

**LURENȚIU-CRISTIAN DUMITRU, ROMANIA AND THE
WARSAW TREATY 1955-1968. OBEDIENCE AND
DISOBEDIENCE, “CAROL I” NATIONAL DEFENSE
UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING HOUSE, BUCHAREST, 2009, 570
PAGES (ROMÂNIA ȘI TRATATUL DE LA VARȘOVIA 1955-
1968. OBEDIENȚĂ ȘI NESUPUNERE, EDITURA
UNIVERSITĂȚII NAȚIONALE DE APĂRARE „CAROL I”,
BUCUREȘTI, 2009, 570 PAGINI)**

Alexandru PURCĂRUȘ¹

The Warsaw Pact was an alliance *sui generis*, a tool which Moscow has aimed to counterbalance NATO and control politically and military the subordination of the satellite states from its European sphere of influence. It can be said that the sinuous and unsteady evolution of the Warsaw Pact was rather imposed by the dynamic relations between Moscow and its allies, than the reference to the enemy.

Perhaps for this reason, the interest in studying this particular Cold War alliance maintained after its dissolution, formalized in 1991. Thus, the activity of identifying and publishing sources, long time classified, was accompanied by an analytical effort, with notable results in the field of scientific research.

The year 2009 is not an exception in this regard. In this context, it must be mentioned the excellent and impressive volume of documents created by Mioara Anton, *Romania and the Warsaw Treaty. The Conferences of Foreign Ministers and their Deputies (1966-1991)*, Alpha MDN Publishing House, Bucharest, 2009 (*România și Tratatul de la Varșovia. Conferințele miniștrilor Afacerilor Externe și ale adjuncților lor (1966-1991)*, Editura Alpha MDN, București, 2009). It is also worth noting that the Central Intelligence Agency posted on its website in November, a collection of articles published in Soviet military journals between 1961 and 1984, covering various aspects of the alliance's military strategy set up and sustained by the Soviet Union.

In addition to these sources, the speciality literature of the theme has also been enriched at the interpretative level by substantial and salutary contribution of the historian Laurențiu-Cristian Dumitru. From the very beginning it must be said

that his book comes into focus by accuracy and balance, which recommends it as a reference point in the literature of the subject.

The author proposed to present, from Bucharest's perspective, this dual nature of the Warsaw Pact, in order to discern, as he confesses, why the Romanian state abandoned the attitude of unconditional loyalty to Moscow, for one of temperate "dissidence". In order to do this, he resorted to "a systemic and integrated approach that refers to political, military, diplomatic, economic, geopolitical and geostrategic matters".

His work was based on the most important Romanian and foreign contributions in the field, on the memoirs and journals of relevant actors and, especially on consistent investigation of national archives (Central Historical National Archives, Romanian Military Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives). The unhackneyed information allows the author to provide personal assumptions and relevant comments or to reveal connections between different events and processes, which makes this work distinguishable from others similar, that have failed, unfortunately, under the umbrella of compilation.

The structure of the book is harmonious and judicious. The first two chapters are intended for a detailed explanation of the international context, the causes and conditions that led to the Soviet Union's decision to set up a mirror image of NATO, special attention being paid to the organization of the conference for establishing the Warsaw Pact and the treaty's detailed presentation. The other two chapters analyzes the gradual transformation of the Romanian state into an Eastern bloc's maverick, revealing why and how it moved from its supporting attitude regarding the Soviet intervention against the Hungarian revolution of 1956, to the harsh condemnation of the Soviets' and of their allies' political and military action in Czechoslovakia, on August 1968.

The author describes in detail the beginning of the Cold War, debating its origins and both Moscow and Washington's responsibilities in dividing the world between the capitalist party and the communist one. The competition between the two superpowers, United States and Soviet Union, is also analysed in the light of each power's perceptions, insisting upon the explanation of their security concepts. In fact, this section of the paper is a careful radiography of the international relations during the period between the end of World War II and 1955, focusing on the turning points: the launch of Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan and the creation of Cominform (1947), the Berlin blockade and airlift during the period between June 1948-May 1949, NATO's setting up (1949), the Korean War (1950-1953), Stalin's death (1953) and Geneva Conference (1955).

Moreover, Moscow's arguments to create a military alliance on May 14, 1955 are outlined. The acceptance of the Federal Republic of Germany in NATO

(May 9, 1955), the conclusion of the State Treaty with Austria (May 15, 1955), which for Moscow meant losing the legal right to maintain troops in Romania and Hungary, were merely two of Kremlin's reasons. The author considers, thereby sharing an opinion that has already been expressed in historiography, that, in addition, the Soviets wanted to improve their international status, but also to neutralize NATO, pretending the simultaneous abolition of the two blocks. Finally, the Warsaw Pact was a mean of action for the Soviet Union to exercise control over the states found in its European sphere of influence, but "less than a means of strengthening their military capabilities" as the author notes.

The assessment of political and military organization of the Warsaw Treaty allows the author to consider the specifics of this asymmetric military alliance, dominated by the authoritarian Soviet Union: "The fact that for the entire period of the Warsaw Pact existence, the Supreme Commander (the designation of Commander-in-chief will be set at the Political Consultative Committee Meeting in Budapest, on March 1969) and the Chief of Staff of the United Armed Forces were marshals and Soviet generals, shows by itself nature of the political and military relationships established between the Soviet Union and the satellite states. Although fitted with, the rotation system for these posts had never worked in practice". Moreover, when the Polish Minister of Defense, Marian Spychalski, rose this issue, Soviet Union's marshal, Ivan S. Konev, the first Supreme Commander of the United Armed Forces replied harshly: "What do you think, that we will do here a somewhat of NATO?"

Given this reality, between 1955-1958, Romania has shown a total obedience, proving to be one of the most loyal allies of Moscow, especially during the Hungarian revolution of 1956, a moment which marshal Anatoly I. Gribkov considers it, in a chapter of his memoirs, as "the first probation of the Warsaw Pact's thoroughness". The subservient behavior of the leaders from Bucharest decisively influenced the Soviet decision to recall the troops dispatched on the Romanian territory. In this respect, the author considers that "the decision of the Soviet Union to withdraw troops from Romania was taken in successive stages, over the period between 1955-1958, the personal involvement of Nikita S. Khrushchev representing the most important aspect in making this decision". Paradoxically, this was the way that created the premises for the communist regime in Bucharest to emancipate from Moscow's control.

The assertion of the Romanian foreign policy's new course is portrayed scrupulous and expressive, the author focusing on Romania's attitude towards the events such as the German problem, Soviet-Chinese ideological and political dissensions or Cuban missile crisis. There are also broadly related the differences within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), which prefaced the Declaration of April 1964, according to which – says the historian – "the regime

in Bucharest elevated the promotion and assertion of independence and national sovereignty to the level of a state policy". There aren't neglected either the Romanian-Soviet disputes regarding the reform of the Warsaw Pact and the explicit commitment of Bucharest to the "battle of statutes" between 1965-1966. Simultaneously, there are exposed the changes generated in the economic and cultural relations between Romania and the West, being outlined measures such as establishment of Romanian-West-German diplomatic relations, in 1967, the denial to align of the common position of the communist bloc in order to condemn the Israel as the aggressor during the "Six-Day War" and maintaining diplomatic relations with this country.

As expected, the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968 and the response of Romania enjoys a privileged attention. "Prague Spring" is thoroughly reviewed, the author noticing Nicolae Ceaușescu's ambiguous position, who supported the separation of Czechoslovakia from the control of Moscow, but was not interested in the progress of political democratization process in that country. A substantial space is devoted to Soviet and other four state members of the Warsaw Pact military operation (Bulgaria, Poland, German Democratic Republic and Hungary), which materialized the Brezhnev Doctrine of "limited sovereignty".

Bucharest's unequivocal disapproval of the invasion represents the pick of the policy of disobeying Soviet Union, a reality that entitles the author to characterize as "unreasonable" the statement of some historians who credit the idea that this move had Kremlin's approval in order to produce a dissident of the alliance, who could capitalize the sympathy and the confidence of the West.

Moreover, the author argues that Moscow did not intend to attack Romania, during, or immediately after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, stressing that "the policy pursued by Ceaușescu did not challenge the communist regime or the stability of the Warsaw Pact". In his view, Nicolae Ceaușescu reacted disproportionately to this hypothetical danger, in order to obtain the support of the international community and gain freedom of movement in the relations with Moscow. But he avoided, through concessions, the generation of an irreversible break with the Warsaw Pact.

The historian comments extensively on the impact of the Czechoslovak crisis on the Bucharest's leadership. There are mentioned measures such as the refusal to accept foreign troops on the national territory or to grant the right of overflight to the foreign aircrafts carrying troops and ordnance or the decision that Romania's armed forces should not participate in exercises with troops outside the national territory, but only to command and staff applications without troops. Under the same rationing entered the cessation of the Romanian officers and

generals' training in the Soviet Union and the marginalization of those who had studied in Moscow.

All this culminated with the setting up of a national military doctrine, which imposed the concept of “the entire people’s war”, which led, *inter alia*, to the establishment of “patriotic guards”, having role and missions of paramilitary forces. Also, there have been significant changes in the structure, facilities, equipment and training of the national defense system and they started to build up a national defense industry. An evolution that determines the author to state that Romania's *de facto* membership in the military structures of the Warsaw Pact “was voided of substance”. Moreover, the communist Romania was counting on Western and Chinese support to neutralize any possible pressures coming from the Soviet Union. In addition, the leadership in Bucharest refused to participate in a possible “preventive war” triggered by Moscow against NATO. “In this way – the author concludes – all Soviet military doctrine became ineffective for the Romanian armed forces, since the Bucharest was underlying and applying their own national military doctrine”. This attitude did not intend to deny the Warsaw Pact, but getting real autonomy from Moscow, for subordination to be replaced by coordination as the basis for bilateral relations.

The clear and articulated exposure, the convincing topic, sober and understable style, gives the book strength and makes its reading enjoyable and educative, not only for researchers and specialists, but also for the general public interested in knowing the past.