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Minutes of the Meeting of the Romanian Executive Committee Regarding US President Richard Nixon's Visit to Romania (2-3 August), and the Discussions that Took Place on that Occasion

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Summary:

Minutes from a meeting of the RCP CC Executive Committee, discussing a meeting between Romanian officials and Nixon's delegation from the United States. They discuss how Nixon proposed they come to some agreement on a peaceful resolution in Vietnam, guaranteeing South Vietnamese sovereignty and democratic elections. On this, both parties agree. They also briefly discuss American industrial and scientific progress.

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Transcript

of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the RCP CC

4 August 1969

[Excerpts]

[...]

Cde. Nicolae Ceausescu: We thought of making a short presentation of Nixon's visit and the discussions we had.

In regards to the visit, you are familiar with the way it took place, so I can't tell you anything more about it.

The discussion took place on two occasions due to the short time available. Comrade Maurer represented us in the discussion of the more important issues, while Kissinger represented the Americans. Other participants from our side were the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Trade and from their side several of Nixon's deputies and counselors who discussed in greater detail economic issues and the development of relations in the fields of culture and science.

During the discussions we had with Nixon, we tackled two main sets of issues: the first one involved bilateral relations while the second dealt with international issues.

[...]

Regarding more general international affairs issues, he [Nixon] began with a broad statement regarding his visit to Romania, saying that he considered this visit to represent an expression of the American wish to develop relations with Romania and other socialist states and that he did not come to Romania with the intention of contributing to a further deterioration of relations between Romania and other socialist countries, but on the contrary, he wished for Romania to have good relations with the other socialist countries. He stated that they understood that Romania had a different social regime, but that they were determined to respect Romania's independence and social regime, and that they wished to develop relations under these conditions.

I told him that if we had believed that this visit would have as an ulterior motive the deterioration of relations between Romania and the other socialist states, we would have not agreed to the visit.

He subsequently stated: "let's talk like we did when I wasn't president." In fact, he is a man who does not show disapproval when told things he does not agree with or when he has a different point of view, like others do.

Therefore, first of all, I would have told him not to come if I had had this impression. Then, I told him that we also view this visit in the spirit of cohabitation between us and states with other forms of social regimes.

In the discussion of international issues, more general issues were discussed, in a more theoretical setting [pe principii inalte] so to speak, regarding the principles that relations between states should be based on; the prospect of the development of

international life; we spoke more broadly of principles such as the equality of rights, sovereignty, and noninterference in domestic affairs; we tackled the fact that the US supports a set of reactionary, retrograde, and feudal regimes, and we do not understand why the United States of America, which was itself supported by France in the fight for national freedom and considered this as fair, is supporting today reactionary regimes.

In principle, he stated that they, too, believe that relations should be based on mutual respect, on respect for sovereignty, and on the right of every country and nation to develop independently, and that they are prepared to, and wish to, respect these rights of every nation.

He spoke to us about the visit to India and Pakistan, about the concerns he had regarding the conflict between India and Pakistan, and conveyed that they were making use of extensive resources for arming themselves even though they had a low standard of living and could make better use of their resources to develop their economies. However, the situation was rather complicated and he could not see signs that the conditions existed for these problems to be resolved. And so he got to China.

He asserted that according to the American view, the People's Republic of China leads an aggressive policy in its relations with neighbors and referred particularly to the border conflict with India and Chinese intervention in Korea.

Here we brought up history and further discussed the issues. Kissinger, being a historian, stated that there were no instances in India's history when it led an aggressive policy. Here the Korean issue was also raised. I told them that the Chinese intervened there under special conditions, during war, but that after the armistice they withdrew, proving that the Chinese were not interested in territorial gains.

I explained to him that, in our opinion, it was necessary to renounce the policy of refusing to recognize China and admit it to the United Nations, since this policy did not help in solving international problems, considering not only issues in Asia, but even broader issues, a point with which he agreed. He asserted that in 25 years China would have a billion inhabitants and would certainly be a great power.

In this context, he also expressed his concern in regard to the border conflict between China and the Soviet Union, underlining that the main reason they were particularly concerned was that a conflict between China and the Soviet Union would not limit itself to these two countries and would have grave consequences. Thus, they were worried by the possibility of an escalation of this conflict.

At this point, I explained our position and told him that it would be truly serious if the situation escalated into a conflict, but that we believed things would not get to that point, and that if anything was to be done, it should be finding a way to avoid such a situation.

I say here what Nixon said and I don't know what he truly thinks, but in any case, this was his point of view and his analysis of the situation.

Since we are here-I am not following the actual order of discussion-I will move to the Vietnam issue. In fact, this topic took us the whole morning yesterday. The Vietnam issue occupied a very important place in our discussions. He broadly explained the point of view of the United States. Surely, it is not the history [of its involvement that matters], since we agreed that it is not necessary to talk about history, but of how to conceive a solution to this problem. He declared several times that one of his goals is to bring this war to an end. He explained that they felt that progress had been made but that they did not manage to start actual talks with North Vietnam and with the

National Liberation Front, and that this worried him, given that they would have to reevaluate the situation to see what they can do next if within the next three months-until November when there will be one year since the cessation of the bombardments-they would not manage to reach a resolution. He said that they were ready to withdraw their troops within a year, under the condition that North Vietnam withdraws its troops and a newly elected, internationally-controlled government was accepted.

Of course, the discussion was more complex and I don't want to get into any details, but we asked questions. We explained our point of view and the fact that we understood that North Vietnam was ready and wished to reach a solution through negotiations, but that this involved the cessation of the war, the withdrawal of troops and putting together a coalition government, as the National Liberation Front demanded. There was a longer discussion surrounding this topic with questions and answers.

What mainly resulted from this is that in the end, it is possible to have discussions and the solutions can be diverse, but the main point is finding a solution. Their main concern is that these discussions will take into consideration the existence of [South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van] Thieu, the government in the South. He talked about a commission and said that, in any case, they did not interpret this as abandoning the Thieu government and that they definitely wished-and he repeated this even during the meal-to end this war, but on reasonable terms that would not harm American interests or reputation.

Cde. Ion Gheorghe Maurer: Generally, he stated that the government would definitely be the result of elections, but they would not accept a solution that would eliminate Thieu without popular consent.

[...]

Ceausescu: To what extent he will go all the way, we will have to see.

We explained to him that, according to the contacts we made with United States allies, we also noticed in their case a wish to find ways to sort out relations and build up European security and we consider that this would be very important for the future development of relations, by leading to a lasting peace-as they say they desire.

These were the issues approached in our discussions.

The following could be said as a general conclusion:

First, it was a manifestation of the American interest in developing relations with Romania. He expressed several times that they truly wished that this visit would lead to the growth and progress of relations between our countries. Then, he expressed his desire to expand relations with all other socialist countries of Europe and even revealed his wish and intention to visit other European socialist states. During the exchange with the Bulgarian and Yugoslav ambassadors he actually stated that he hoped to have the opportunity to visit these countries. He also told [Soviet Ambassador to Romania Aleksandr] Basov that he wanted to visit the Soviet Union. Basov wanted by all means to find out when, but did not manage to get an answer. Overall, I left with the impression that the United States was contemplating a policy that would create conditions for the improvement of relations with the socialist countries and, while placing relations with the Soviet Union at the forefront, it wishes to simultaneously develop relations with the other socialist countries, a correct position in my opinion. I believe that if these opportunities will be used wisely we will have a lot to gain, generally vis-à-vis relations with socialist countries and world

peace.

Another conclusion that I drew from these discussions—from the official ones and from the ones on the road and at the dinner—it seems that they are preoccupied to a certain extent with reorienting their policies in a way that would help them find solutions to disengage militarily from Vietnam and avoid engaging in similar military actions in the future. Of course, it is probably not only his position but also the position of America's leading circles, which are beginning to understand that this military intervention strategy has no prospects, that it has not had any positive results so far and that in the future it is unlikely to provide any results at all. In fact during the general conversation—in 1967 and now—I made the following comment: "The US is definitely the leading power now; but in the future there will be others." He asked: "And China?" I told him: "yes, China, too." I explained to him that this situation was not permanent, a fact that he agreed with. He said that they were of the same opinion, that circumstances were forcing them to renounce their old ways and look toward a new approach. Of course, this does not mean that they will fully abandon their policies, but that they will simply look for new means that will bring better results than the military approach. I believe that this fact is not without importance and proves that they are approaching the situation wisely and realistically.

I think that we can conclude that Nixon's visit to Romania was good and useful, not only for the expansion of relations between Romania and the United States, but also because it contributed to the creation of a better environment for cooperation, proving that it is possible for two countries with distinct social orders and size to develop good relations if they abide by certain principles we know and practice, a fact confirmed several times by both sides. They even publicly confirmed this fact. We believe that in the context of the current international environment, this visit has a broader significance that is not limited to Romania. It seems that the United States understands it the same way and confers on it the same significance.

These were broadly the issues we discussed. If Comrade Maurer has anything else to add or if he has any other questions...

Maurer: I have nothing to add.

Cde. Ianos Fazekas: I propose to agree on this.

Cde. Gheorghe Stoica: I fully agree with the tone set by these discussions and I think we can congratulate Comrade Ceausescu and Comrade Maurer who achieved these results. Of course, imperialism remains imperialism.

However, we should not forget that Vietnam taught the Americans that it is better to take the chestnuts [out of the fire] with someone else's hand.

Ceausescu: They talked more about the fact that the third goal of American foreign policy was supporting developing countries.

He told us that there were 35,000 killed and 200,000 wounded in Vietnam, if the translation was correct.

Maurer: Yes, it is true, indeed; they have 200,000 wounded.

Stoica: It is very interesting, now they realize they cannot go on this way.

Ceausescu: They are concerned with the state of affairs in Asia and Africa, or the

countries left behind, and it is in this context that he was looking at the one billion Chinese. I told him that this was not only about the one billion Chinese, but also the Indians, Pakistani, even the Japanese, who are all Asian and who will, always, remember this situation and show solidarity. It seems like they are starting to think more about these realities, not so much [about] today, but what things will be like tomorrow, and thus look at things from the point of view of the future and the changes that will intervene.

They are surrounded by many scholars and scientists who think [about tomorrow] and make all kinds of calculations. Generally, all of them were young. They are all people from university environments who evaluate, who compare; they cannot ignore all these [facts] and the future.

He started telling us what things could be like when China's population would reach one billion and then I told him that there would actually be even more [in number] since the other Asians should also be counted.

Stoica: I suggested to Comrade Dălea to forward the toast Cde. Ceausescu made during lunch, which is not without significance.

Ceausescu: One thing that I would like to point out is that generally, we were able to discuss most things openly with Nixon. In the toast I also mentioned Vietnam, however, without mentioning that I discussed this topic with him. He knew beforehand what I would say during the toast about this and he did not say anything, but stayed and listened.

Naturally, they openly expressed their opinions as well. They simply concluded that this was the situation and that nothing more could be done.

As you saw, I took them to the market. They were quite lacking in the haughtiness that characterizes so many other leaders, even though he [Nixon] is the president of a great country, not only capitalist, because to be honest, today, from an economic standpoint, it is the most powerful country in the world. He did not come as if he was representing a great power, but went to the market and shook hands with all the grocers. From the perspective of social origin, he has a better background than some communists. His wife is a miner's daughter.

Cde. Dumitru Coliu: At the lunch, I sat next to [Assistant Secretary of State Joseph J.] Sisco, and during discussions with him, he told us about his life, and he told us that: "You know, if I lived in Romania, I would be the best communist." He said his father was a peasant.

Ceausescu: You know, they developed in a different way, they do not have the same feudal mentality of a bureaucratic liege [birocratie boiereasca], that you can find with some communists. Of course, here is not only a question of people, but rather a question of the changes that are taking place in American society. The fact that they landed on the Moon, that they reached such results in scientific exploration, cannot be without repercussions in the way people think. There, 70 percent of the population is made up of the working class. They are the most industrialized country. And, on top of that, the percent of intellectuals also grew, and these people cannot stop thinking, cannot be without influence.

I had a meeting with that group of American professors. There were about 50 professors there.

Stoica: All of them are simple people.

Ceausescu: I was looking at them, you would not believe that they were professors, based on how they dressed. Thus, from this point of view, we can learn some things from the imperialists. They were very modest, they asked questions, I answered them, at the end they applauded. I gave them that interview, the one you read. Of course, it's difficult to convince them that they need to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. They understand socialism, but not the way it's manifesting here, or in the Soviet Union, or China. It is, after all, difficult for them to grasp it. This is not understood even by the people who live there [in the US]. As a matter of fact, they will never reach socialism, if they continue with this [Western] mentality.

Cde. Leonte Rautu: The communists do not exist in the US.

Cde. Ilie Verdet: Kissinger stated that at least half [of the CPUS] are members of the security services [FBI], and do not worry that their life is not secure. They only do one thing: report on one another; some report to the police, some report to the party.

Ceausescu: That's about it. Many called him "Comrade Nixon," including the radio announcer. The Americans liked the buildings they saw in the neighborhoods we visited.

Rautu: It is a very important success.

Ceausecu: We will inform our friends about these discussions. I already informed Basov, it took me an hour and a half. I told him all these things. Even Basov said that [the Americans] are straightforward people [oameni simpli].

That's it. The session is adjourned.