

Détente and the events from Czechoslovakia, 1968

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Keywords: détente, Czechoslovakia-1968, Eastern Bloc, and Western Bloc, East-West relations.

Abstract: One of the most important characteristics of the international system during the Cold War is that the world was bipolar and the international politics was almost entirely monopolized by the 2 great powers of power, the Soviet Union and the United States. The international politics, even within the subsystems level, was controlled by these 2 superpowers (Andrei Miroiu, Radu Sebastian Ungureanu, Polirom, 2005, p. 33-37). At the beginning of the 1960s, the world entered on the road of a new relaxation. The relaxation appeared between the 2 great powers of that time, the Soviet Union and the United States and it had also a very important influence over the relations between some socialist countries and the “big brother” or between the East and West in general. Although the signs of détente were visible from the beginning of the 1960s, détente’s beginning is chronologically and approximately set in 1968. This could be seen as a paradox, considering the events from Czechoslovakia that could have affected the East-West relations. This article will try to show through the light of some archive documents how the 1968 Czech events influenced or not the détente phenomenon at the end of the ‘60.

After the SU and the US had exceeded the crises capable to lead the world towards a third world conflict, the 2 superpowers have understood that a détente policy, conceived at least, “as an accommodation among states with divergent interests” –in Nixon’s expression – is preferable to the warm war and even to the cold war (Valentin Lipatti, Ed. Politică, București, 1985, p.12). This atmosphere of relaxation and détente also influenced the way in which the small and middle states from Europe perceived their selves, identified their role and their rights within the international system frame. The Communist Bloc was more and more willing to open itself to the world and starts to recognize the necessity of a dialog with Washington. These is the period when Romania, Finland or Hungary start to consider that they could influence the international politics, that they could transform their selves in examples for other small and middle countries and, more important, their voices are beginning to be listen.

Romania’s position within the context of the 1960s-1970s détente does not have to be interpreted only through the perspective of its automatic integration in a general phenomenon, in the sense of the total and unconditioned following of the example offered by its “big brother”, but specially through the perspective of its foreign policy, oriented to independency and autonomy. This policy excluded Romania from the homogeneous lines of the socialist countries. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, making a clear distinction between the Soviet model and the Soviet Union, refusing to transform Romania in the “bred basket” of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), had brought Romanian on the road of autonomy from 1962 (Denis Deletant, "România în regimul comunist (decembrie 1947-decembrie 1989)", în Mihai Bărbulescu, coordonator, *Istoria României*, Ed. Enciclopedică, București, 1998, p.525). The Declaration from April (1964) is a proof of Romania’s more and more independent policy. According to this declaration, Romania’s foreign policy was based on 4

major principles which were much appreciated at international level and less at bloc level: the equality in rights, non-interference in the internal affairs, territorial integrity and national sovereignty, mutual advantage. After 1964, Romania was promoting a policy of enlarging the cooperation relations with the Western world. Romania's independence covered a wide range of forms: visits of western leaders in Bucharest, maintaining friendly relations with Yugoslavia, establishing diplomatic relations with GFR, maintaining the diplomatic relations with Israel, collaboration agreements with the Common Market, an active policy within the UNO and other international organisms. Even from the beginning of the détente process Romania was, willingly or not, an example for other socialist countries.

Encouraged by the improvement of the Soviet-American relations, small and middle Socialist states are beginning to talk about détente, associating it with the improvement of their own relations with western capitalist countries. At the beginning of 1968, the opinion that Hungary must exceed, within the international relations, the frame of their international relations limited by that point at the socialist countries, had appeared and spread more and more within the Hungarian Foreign Minister. It had been made a study on the Hungary's foreign relations in comparison with other socialist countries' foreign policy. This study showed that from about 20 exchanges of delegations organized during 1967 by the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, the majority was represented by the visits of some foreign delegations in Budapest, especially from socialist countries. In the same time the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs had made just one visit abroad. For comparison, the study was quoting the example of Romania which during the same year had organized about 40 exchanges of delegations, from which about 50% in Bucharest, the rest being represented by the Romanian visits abroad. It was also appreciated that from all these contacts only 50% had been with the socialist countries and that in their majority they had been at high level. With the same occasion it has been expressed the hope that this opinion which appeared within the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs will finally convince by the utility of the Hungary's foreign relations diversification the persons responsible with Hungary's foreign policy (Telegram no 46090, from the Romanian Embassy in Bruxelles, dated 04.03.1968; top secret; signed I. Oancea, Diplomatic Archives of the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, (AMAE) Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, page 76).

On 10th of May 1968 Dr. Iudro Otto, physician in the hospital for the Hungarian leaders and for the members of the diplomatic corpus from the socialist countries and a relative of Alois Indra, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, told to D. Turcuş, a Romanian diplomat in Budapest, that "everything that is done in your country [that is Romania, my note] is looked with great interest in Hungary. Of course this look offers us different impressions: respect and admiration, envy and will that some day we could act the same way. Anyway, right now Romania is in Europe's spotlight and offers a catching example" (Telegram no 47450, from the Romanian Embassy in Budapest, top secret, dated 11.05.1968; signed D. Turcuş; AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, pages 153-154).

Paradoxical, while the relations between East and West were improving, within the Easter bloc different old or new disputes disunited the Socialist countries: Hungary and Czechoslovakia, USSR and Yugoslavia, USSR and Romania, Hungary and Romania etc. Despite the fact that the Hungarian and Romanian parts were officially appreciating positively the evolution of the Hungarian-Romanian bilateral relations, in Hungary continued to appear materials with an unfriendly content at the address of Romania, and these materials were in a bigger number starting with the second half of the 1967. The great majority of these unfriendly materials were related with Romania's history. On this ground it have been ascertained, as a new aspect, an unfavorable attitude and a defective report of the members of

the Hungarian Working Party and of the public opinion, towards a series of Romanian Communist Party and Romania's acts in their foreign policy. Those unfriendly remarks concerned: the RCP position over the problems of the unity of the working international movement and specially over the position taken during the 1968 February Meeting in Budapest concerning Romania's position towards: the conflict from the Near East, non-proliferation of the atomic weapons, establishing relations with GFR, and culminated with the attacks at the address of the Romanian leaders because of their position over the Czechoslovakian events (Note concerning the bilateral relations between Romania and Hungary, from 6.09.1968, Top secret, AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220, file "Popular Republic of Hungary-Socialist Republic of Romania", pages 1-8).

Generally in the Eastern countries has been considered that the improvement of the relations between the Socialist countries would contribute to the enlargement of the détente process. On 30th of May 1968 during a cocktail at the Czech Embassy in Budapest, Andrej Zador, director in the Minister of Culture from Czechoslovakia, was speaking highly about the external policy of the Romanian Communist Party in the sense of the consolidation of the country's national independency and sovereignty, also expressing his appreciation about "the right and just position" adopted by the Romanian Communist Party towards the events from Czechoslovakia. With this occasion, Zador told to I. Bochiş, one of the Romanian councilors at the Romanian Embassy in Budapest, that the process of democratization and renewal of the Czech political live would have been impossible without the example of Romania and Yugoslavia and without their moral support. Zador appreciated that the future visit of the Romanian delegation of party and state, lead by N. Ceausescu is very important, not only for their bilateral relations, but also for the improvement of the political atmosphere and of détente in Europe. "For Czechoslovakia", he said, "the principles and the ideas which will be affirmed with this occasion by the 2 heads of delegations represent a support and encouragement on the road of consolidation of the process started by the CC plenary from January 1968" (Telegram no 47537, sent from the Romanian Embassy in Budapest, top secret, dated 31.05.1968, signed I. Bochiş, (AMAE), Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, page 196).

The Prague Spring let everybody to infer that the situation will become at a certain point tensioned. In May 1968, H.L. Plaza, the charged with business in Budapest of the Republic of Chile was considering that the SU would not militarily interfere in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia for 2 reasons. "On the one hand the SU has an unfavorable situation and in this way the SU would attract the disagreement of the whole world public opinion, the same way the US attracted the whole world public opinion disagreement because of the Vietnamese war. Another reason is Czechoslovakia's popularity in world and the aversion of the populations towards the great powers which let them not even to breathe without their interference (Telegram no 47449, from Budapest, top secret, dated 11.05.1968; signed. Turcuş; AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, page Pages 151-152). In May 1968 "although the Czech comrades were optimist, everybody else around them were very worried, specially for the reason that in Czechoslovakia the criticism was lead only towards the past, as if in the present would not be anything to criticize". The meeting of the leaders of the communist and working parties from Hungary, Bulgaria, GDR, Poland and USSR, from the beginning of May 1968 in Moscow had as objective the adoption of a firm common position towards the situation from Czechoslovakia, which was a Polish initiative, explained by the strain relations between Poland and Czechoslovakia. At the basis of Polish-Czech misunderstanding was not only the Czech criticism towards Polish measures against students, intellectuals, and Jews, but also some territorial arguments. It was about a territory with a population of 40,000 people, of Polish origin, which after the World War II had been included into the Czech state as a result

of the "Soviet practices". In Moscow, Gomulka have pretended immediate measures against Czechoslovakia, but "the Soviet Union cannot afford now something like that". Unhappy with this answer, Gomulka left Moscow after a few hours. But Bulgaria, Hungary, GDR and Poland continued to be very careful not to disturb the "big brother" in this matter. "We are not agreeing with this kind of measures and we do not approve the total alignment of Hungary to the Soviet policy, but we have to be well understood that we cannot otherwise" said Iudro Otto to D. Turcuş. "This total subordination is hard to be supported, but the price had to be paid because now in Hungary there are better economic possibilities, people are building houses, buying cars etc" (Telegram no 47450, from the Romanian Embassy in Budapest, top secret, dated 11.05.1968; signed D. Turcuş; AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, pages 153-154). –The sentence "the Soviet Union cannot afford now something like that" has to be accepted with care because on about 1st of May 1968 every night, massive movements of motorized Soviet troupes were made in Hungary on the direction North-East: tanks, armored machines, rackets, and others of the most modern construction. During the period of Chino-Soviet strain relations, elite and aviation Soviet troupes have been moved from Hungary. Now they have been brought back. The Soviet military troupes from Hungary counted that time 95,000 people, 125 plains MIG-21, rackets units etc (Telegram no 47449, from Budapest, top secret, dated 11.05.1968; signed D. Turcuş; AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, pages 151-152). The Soviet Union was preparing for intervention long before the negotiations with the Czechs or the other socialist countries to be finished. In Moscow, Kadar adopted a moderate position, in the sense that he reaffirmed Hungary's loyalty towards USSR and in the same time he has let one to understand that Hungary is looking with sympathy at the events from Czechoslovakia. Kadar was the one who contributed in calming down Gomulka and Ulbricht in the sense of non-interference with military forces in Czechoslovakia, because "this would have brought great prejudices to the international communist and working movement and to the preparation of the world consultation of these parties". In May 1968 it was considered that after the Czechoslovakia evens drawing, in Hungary too will start gradually a new more independent policy, which will positively influence its relations with its neighbors (Telegram no 47465, from the Romanian Embassy in Budapest, top secret, dated 15.05.1968; signed D. Turcuş; AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, pages 159-160). On 14th of May 1968, Zagor Gyorgy, the chief of the Direction III from the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, was saying to a Romanian diplomat concerning the Czechoslovakia situation, that the Hungarian Socialist Working Party totally support the political program of CC of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, expressed its solidarity with it and also the hope that it will succeed to positively orientate the course of the events. The HSWP position, he said, comes and is based on its experience from 1956, when, as it is well known, the events started with some general unhappiness, expressed especially by the intellectuals, writers and students, "which have expressed exaggerated demands at that time". Within the HSWP, generally there is the belief that the Czech comrades will know to where they can go with their democracy and humanism, Zagor Gyorgy said. "Within the party [Hungarian Socialist working Party, my note] there is expressed the worry that the antidemocratic forces will gain space and this fact is concerning us, because this also happened to us". In Zagor Gyorgy's words this was the official position of the HSWP. At that point, the Czech situation did not constitute a danger for the rest of the Communist Bloc, because there was no sign that the Czech model would spread among other socialist countries. This is the essence of Zagor Gyorgy sayings: "The Hungarian public opinion is looking with sympathy at the Czech events and there have been no cases when somebody to manifest activities of instigation and to say, under the influence of the Occidental propaganda, look

how well are acting the Czechs" (Telegram no 47469, from the Romanian Embassy in Budapest, top secret, dated 15.05.1968; signed. Turcuş; AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, pages 161-164). Generally, in Hungary it was considered, on the one hand, that there was no motive of fear because Czechoslovakia was not intending to leave the socialist economic system, and, on the other hand, that the fact that Czechoslovakia wants to enlarge its economic relations with the Western countries was easy to understand and did not threaten the socialist basis of its economy (Telegram no 47493, from the Romanian Embassy in Budapest, top secret, dated 20.05.1968; signed D. Turcuş; AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, Page 170). In June 1968 Karoly Erdelyi, deputy of the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs was appreciating that the bilateral relations between Czechoslovakia and Hungary were developing very well and it was considered that it was not necessary to interfere in that time in any way upon those developments. The Hungarian part understood that in that moment Czechoslovakia could not deal in detail with the development of its bilateral economic relations with Hungary, because it was much occupied with dealing with its internal economic and federalist problems (Telegram no 47584, from the Romanian Embassy in Budapest, top secret, dated 11.06.1968; signed D. Turcuş, addressed to Vasile Sandru, the deputy of the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, pages 212-214). In July 1968, Hungary considered its main task the consolidation of its political, economic and cultural relations with USSR, insisting in the same time upon enlarging its relations with socialist countries, "starting with Cuba and finishing with China". "Today Hungary is learning again to justly appreciate its national particularities, other nations' personalities and particularities. Hungary serves the great cause of the proletarian internationalism by a differentiated harmonization of their right pretensions and demands" (A report from the Romanian embassy in Budapest, addressed to Vasile Sandru, signed D. Turcuş, dated 14.07.1968; top secret, AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, pages 233-237).

After the military invasion in Czechoslovakia, Hungary's attitude changed, considering that "the present international situation is very disturbing". The archive materials reveals us a dual Hungary in its external policy. With the Soviet Union, Hungary show itself very obedient, with the Romanians, for instance, explained that position and criticized Soviet attitude. "The Soviet leadership does not want or cannot to understand that in the European socialist countries, socialism is not threatened and that not all the Soviet methods are suitable for these countries. In its economic development, for instance, Hungary has to apply the most suitable methods for its demands and these methods do not coincide with the methods used by Soviets in their economic development. The time will come when Soviets will understand these things. But until then we have to try to walk on our path with care, without disturbing them, even with the risk of some concessions" (Telegram no 91837 from the Romanian Embassy in Vienna, signed Gheorghe Pele, dated 13.09.1968, top secret, AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, pages 246-247).

But this concern does not last long. In November 1968, Karoly Erdelyi appreciated that the Czech events have not influenced in a negative way the Soviet-American relations which had entered on the road of the relaxation. During his visit in Bucharest, 24-28th of October 1968, Erdelyi Karoly, the deputy of the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, was considering that "the events from Czechoslovakia have not substantially disturbed the international relations situation". He explained in Bucharest that "Western and Third World Countries reaction has not been sharp, and many times it has not been negative either. USA limited their selves to a few formal declarations, which is natural, because they are implicated

in acts of aggression and they do not want serious discussion over this issue. As the USA, other Western countries did not take serious measures to restraint their relations with the five socialist countries implicated in the Czech invasion, limiting their selves to some symbolic measures (for instance on cultural level). African countries did not show any particular attention, while Asian and Arabian countries showed quite a favorable position. All these do not mean that the situation has to be seen in pink colors", Erdelyi Karoly added. "The Communist parties, some progressive organizations and personalities from the western countries condemned the action of the five. A much sustained activity will have to be organized in order to explain to them the justice and necessity of this action". Erdelyi Karoly expressed with this occasion a vision on that time present international situation, which was the vision of the Communist Party of the SU leadership, shared also by the Hungarian Socialist Working Party.

Erdelyi Karoly also explained in Bucharest that the Soviet reasons for its favorable attitude towards the détente process had deep economic explanations. "The USSR has a total social product of 320 billiards dollars annually with a population of 240 millions inhabitants, in comparison with the 785 billiards dollars at a population of 200 millions inhabitants in the USA. The increase of the USA product, relative or absolute, is exceeding that of the USSR. Aware of this situation, the leadership of the SU was leading a not offensive policy against the imperialism, but a policy of safeguarding the Socialism's positions conquered by now. This effort in itself is very hard to realize for the SU. In order to face the situation from the domain of the nuclear arming, USSR has to spend for defense about the same amount spent by the USA, that is 70 billiards dollars annually, and that was for its national income a burden much heavy in comparison with that of the USA. If the nuclear arming had extended to other capitalist countries, in order to maintain the balance with the arming from the capitalist world, the SU would have had to make even bigger material efforts, which would have exceeded its possibilities. That is way the SU insisted a treaty in this sense to be concluded. Taking into consideration these reasons, the SU makes efforts to eliminate the war from Vietnam, of course in advantageous conditions for Vietnam. The reason: if it will come to the invasion of the Republic of Vietnam, by land, by the American troupes, no one could oppose after that to the occupation of the country. The SU and other socialist countries could not supply all the help needed for continuing the war in these conditions". The economic reasons of the détente are also explained by the fact that one of the 2 main tasks of the Soviet foreign policy at that time was to deeply, scientifically and profoundly study the causes which had made possible the fast progress of the "imperialist" countries' economy and, in particular, the development in this countries of the technical-scientific revolution? By knowing these causes there would have been created the conditions for the SU "to elaborate the necessary measures in order to accelerate development rhythm of the Soviet economy and to raise this economy on a new technical basis, superior at the world level". The plans for developing the Soviet economy, which were making then, had in principal the aim that until 1980 the forces balance to turn over in the favor of the USSR".

Karoly Erdelyi also expressed Hungary's theoretical reason for participating to the intervention: "The experience showed that we cannot consider the socialism as finally and irreversibly set up in none of the socialist countries, with the exception of the USSR. The dangers that are threatening the socialism in these countries are: the fact that the small bourgeoisie has not been yet reeducated and finally settled on the road of the socialism; the policy of the imperialistic countries to create "bridges" towards the socialist countries in order to have an ideological and political influence over them. Under these conditions, if the party leadership makes mistakes, the counter-revolution can go, in a way or another, to the restoration of the capitalism. No socialist country can stay passive when this danger appears, no matter where it appears. This was the situation in Czechoslovakia after January 1968, and

if the intervention were not made, the country could have been separated from the world socialist system. When the legal leadership of a socialist country is not capable to see the danger that threatens its socialism it cannot take the necessary measures. There can be multiple causes for such a situation: a faint ideological position of the leadership, a lack of firmness, revisionism etc. In those conditions the socialist countries must not wait, they have the internationalist duty to take all the measures to eliminate the danger. That was the case in Czechoslovakia, and it can reappear in other countries. Of course this is not the case for Romania where the positions of the socialism are strong, the party rules firmly the situation, has a Marxist-Leninist leadership etc. But the situation from Yugoslavia provokes worries; because it cannot be foreseen what will happened after Tito's death. There, the socialism can be threatened without the authoritarian leadership of Tito, if the new leadership cannot take the necessary measures and cannot use the help of the other socialist countries". At a Romanian diplomat's question if there is really the intention that after Tito's death an intervention in Yugoslavia to be tried, contrary to the decision expressed by the Yugoslavian leadership and people, ready to opposed with the weapons in their hands anytime and towards any intervention, Erdelyi Karoly said that he only expressed a theoretical reasoning; and if the problem would become a real one than it would be analyzed what must be done. Erdelyi Karoly insisted that he had expressed a vision on the present international situation, which is the vision of the Communist Party of the SU leadership, shared also by the HSWP.

Erdelyi Karoly has also spoken about the Soviet-Hungarian relations. He has underlined the great trust showed by the Soviet leaders in the Hungarian leadership, especially in Kadar. "Because of that trust, Hungarian leadership is completely free and independent in elaborating its internal and external policy and the Hungarian leadership can express its real opinions in front of the Soviet leadership, even thou those opinions are not the same with the ones of the Soviet Communist Party. In its actions, especially in the external ones, Hungarian leadership is always taking into consideration the opinions of the Soviet leadership and its sensitiveness in some aspects, trying to avoid anything that could cause unhappiness or misunderstandings from the Soviet point of view. For Soviets the main issue is that they are consulted in all the major problems and that they see the permanent will to collaborate from our part. As long as they are convinced of that, they are capable of anything, to even give us their own shirt, if necessary". As an example, Erdelyi has quoted their agreement with the Soviets concerning the building of a nuclear power plant in Hungary. The Soviets have accepted to deliver the necessary machines, in amount of about 120 millions dollars, in very advantageous conditions for Hungary (credits with low interests and long term to pay them back). On the internal plan, the great trust in Kadar, permitted Hungary to act as freely as possible, "maybe even freely than can you, Romanians", because it does not have to be preoccupied with a negative reaction of the SU, he said. "Even if we were not communist, we still would have had a realistic policy, and would have taken into consideration the neighboring with the USSR, both internally and externally" (Report no 01/005505/5.11.1968 with the occasion of Erdelyi Karoly, the deputy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in Bucharest on 24-28th of October 1968, concerning the issues such as bilateral and international relations; drown up by V. Şandru on 4.11.1968; "top secret", AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220, file "Popular Republic of Hungary-Socialist Republic of Romania", pages 32-37).

It is very easy to notice that the Czech events have influenced Hungary's relations with the SU and with the socialist countries. The opposite positions adopted by Hungary towards the Czech situation are very easily to notice within the period May-October 1968. During the Czech crisis Hungary has gain the trust of the SU and by having that trust it could act freely on the international level, the Western states included. On the other hand it can be infer that many times the positions expressed officially were sometimes dictated by external

circumstances. Although the Hungarian-Romanian relations were considered very strained at the end of the 1960, specially because their positions towards the Czech events and because their relations with the Soviet Union, between the Romanian and Hungarian diplomats the talks were very friendly at that time, as we could see, Hungary trying to motivate its participation in the intervention in all possible ways, theoretically and from the international low point of view, demonstrating the fact that in essence their both countries were looking for a better way to deal their relations with the Soviet Union. Hungary and Romania's actions towards relaxation and détente were also a way to gain, directly or indirectly, more independence in their relations with the "big brother".

In October 1968, as a consequence of the military intervention of the USSR and the other socialist countries in Czechoslovakia and because the withdrawal of their troupes from Czechoslovakia was delayed, the occidental diplomats manifested a serious preoccupation for the relations between their countries and the up-mentioned socialist countries. There were made references to the canceling or postponing, sine die, by some occidental countries, of some important visits to or from the 5 socialist countries, such as: delaying Jenő Fock's, the head of the Hungarian government, visit in Austria; canceling M. Stewart, the British State Secretary for external affairs' visit in Budapest and Sofia; postponing the Hungarian foreign minister's visit in Denmark; postponing the visit of the minister of culture from Holland in Hungary, postponing the visit of the Hungarian minister of agriculture in Holland; boycotting some economic, cultural, and commercial actions organized in one of the 5 socialist countries such as: the Fair from Plotiv, the Music Weeks from Budapest (the assembly of the opera from Bologna, the musical college from Zurich while the symphonic assembly from Bamberg renounced to participate, and other occidental countries among which USA, France and others reduced at minimum the number of their participants). It started to appear some reticence manifested by the occidental countries towards the socialist countries participating to the military intervention in Czechoslovakia (for instance France manifests reticence towards Hungary). The Western diplomats considered in that moment that this reticence was only the beginning of the direct consequences of the military invasion in Czechoslovakia and of the tries to permanent Czechoslovakia's occupation.

The Soviet threats with an eventual intervention in the GFR's internal affairs on the basis of the known articles from the UNO Chart, added new elements of worry which were observed in that autumn at Albert Toby Tafel, the chief of the GFR Commercial Representation, Hans Ioachim Vergan, councilor with press problems in that Representation, Yuksel Tamtekin, councilor at the Turkey's Embassy, dr. Yukka Nevakivi, Secretary II, first collaborator at the Finnish Embassy and others. In a conversation with a Romanian diplomat, on 25th of September, A. T. Tafel and H. J. Vergan expressed their astonishment towards the Soviets intention to, concerning GFR, unilaterally and arbitrarily interpret the articles no 53 and 107 from the UNO Chart and they said that "still, after the Czechoslovakia's occupation anything is possible, including a soviet attack on GFR. It is not accidental the fact that the Soviet troupes in Czechoslovakia are placed along the Czech frontier with GFR. In these conditions, the West-German diplomats said, the suppositions expressed in Occident that the Czechoslovakia's invasion is just a prelude of the campaign and of psychological pressures against the Western countries, and first of all against GFR, using different motivations, seem possible". From their saying, it results that the West-German diplomats considered possible the Soviets to wait for a "propitious" moment (student movements, strikes etc.) to interfere directly, to form a provisional government and to act after that according to their well known habit. At GFR's request, the USA administration decided to stop the decreasing of the amount of their armies on the West-Germany territory. In the same time USA and Great Britain promised to the Bonn government that they will increase their military effectives from West-Germany. At the beginning, USA and Britain suggested to GFR to increase its own military

forces, but GFR insisted for supplementation of the foreign armies on its territory and that for different reasons from which A.T. Tafel and H.I. Vergan mentioned: 1. the serious lack of working force from GFR; and 2. the low military level of those who would form now the army, without a minimum military training that could last for months. Strictly confidentially, the West-German diplomats then said that the main motif for which GFR insists to further have foreign forces on its territory and to be defended by foreign troupes against an eventual Soviet invasion is a different one: the Bonn government intends to assure the country's security on a larger level and not strictly nationally with its own forces. "An attack of the Soviet army upon the West-German troupes would mean war only between USSR and GFR, Tafel and Vergan said, but attacking the USA, Britain and GFR's armies by the Soviet troupes would mean war between USSR, on the hand, and USA, Britain and GFR, on the other and that would force Soviet leadership to be more careful and think more seriously before starting such an action". The West-German diplomats said that the recent visit of General De Gaulle in Bonn was due to the increasing preoccupation of GFR and France towards the USSR threats. The West-German diplomats expressed their skepticism towards the fact that De Gaulle agreed to increase the French military effectives in GFR. But they expressed their content concerning the visit of Kissinger in Turkey. J. Tamtekin, on 26th of September said that Turkey, influenced by the present international context, agreed to the GFR's request, expressed 3-4 years before, to permit the West-German troupes to make military exercises on Turkish polygons. They said that only in the present time Turkey and other allies of GFR understood that the preoccupations, concerning an eventual Soviet attack, expressed so many times by the Bonn government are real. In order to support GFR as quick as possible, the NATO members are studying the possibility to reduce to half or even more the present general mobilization time.

Concerning the consequences of Czechoslovakia invasion by the 5 socialist countries, or, as dr. J. Nevakivi said, concerning the violation of the "game rules" the up-mentioned West-German diplomats showed that lately GFR, Japan and other countries which did not sign by now the treaty on nonproliferation of the nuclear weapons show increasing restraints towards this treaty, while other counties are facing difficulties in obtaining its ratification. In Bonn there are forming opinions according to which the GFR's position towards this treaty to depend on the express USSR engagement to not distortedly interpret the articles no 53 and 107 from the UNO Chart and to not take unilateral measures against GFR (Informative note from the Romanian Embassy in Budapest, dates 7.10.1968, addressed to Vasile Şandru, signed Ion Avram, countersigned D. Turcus, top secret, concerning the preoccupation of some occidental diplomats upon the relations between their countries, on the one hand, and USSR and other socialist countries, on the other hand; AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, pages 266-269).

It is clear that the Western Bloc could not consider the Czech events otherwise then in the light of their influence upon their territories. Their worries were expressed concerning the way in which the situation will evolve for the Federative Republic of Germany, and not for Czechoslovakia, being afraid that the Soviet Union will not respect their zones of influence. The Western protests concerning the military invasion in Czechoslovakia were strictly formal and without substance.

In October 1968, many occidental diplomats (from Italy, Turkey, Belgium and Holland) considered that the situation in Czechoslovakia could have had 2 solutions acceptable by the Soviet part: 1. Changing Dubcek, Smirnovski and eventually Svoboda, which they thought it was risky but to Soviets' liking; they thought that this would have been a more radical solving of the situation; and 2. the actual leadership of Czechoslovakia to remain in post with the condition that it will "declare" in words "that they will do what Soviets want and under the table to do what they want, as Hungarians do. To apply Kadar's

tactic" (Telegram no 48134 from the Romanian Embassy in Budapest, signed D. Turcus, dated 08.10.1968, top secret, AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, pages 271-272).

Generally, the perspective on the atmosphere of détente on the continent was comment with concern by Western diplomats in the autumn of 1968 because of the events from Czechoslovakia and their consequences. Arthur Kremsner, press attaché at the Austrian Embassy in Budapest considered with bitterness that the tendency towards a better understanding between West and East, the actions that could have take place in this direction have been stopped by the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. He considered that the initiation of the nine concerning actions on the regional level succeeded, but now the hopes concerning a real understanding between East and West have been swept away". The intervention from Czechoslovakia made Occident to be more realist concerning Moscow's sincerity; "that is way the main preoccupation now is to consolidate NATO". The Romanian diplomats instead considered that there still were unexplored possibilities in the direction of the peaceful leaving among countries with different social systems.

Francis I. Meehan, councilor at the USA Embassy in Budapest, showed that the atmosphere of détente in Europe and in the world is differently conceived by the USA, on the one hand, and by the USSR, on the other. "We are seeing the détente, the American diplomat said, as an atmosphere in which the East and the West try to solve the main problems of our times, starting with Europe splitting. We want freer and more opened relations among the nations from the European continent. USSR, on the other hand, conceives this atmosphere in a narrow way, which is its willing to solve some problems that concern only the relations between blocks". He also offered the explanations concerning US decision to not let the 1968 events to affect the relaxation process in these terms: "In the interest of the peace in the world, and despite the events from Czechoslovakia, the USA will seek to maintain its dialog with USSR, although it is difficult to foresee what the SU will do next and in what measure the SU is interested in maintaining this dialog (Telegram no 48230 from the Romanian embassy in Budapest, dates 27.10.1968, singed Ion Avram, addressed to Vasile Sandru, top secret, AMAE, Fund Hungary, problem 220/1968, File "Popular Republic of Hungary" Direction I-relations, pages 280-281). This is the USA official attitude, but we must at least consider the possibility of a deeper Soviet-American understanding.

Despite all these worries, the détente process has not suffered deeply and could develop further after 1968. One could see a paradox in the fact that in 1968, year shuddered by the Czech crisis, practically started the détente period in the Cold War history. Considering the relations between the détente and Czech invasion, the small and middle countries either could not though possible such an intervention or over-appreciated its significance within the East-West relations. The relaxation process was not negatively affected by the Czech events because the SU and the USA decided otherwise and both, the SU and the US could not risk tensioning the relations between them. On 28th of November 1968 Karoly Erdelyi put it in these terms: "the relations between USSR and NATO countries have not been seriously affected by these events for the simple fact that the SU is a great power which they cannot play with". The military action from Czechoslovakia affected though the evolution of the

* In 1960 Romania proposed on the UNO General Assembly's Agenda the point entitled "Actions on regional level for improving the good-neighboring relations among the European states with different social and political systems ". After long debates this initiative has been finalized with the adoption on 21st of December 1965 of the UNO General Assembly's Resolution no 2129 (XX). This resolution had nine authors: Romania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Yugoslavia, Sweden and Hungary and foresaw the maintaining and enlarging the contacts in different domains among states with different social and political systems. The General assembly called the governments of the European countries to intensify their efforts towards the détente of the international relations.

relations of Hungary and other small socialist countries with Occident. From the economic point of view there has been felt no difference, the exchange relations with them continuing. Western countries like Belgium, Italy and others expressed, in one way or another, their disagreement towards Hungary's participation in the military intervention in Czechoslovakia. The ambassadors of these countries do not participate in the protocol actions organized by the Hungarian embassies abroad. Generally, the NATO countries restrained their cultural exchanges with Hungary and other small socialist countries that "offered support to Czechoslovakia" (Telegram no 48345 from the Romanian embassy in Budapest, dates 29.11.1968, signed D. Turcuş, addressed to Vasile Sandru, top secret, pages 288-292).

Romanian leadership had a very clear vision about the way in which the Soviets and the Americans were used to deal with the world problems by their selves. And in closed circles they were very acid in their comments. In 1973, within the meeting of the Executive Committee of Central Committee of Romanian Communist Party, from 2nd of July, Emil Bodnăraş said: "Concerning the relations between the US and the SU we can say that the manner to talk with the doors bolted was settled in the last time, and, as far as possible, between four eyes. When somebody talks between four eyes he usually wants to avoid publicity around some delicate aspects of things. In this case those delicate things can only be about the sphere of influence or about some mutual concessions in their global politics, and global politics always means where do I give in and where do I win, and, if we talk in terms of giving in and winning between two big powers, someone else always pays for both, gain and loss. The collaboration between Soviets and Americans does not date from a day or tow, it is old, they have agreed on other occasions upon reparations and spheres, and it is hard to presume that they have gave up to do it any longer, influenced by their preoccupation for *détente* or for respect for others' rights. There is more. They don't even talk in their agreements about others' rights, but they talk about the respect for the mutual interests between the SU and the US. For us *détente* means to be left alone to develop, to co-operate, and to collaborate with all countries on basis of equality. For the other part, our older comrade, *détente* means military occupation. On the other hand, *détente* means for the Soviets when I talk to you, you shut up and in order to be certain of that I send you international help under the form of tanks and I negotiate with the Americans when to withdraw them. You are not the one I talk to. The term *détente* has one sense in Bucharest or in other capitals of the countries that try to affirm independently, and other sense in Moscow or in Washington. For us *détente* means independence, sovereignty, noninterference in internal affairs, equality, respect for its interests, and, where there are mutual relations, advantage" (The minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of CC of RCP, from 2nd of July 1973, ANIC, CC of RCP, Section: Office, File no 120/1973, pages 22-65, 112-119).

The Romanian-Soviet relations, on the one side, and Romanian-other "brother" countries, on the other, have been modified at the end of the '60 and beginning of the '70s because of the Czech crisis and its consequences. In the matter of the Easter Bloc "centre-periphery" and "periphery-periphery" rapports it is very important the fact that the satellites weren't exactly equals, that there existed a "periphery of the periphery", a certain hierarchy inside the periphery. This hierarchical structure is tightly connected to the idea of "getting closer" to the centre. This "getting closer" does not refer to space. It refers to having power, having access to certain information, knowledge about the process of taking decisions, the purposes and the future plans of the Centre. The quantity and the quality of the information left to arrive from the Centre to the Periphery were based on the Center's trust in that particular country. By loosing the Center's trust in 1968, Romania was going to improve the position from this point of view only after 1972 (Katalin Miklossy, Kikimora Publications, Helsinki, 2003, p.127-132). But in the light of new archive documents we can see that this appreciation is valable only from the official and public point of view. That was what

everybody knew at that time, because in the backstage Romania was still heard by the Soviet Union. At the meeting of the Political Committee of the Warsaw Treaty Organization countries, Berlin, December 2nd, 1970, Romania demonstrated that it had at that time a real capacity to negotiate with the Soviet Union from the positions of equality, that it could make her position acceptable by the Soviet part during negotiations, that the Soviet Union considered at that moment very important to take into consideration Romania's positions, seeking a compromise capable to please her (The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the CC of RCP from 03.12.1970, concerning the Political Committee of the WTO countries, Berlin, December 2nd, 1970, ANIC, CC of RCP, Section: Office, File no 110/1970, pages 2-13, Archive no 2484/28.12.1970).

The consequences of the Czech events upon the Romanian-Soviet relations must not be over appreciated. Romania had chosen long time ago its independent and autonomous path, and its position towards the 1968 events is according to that choice and not the other way around, this position to negatively influence its relations with the Soviet Union.

Conclusions

Why the Czech events did not affect negatively the détente process? Some could argue that in 1968 the process had already begun and the events from Czechoslovakia could not deeply and negatively affect the East-West détente since the progresses on that direction were already important. Others could say that after the beginning of the process, there was no event capable to stop its internal and independent evolution. This article has tried to demonstrate that it was not the case. Once again the international politics has been dictated by the characteristics of the Soviet-American relations. There was no event capable to affect their common decisions and their common interests. In 1968, the Soviet Union and the United States have decided that it was in their best common interest the begun détente process to continue, no matter what. Despite all the worries expressed by other socialist or capitalist countries, before or after the invasion, the unbelievable Czech crisis was not capable to shudder from the basis the East-West relations which were entering by that time on the path of détente. The events from 1956 and then those from 1968 did not make the Western world to take a strong attitude against the Soviet practice, beyond the level of declarations. These facts demonstrate ones again that in essence the agreements on the spheres of influence were after all still valid.

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