

August 17, 1968

**Stenographic transcript of meeting of the Executive
Committee of the Central Committee of the
Romanian Communist Party**

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Summary:

Ceausescu relates his recent meeting with Dubcek in Prague in August 1968. His talks with Dubcek focused primarily on the events that had unfolded in Czechoslovakia over the last several months.

Original Language:

Romanian

Contents:

Translation - English

TRANSCRIPT of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party 17 August 1968 Participants : comrades Nicolae Ceausescu, Gheorghe Apostol, Alexandru Bârladeanu, Emil Bodnaras, Chivu Stoica, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Virgil Trofin, Ilie Verdet, Maxim Berghianu, Florian Danalache, Constantin Dragan, Ianos Fazekas, Leonte Rautu, Vasile Vâlcu, Stefan Voitec, Iosif Banc, Petre Blajovici, Dumitru Coliu, Emil Draganescu, Petre Lupu, Manea Manescu, Dumitru Popa, Gheorghe Stoica. Invitees : Mihai Dalea, Vasile Patilinet. □Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu : □Comrades, I want to inform you about the way the visit [to Czechoslovakia] took place, and about the results obtained in the discussions with the Czechoslovak comrades. □The reception was good. In general, the population met us well and after all of the speeches, although the press could not transmit everything, this thing was apparent. □We began the talks. On the first day, [Alexander] Dubcek spoke for more than an hour. He informed us about the way their activities had unfolded from the January Plenary Session up to now. He also informed us about the meetings they had with the Soviet comrades and the other parties (You will find the details in the stenogram). □Generally speaking, the evolution of the events in Czechoslovakia is known to us. They admit that, eventually, at Cierna and Bratislava they managed to reach the reported agreement, but it seems to us that this agreement is not exactly an understanding which bodes well for cooperation since some renewal [of negotiations] and pressures have already begun. They pointed out that their current main concern is to prepare for the proceedings of the congress to be held on September 9, as they had already established. All of the decisions are to be made in a collective spirit. They also told us about other difficulties they had, about some demonstrations of antisocialist elements, some attempts on the part of the Social-Democratic Party, which are insignificant enough, but are still being made. They told us, however, that there is unity within the framework of the National Front, and the two parties they collaborate with agree with the orientation of their activity, and - in their opinion - things are going well. They thanked us for the help given to them and for the stance taken by our party, government, and country in the difficult circumstances they were in. We presented to them the position adopted by our party after the Warsaw meeting. We showed them that we, too, are of the opinion that it is good that at Cierna and Bratislava an agreement was reached, and expressed our solidarity and support for the fulfillment of the tasks they have. On the morning of the second day the talks referred to the bilateral issues of economic collaboration; we expressed our willingness to institute broad collaboration in the economic field. The representatives of the other two parties in the National Front, the Socialist Party and the Popular Party, also took part in the meeting. The talks were held in an atmosphere of complete understanding. There was no problem. We signed the treaty, and drew up a communiqué that will be published in the press of our two countries tomorrow (it has about six pages with double-space lines). Though initially the opinion was expressed that the communiqué should be shorter, of only two pages, in the long run the groups of the two countries that worked on the communiqué agreed that it should be longer. What I would like to say in addition, something that not even the press was able to relate because it is impossible to understand it from the press reports, is the atmosphere that we felt within the ranks of the population, including that at the meeting that took place at the AVIA Enterprise yesterday. The atmosphere was very good. We found that [Alexander] Dubcek enjoys authority, support, and trust everywhere, and - in general - the population and the workers back the orientation and the course taken by the Czechoslovak government. From this standpoint our opinion is different [from the Soviet one ?] This opinion is, I think, the opinion of all of us. In effect, it is incomprehensible to us [to find such support for Dubcek] where [if] a counterrevolution exists. We met people, we shook hands with them, they were happy, they were declaring, a special manifestation [of goodwill] towards] Romania. Nowhere did we see demonstrations that might offer one food for thought in the sense that some protests might exist there. Of course, there are some problems, there are some groups of young anarchists against whom [the Czechoslovak leadership] took a definite stand. Even Alexander Dubcek in his speech yesterday took a stance against such manifestations. The fact that some states of affairs, some negative aspects of the relationships between the socialist states are criticized is true, but in a form and with an essence inoffensive enough. Consequently, one cannot even say that there are states of affairs that might offer food for thought to some extent, let alone draw the conclusion that there is a counterrevolutionary situation. Because we know what a counterrevolutionary

situation means, because we worked in conditions of illegality, and in the difficult conditions after 23 August, and we know what such a situation means. Certainly, it is true that the brutal manifestations against the Czechoslovaks gave rise to certain resentments, and [the Czechoslovaks] told us that [previously] they had had to work a great deal with the population to improve their attitude towards the Germans, and that now they have to start again from scratch to do the same thing. Of course, [the Czechoslovaks] recognize that - from this viewpoint - an atmosphere was created due to the interference in their internal affairs, and due to the position adopted, which - instead of improving the situation - caused the worsening thereof. Neither our newspapermen comrades have ever seen such a situation because we have had eight newspapermen in Czechoslovakia for nearly three weeks now, and they have not seen such demonstrations, either. There really are some things, and they exist because of the fact that the Soviets did not want to withdraw their troops from Czechoslovakia. Such manifestations also exist because of the fact that [the Soviets] have a lot of people carrying out organized activity against the Czechoslovaks on Czechoslovakia's territory. These things are known, too. We did not visit the whole country. We were only in Prague. However, Prague is a very big workers' center, an important center. We can appreciate that the atmosphere is good there. The wish and the preoccupations exist not only of the leadership but also of the population to ensure the implementation of the party's program. In our discussions with them, emphasis was laid on the development of a good cooperation between our countries and parties for the purpose of underscoring the necessity of acting towards ironing out the divergences among the socialist countries in Europe and, especially, among all of the socialist countries in the world, of trying not to take actions that might worsen the situation. It goes without saying that this is also dependent upon the other socialist countries, not only upon us. We could ascertain the fact that they realized [the situation] and acted accordingly, and we went there just to meet them halfway, we tried to discuss and find together the best ways of acting. That is why we appreciate that the discussions with them, the meetings we had with them, long enough in comparison with the little information we had, were very very long [useful?]. Aside from these [discussions and meetings], each of us - the members of the delegation - held talks with various Czechoslovak comrades. In the meetings in public, which were very numerous indeed, especially yesterday, we presented our position, our point of view, which was very well received. As far as I know, both the meeting and the press conference were aired on television. At the factory, people understood us perfectly. They did not even wait to hear the translation to the end. At the press conference, of course, the newspapermen did not raise any special issues. They raised a few questions in connection with the treaty. Here we tried to follow the line of not giving a reason for someone to say that we used Prague [to display] our divergences. There we underlined what we deemed must be done; naturally, we had the intention of helping the Czechoslovak press understand that there was no point in their going after speculations; consequently, when winding up my speech, I told them that our task was to contribute towards strengthening unity. They were very satisfied with the way the press conference proceeded. I understood this from both what I read in the "Mlada Fronta" newspaper and from discussions held with the Czechoslovak comrades. We feel that, in general, the manner we held the discussions and acted in the public meetings was both a help to the Czechoslovak comrades and a contribution to the strengthening of the friendship between us, and - at the same time - made it possible for us to find ways of contributing to the elimination of divergences, and to the strengthening of the unity of the socialist countries. In fact, this is the very thing we intended to do. It is with this end in view that we made the visit, and I think we acted well and managed to follow this course. Of course, [the Czechoslovak comrades] have three more months until the date of the congress. They have to carry out a huge amount of work and need peace and quiet in this period, but it seems that the Soviet comrades do not quite feel like letting them go about their work quietly. Last night, at our reception, I talked to the Soviet ambassador in Czechoslovakia and told him a few things. I told him that it would be better if we let them alone so that they could make preparations for their congress. He said that I was right. He also said that he liked our press conference. Well, comrades, that is about all I have to say as regards the issues. There are no special issues, there are only things I wanted to inform you about. Maybe the comrades have

questions to ask or the other comrades, members of the delegation, have something to add. Cde. Janos Fazekas :Comrade Ceausescu, what is unity like under the current [Czechoslovak] leadership? Cde. Nicolae Ceausescu :We did not manage to concern ourselves with [the issue of] unity under the current leadership, in point of fact we did not intend to do so, either. Of course, the comrades with whom we discussed this issue gave us the impression that there was complete unity. There are those there, however, such as this [character] Svetska, who is the editor-in-chief of the newspaper, [a person] very difficult to work with, and other such elements are certain to exist. We sought, however, to underscore the necessity of unity. I did the same thing in the toast I proposed to the Czechoslovak comrades yesterday, at the dinner party hosted by Alexander Dubcek. He proposed that we make the statement [about the necessity of unity] in a form that could not be construed as an interference in their internal affairs. [The Czechoslovak comrades] thanked us and appreciated that we had done this thing well. While we were there, we received a delegation of the newly-established Romanian-Czechoslovak [Friendship] Association. Yesterday, when I received the delegation, they were quite thrilled. We also received a delegation of the Association of the Former Underground Resistance. Apart from this, we received a number of telegrams and letters. I learned that telegrams and letters were received at home, too. Generally speaking, therefore, all of these aspects show that both these organizations and all of the others have adopted an active position of support because they came to us of their own accord. The conclusion can be drawn that the visit was good, even very good, with good results as regards the development of the relationships between our countries, as regards the appreciation of the current situation, and the necessity of acting in such a manner that an improvement of the relationships between the socialist countries can be achieved. We will have to continue helping the Czechoslovak comrades. We must think hard and find forms of rendering support to them, not directly, but in general and to have others understand that these people want sincerely to solve their problems. They told us that they had had thousands and thousands of people, even from among party activists, who had suffered repressions; some of them had been executed and this state of affairs had influenced the situation there, and that they were making their best efforts and were determined not to revert to their old ways, as they were required to do, since what was required of them at Warsaw was that instead of using political activity to solve problems they were to go back to repressive activities. This is an essential fact and it seems that some of them are afraid of what is going on at home and try to raise terror to the rank of Marxist-Leninist principle. And, therefore, supporting the Czechoslovak comrades is an issue of our whole movement, it is an issue of contributing towards the elimination of a number of states of affairs that were extremely detrimental to both our movement and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and - by doing away with the said states of affairs - to contribute to the restoring of the unity of the communist and workers's movement. The issue here is a confrontation between two conceptions, comrades, between a conception that wants to maintain - as a principle of solving the internal issues - terror and repression and looks upon the party as a repression apparatus, and the conception based on the idea that the issues must be solved democratically, by way of conviction, so that the people can be attracted to solving the issues of their country and forging their victory. For this reason, we feel that - when coming up against such a situation, which is a special issue - we cannot be simple spectators, and we have not been simple spectators up to now, either, since what we have done over recent years is in line with this direction. We told them that we knew how to solve our issues, not in a spectacular way, but [?] we prevented the appearance of mass pressures. Cde. Gheorghe Stoica :I would like to lay emphasis only on one fact, which was made salient by the Czechoslovak comrades after the presentation and briefing made by comrade Ceausescu, namely the fact that we did not let lots of issues accumulate, but found ways of solving them, and such issues actually did occur in our country. It was this fact that the Czechoslovak comrades underscored, too, and it is to the credit of our party that it knew how to duly take measures to prevent this fact happening, and this aspect was especially underlined by the Czechoslovak comrades. In point of fact, all of our actions speak in this sense. We too had deficiencies, we too had deviations from duty, but we succeeded in resolving them. It is for this very reason that the issues there, although there were persons who signaled the fact that

explosive material was accumulating, were not solved in due time. Undoubtedly, [the Czechoslovak party] is in a position to have the issues there under control, and carry them through. I would like to say one more thing about the special activity carried out by Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu, who in this whole period gave his utmost. In truth, from morning till night, he worked actively to defend the just ideas and performed a task that really deserves special appreciation. I think that all of the comrades will agree that the work of Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu deserves special appreciation as the whole burden of work rested with him. The other members of the delegation had less work to do. He bore, however, the brunt of this work, and now I, too, realize that this thing was not so easy. I attended a press conference for the first time, and if here you do not pay special attention to what you say, unpleasant things may happen because such a conference is similar to a boxing match. Cde. Emil Bodnarus :The Czechoslovak comrades remained with the sentiment that the Romanian are friends they can always rely upon in this difficult situation. They actually said that they have not received such massive support from anybody until now. Cde. Chivu Stoica : Comrades, in my opinion, what the Romanian delegation did [in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic] is not so simple. For this reason, I think that we should write down in the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee the way our party's delegation, and chiefly Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu, fulfilled the task assigned to them by the party. (All of the comrades agree). Cde. Nicolae Ceausescu :Comrades, I think that we can now adjourn our meeting.