakia”, in *Winter in Prague: Documents on Czechoslovak Communism in Crisis*, ed. Robin Alison Remington (The M.I.T. Press: Cambridge, 1969), 359-361

Vita

Paul Hebert was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana. Following his graduation from Archbishop Rummel High School in 2007, he enrolled in the University of New Orleans, where he earned his BA in History in 2011, and is currently working towards an MA in History.