

“OVIDIUS” UNIVERSITY OF CONSTANȚA

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DOMAIN: HISTORY

ROMANIA IN COMECON
FROM ECONOMIC DICTATE TO EMANCIPATION
(1949-1964)

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SUMMARY

The problem of creating integrated economic, political, cultural systems concern both the world of politics and the one of academics, especially that they existed in different regions of planet. Such structures were organized either as empires during Ancient and middle Ages, either as free will associations of sovereign states during modern and contemporary period. In the mid-twentieth century, the bipolar equation receives two such entities: the European Economic Community and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, which modeled for the two divided worlds of the Cold War. The analysis, the research and the study of such structures has generated a well-developed literature in the West and a one under consolidation in the East.

The scope of the thesis falls into a time frame that covered the early functioning period of this economic-political organization: 1949-1964. I have focused on the events that had followed since 1949, the organization's founding year, and I have completed the research with the disclosing of "*Declaration of PMR in April 1964*"¹. Choosing the analyzing timeframe was not accidental – it corresponds to the first period of communist government in Romania, characterized by the vision of Gheorghiu-Dej. The process of international events had profound implications for the reorganization of Romanian society and the timeframe to be studied is more than relevant to capture the whole leadership metamorphosis of PCR, whose heads had turned from Moscow's puppets to representatives of the national interest for the Romanian people. The confrontation deployment plan was essentially economic and Romania's participation in the work of Comecon accurately captured all those tense moments. I considered it appropriate to choose as investigated time only this period, primarily due to the large number of information sources, especially to documents held in the archives of various Romanian institutions. Any attempt to extend the period studied, given the relatively short time available to finalize the thesis, would certainly lead to a shallow approach to the chosen subject. A second equally important reason is that access to sensitive political cases recorded after 1964 is still a sensitive issue. I have tried to access shorthand records, informative notes, diplomatic correspondence, documents that were drafted by Romanian diplomatic attaches at Comecon and that were supposed to be found in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign

¹ ***, *Declarația cu privire la poziția Partidului Muncitoresc Român în problemele mișcării comuniste și muncitorești adoptată la Plenara largită a CC al PMR din aprilie 1964*, Editura Politică, Bucharest, 1964

affairs Comecon. Unfortunately, the existing stock available for research contained only copies of protocols meetings at Comecon and other documents without high historical value.

Even though lately the activity of Romania within Comecon has also been studied, I consider the subject far from exhausted. Analyzing the work of my predecessors, I found that there are still aspects that can be developed both in terms of informational content, but mostly in terms of approaching the matter. The elements that have stirred my curiosity and led me to choosing this subject were the moments of maximum tension between Romania and the Soviet Union during 1964, the "*Declaration of April 1964*" and the initiative of Soviet teacher I. B. Valev to establish the first interstate production complex. As originality leading component of my work, I am able to mention the study carried on the idea of economic regionalization. The process in question was created and implemented for the first time in a formula similar to the one proposed by Valev in the Soviet Union, afterwards being proposed to be also implemented on the territory of other states. Except for the initiative to create the Danube complex, I have illustrated in a subchapter the economic regionalization attempt of the other colossus in the communist world: China.

I appreciate that the economic factor is perhaps the most important piece in the East-West confrontation frame, as it was well proved by the victory of political-economic-ideological bloc that succeeded in best managing its resources. Comecon (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) and EEC (European Economic Community) were the two economic organizations that had to impose their own model of economic development to the ideological opponents. Their establishment had created the prerequisites of applying antagonistic economic development strategies. The model of free trade and of free capital market had been considered for hundreds of years the economic growth engine for the Western states, being competed since the early beginning of the twentieth century by the model of economic centralized planning, as it was first applied in the USSR.

The researchers' concerns for the economic field as a driver of change are restricted, very few believing even from the beginning that the victory during the Cold War could have been decisively influenced by the victory of one of the two economic organizations, representatives of different ideologies. Following the scientific work of those who have approached this issue, I have noticed among them many young people which, through their work, have tried to fill the informational vacuum that mirrors on our current lives.

Approaching the impact of Comecon towards the Romanian economy has been an important subject of research both before 1989 and after, with major differences in approach, as well as perspective and as sources of information. The survey on the economic

development model promoted by Comecon has been divided into two distinct phases: before and after 1989. Over 1949-1990, the amount of people who have studied Comecon within a political context was reduced, and the few attempts to approach the subject had been dictated by the context in which events were unfolding. References specific to this period include many technical papers, with a massive content of information that is addressed especially to specialists in the field of economy. Among the most representative works during 1949-1989, the focus is set upon the books of Ion Alexandrescu², Maria Desmireanu³, Emilian Dobrescu⁴, Ion Blaga and upon many papers written by groups of authors from economic research institutes⁵. An important piece of information on how the organization was structured is also found in the books of Western researchers concerned on the issue. Of these, the following are to be mentioned: Paul Taylor⁶, A. J. Groom, Michael Kaser⁷, Werner Klein⁸ etc. Disregarding the period in which they were written, the papers I have studied retain their objectivity and accurately describe the organization's structure.

After 1990, many researchers have chosen that issue, each making a significant contribution to the development of public concerns towards Comecon activity. Among the most important, it's mandatory to mention Liviu Țăranu⁹, Florin Banu¹⁰, Brândușa

² Ion ALEXANDRESCU, *Economia Românească în primii ani postbelici (1945-1947)*, Editura Științifică și Pedagogică, Bucharest, 1986

³ Maria DESMIREANU, *Consiliul de Ajutor Economic Reciproc*, Editura Politică, Institute of Studying the International Economic Joint, Bucharest, 1973

⁴ Emilian DOBRESCU, Ion BLAGA, *Structural Patterns of Romanian Economy*, Editura Meridian, Bucharest, 1973

⁵ ***, *Zece ani de activitate a Consiliului de Ajutor Economic Reciproc*, Probleme Economice, No. 4, April 1959; ***, *Anuarul Statistic al RSR. Direcția centrală de statistică*, Bucharest, 1980; ***, *Dezvoltarea economică a României, 1944-1964*, Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, Bucharest, 1964

⁶ Paul TAYLOR, A. J. R. GROOM (coord.), *International Organization: A Conceptual Approach*; Mihaly SIMAI, *Coordination and Cooperation in Council for Mutual Economic Assistance*, Ch. 6, Frances Pinter, Ltd., London, 1978

⁷ Michael KASER, *Comecon: Integration Problems of the Planned Economies*, Oxford University Press, 1967

⁸ Werner KLEIN, *The Role of the GDR in Comecon: Some Economics Aspects*, in Jan Jeffries, Manfred Melzer (ed.), *The East German Economy*, Croom Helm, Ltd., New York, 1987

⁹ Liviu ȚĂRANU, *România în Consiliul de Ajutor Economic Reciproc, 1949-1965*, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 2007

¹⁰ Florin BANU, Liviu ȚĂRANU, *Aprilie 1964, „Primăvara de la București“. Cum s-a adoptat „Declarația de independență“ a României?*, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 2004

Costache¹¹, Mihai Retegan¹², Dan Cătănuș¹³ etc., each trying to argue the importance of Comecon in the ideological struggle between the two blocks.

For a complete understanding of the overall context in which the organization was established, I have covered a series of studies dedicated to the end of World War II. Important issues that do affect the socio-political environment are found in the studies of the following historians: Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu¹⁴, Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, Adrian Pop¹⁵, Vladimir Tismăneanu¹⁶, Dennis Deletant¹⁷. Their papers provide detailed information about the times of turmoil that succeeded the establishment of communism in Romania and about the economic consequences that were imposed to a regime of military occupation.

The problem of specialization in national economies has become one of the favorite issues of Western researchers during the 50s and 60s. The subject was the headliner of numerous publications both in Eastern Europe, controlled by the Soviet Union, but especially in Western Europe and in the US. References used in order to study this issue are abundant, and of all the discussed sources, I want to mention some of the most important documents found in the portfolios of Western European historians: John Michael Montias¹⁸, Marvin R. Jakson, David Floyd¹⁹ and Michael Kaser²⁰.

¹¹ Brândușa COSTACHE, *Activitatea României în Consiliul de Ajutor Economic Reciproc, 1949-1974*, National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, Bucharest, 2012

¹² Mihai RETEGAN, 1968: din primăvară până în toamnă, Editura Rao, Bucharest, 1998; Mihai RETEGAN, Alexandru DUȚU, *Război politic în blocul comunist. Volumul II, Relații româno-sovietice. Documente, Stenograma discuțiilor pe problemele colaborării în cadrul CAER, 29 aprilie 1964*, Editura Tritonic, Bucharest, 2004

¹³ Dan CĂTĂNUȘ, *Tot mai departe de Moscova. Politica externă a României 1956-1965*, Editura Institutului Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, Bucharest, 2011

¹⁴ Valeriu Florin DOBRINESCU, *România și organizarea postbelică a lumii (1945-1947)*, Editura Academiei RSR, Bucharest, 1988

¹⁵ Ioan CHIPER, Florin CONSTANTINIU, Adrian POP, *Sovietizarea României. Percepții anglo-americane*, Editura Iconica, Bucharest, 1993

¹⁶ Vladimir TISMĂNEANU, *Arheologia terorii*, Editura Curtea Veche, Bucharest, 2008

¹⁷ Dennis DELETANT, *Teroarea comunistă în România. Gheorghiu-Dej și statul polițienesc. 1948-1965*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2001

¹⁸ John Michael MONTIAS, *Economic Development in Communist Romania*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967

¹⁹ David FLOYD, *Rumania: Russia's Dissident Ally*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1965

²⁰ Michael KASER, *Comecon: Integration Problems of the Planned Economies*, Oxford University Press

A significant part of the information that I have accessed stems from memories of those who participated at the events. Alexandru Bârlădeanu²¹, representative of Romania in Comecon, managed to publish as memories, parts of the international activity being supported in this approach by Mrs. Lavinia Betea²². Gheorghe Maurer, Paul Niculescu-Mizil²³, Gheorghe Apostol²⁴ and Gheorghe Gaston-Marin²⁵ detailed aspects of their public and private lives in volumes published after 1989. The persons in question have become exceedingly valuable for my research, precisely in terms of political and economic analyzes that they had left and that can now be very well harnessed.

The fall of communism regimes in Eastern Europe countries and the dissolution of USSR would have brought the much desired post-war order that the states in Eastern Europe had been waited for. Even if historiography had granted a secondary confrontation in the economic field, I would consider that the stake was precisely it. Each of the two competitors, the US and the USSR, had relied on such an economic structure that was designed from the very beginning in order to impose to the other party its own economic system. Comecon is the organization set up at Stalin's strategic initiative that was on the verge of becoming the winning card in the hands of Khrushchev. I believe that approaching this issue as a thesis topic is more than a challenge, becoming an exciting subject for someone who wants to highlight things much closer to reality.

In the moments that followed the overthrow of the totalitarian regime, the attention of the public opinion and of most historical researchers was captured, without doubt, by the political and military issues, while the economic field remained for a long enough period of time a marginal concern of Romanian historians and others. As the main economic organization of communist states that had to organize exchange of goods and plan production, Comecon began to recur as a possible research subject only towards the end of the 20th century, when part of Romanian researchers and historians realized the potential of almost

²¹Romanian politician and economist, minister and member of the Romanian Academy. Minister of Foreign Trade in the early '50s, after 1955 Romania's deputy and representative of Comecon. Political survivor of the communist regime, became a senator in the new Parliament in Bucharest between 1990-1992 and, for a short time, the President of the Senate. See Lavinia Betea, *Alexandru Bârlădeanu despre Dej, Ceaușescu și Iliescu*, Bucharest, 1997, p. 5

²² Lavinia Betea, *Alexandru Bârlădeanu on Dej, Ceaușescu și Iliescu*, Bucharest, 1997

²³ Paul NICULESCU-MIZIL, *O istorie trăită*, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1997

²⁴ Gheorghe APOSTOL, *Eu și Gheorghiu-Dej*, Editura & Tipografia Paco, Bucharest, 2011

²⁵ Gheorghe GASTON-MARIN, *În serviciul României lui Gheorghiu-Dej. Însemnări din viață*, Editura Evenimentul Românesc, Bucharest, 2000

unexplored archive funds approaching the Romanian economic activity. Throughout the research, I have focused especially on the funds of Romanian former Communist Party's Central Committee, Department of Foreign Relations, which have been less accessed by other investigators. In the studied documents from the mentioned fund, I revealed issues pertaining to the position taken by key members of PMR leadership and by delegates from our country in Comecon, within disputes arising around some ideological or economic aspects. Of great importance to the research carried were the documents analyzing the views expressed at congresses of communist parties of other socialist states or the economic development strategies, planned by experts from states concerned in the success of economic specialization process (USSR, GDR and Czechoslovakia). In order to treat with great accuracy the purely economic issues discussed in Comecon, I have extensively analyzed documents from Comecon Commission Fund and from State Planning Committee, Comecon section.

Whatever the motivation and intent that led to the establishment of the organization, the Soviet Union has pledged to provide equality of rights for all states wishing to participate in the project. For this purpose, the Soviets refused to appear as a founding member of Comecon. Moreover, the inaugural meeting, they claimed the right of each nation to decide with regard to the manner in which the decisions made affect or not the national sovereignty. To better understand how to deal with the media, for information purposes, I have consulted propagandist publications of the era in which a “fraternal cooperation”²⁶ between popular democracy states and USSR was describe. In the early 50s, authorship of many party structures has as main task the drawing up of propagandistic documents designed to inoculate in the collective mind the role of guide to the Soviets’ socialist world²⁷. This set of ideas also applies to economic activities under the guidance of Soviet counselors. This theme of communist propaganda has been analyzed and debated after the fall, using many of the archival documents as a documentary basis, by a number of teachers and researchers interested in this issue: Eugen Denize²⁸.

The documentation directed us to a structure that contained 5 chapters of the thesis.

²⁶ ***, *Oamenii muncii salută cu entuziasm crearea Consiliului de Asistență Economică Mutuală*, Scânteia, No. 1336 of January 28, 1949, p. 3, ***, *Crearea Consiliului de Asistență Economică Mutuală e salutăată cu însuflețire de oamenii muncii*, Scânteia, No. 1337 of January 29, 1949, p. 3

²⁷ ***, *Prietenia româno-sovietică, bunul cel mai de preț al poporului nostru*, Bucharest, 1953; ***, *Ajutorul economic al URSS, factor important în dezvoltarea economiei naționale*, Probleme Economice, No. 8/1954, p. 17-26

²⁸ Eugen DENIZE, *Propaganda comunistă în România (1948-1953)*, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2011

In the first chapter, entitled “Comecon – genesis and function”, the participants discussed on the economic reconstruction of Europe and on topics related to role that the two superpowers US and USSR played in the politico-economic fractionation of this continent. The chapter is divided into two subchapters with several subsections dealing with the premises of the emergence of Comecon and with economic issues related to Romania’s cooperation with USSR. In this subsection, I insisted in particular on the way the economic relations took place within Soviet-Romanian joint ventures. In the same way that the US has sought to impose itself economically in the western part of Europe, USSR not only has sought influence in the economic policy of its occupied states, but has even tried to create a new social order also encompassing the economic component. I have found a lot of information about the early moments of Comecon in the archive funds stored in the National Archives, the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or even in the collection of the Official Bulletin.

The ideas conveyed by the media and by specialized works concerning the obtaining of mutual benefits as a result of centralized economic planning, are interpreted by the Romanian press of the era as an undeniable success recognized even by Western publicists. The newspaper “Scântea” captured this aspect in a leading article claiming that the centralized planning system of the national economies combined with the joint exploitation of raw materials generates a real economic growth compared to the “tentative of economic engagement”²⁹ the US had been promoted at that time through the Marshall Plan in the Western Europe. In support of this publication, the team of authors cites the British “Financial Times” which related in an article that any economic growth in the Western countries can only be done at the expense of other countries: “the marshall-ized countries will spin into a vicious circle, each counting an improvement in their economic situation, due to the worsening of its neighbor”³⁰.

Chapter 2, entitled “Comecon – organization and functionality”, is divided into three subchapters and has as a main starting point the idea of economic community of popular democracy states and the role Romania played in this economic alliances. I have examined aspects of how the organization was structured, its functional therein and a number of elements common to both economic organizations established in Europe. The chapter’s importance lies in the fact that it presents in detail the information so that the readers can understand better all the elements related to Comecon, its organization and its functionality.

²⁹ I. FÂNTÂNARU, *Crearea Consiliului de Asistență Economică Mutuală a sporit deruta din lagărul imperialist*, Scântea, February 5, 1949, p. 3

³⁰ ***, *Consiliul de Asistență Economică Mutuală*, Scântea, January 26, 1949, p. 1

Subchapter 1 starts with the moment of establishment, where I insisted on the polemic concerning the exact date of setting up and the position of Romania regarding its participation in the works or the organization.

In the absence of a real economic strategy, that is to be based on free market principles of centralized economic supply and demand, the trades were guided under the supervision of the political class. Most trades between Member States were held as a result of signing agreements, most often bilateral, on import and export needs. At this point, I have already highlighted the items related to the necessity of concluding the free trade agreements that were aiming especially the exports of technology and technical solutions from the more developed or in developing countries. Most of the time agreements involving export of technology were quantified only in terms of numbers and less on the informational content or usefulness. I was able to identify these matters and to understand that the nature of trades was purely formal, practiced most often by inexperienced politicians. Similar to the previous point, regarding Romanian-Soviet trades, I focused on the press of the era and of a series of working papers that lists the documents used by Romanian economists and elaborated by prestigious collective of the country.

In order to deepen the knowledge in the organization's structures, a detailed study of Comecon organizational chart and of key decisions regarding the establishment was mandatory. All this information was gathered from documents and transcripts attached to Comecon Protocol Session held in Moscow, April 26-28, 1949³¹ and from the work of Mrs. Maria Desmireanu³².

In chapter 3 – “Economic specialization of communist states – the Soviet alternative to Common Market” – is divided into three sections. Analyzed events show that Romania has tried to evade the signing of treaties in Comecon, especially because this would have led to a curtailment of economic sovereignty of the country. During Comecon session held in Bucharest, May 1958, the problem of respect towards national sovereignty was the headline of Romania's proposal of normalizing the economic relations between the partners of the socialist camp. Czechoslovakia was the country that had the biggest problems with accepting this principle and therefore boycotted the Romanian initiative. Khrushchev will intervene in the game between the Eastern states and will try to force Romania's hand by setting up an

³¹ ANIC, Governmental Commission for Comecon Issues, File 1/1949, Protocol of Comecon Session I, held in Moscow on April 26-28, 1949

³² Maria DESMIREANU, *Consiliul de Ajutor Economic Reciproc*, Editura Politică, Institute for Research on International Economic Conjunction, Bucharest, 1973

investment fund open only to the countries that adopted the Council Directives. The matter was debated both in Romanian and Western press. J. F. Brown³³ and David Floyd³⁴ were two researchers which granted large areas to the tense moments within heated debates held by Comecon Member States and they also anticipated in some extent the upcoming events.

There were approached some of the economic sectors whose specialization in production became the subject of dispute between the socialist countries. The two most important such sectors were agriculture and industry and particularly engineering. It was also detailed the issue of trade unique strategy developed by the Comecon Council and submitted for approval to governments of member states.

Lack of natural resources for economic development have forced some economically developed socialist countries to put pressure on partners with low economic capacity to export the resources they had on their own territory at reasonable prices compared to global prices. Romania was to be found in the shoes of the states that should give up their own development in order to contribute with its resources at the economic growth of the entire socialist bloc. Polemics that had appeared around this subject are one of the subsections to be discussed in chapter 3.

Comecon integrationist evolution manifested in the early 60s is a novelty for researches carried out so far. In chapter 4 – “Romania and the Valev Plan” – there has been extensively analyzed the elements from which began the formulation of such a project with major implications in the political and economic reconfiguration of the South East Europe. Such an initiative could have generated the first economic development complex in the history of the planet. The Soviet economist E. B. Valev came up with the idea of economic development zones created in several countries, without taking too much into account the national boundaries; his idea had sparked wide debates at that time. His article was based on a series of economic research regarding the economic recovery of the Lower Danube Region, which was to specialize particularly in the exploitation of local or imported from USSR raw materials having as main transport route the Danube, which became the backbone of that region. Originally published in the Soviet journal “Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta” and republished in Romania, in the “Economic Life”³⁵ magazine, the article was subjected to

³³ J. F. BROWN, *Rumania Steps Out of the Line*, Survey, No. 49, October 1963

³⁴ David FLOYD, *Rumania: Russia's Dissident Ally*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1965

³⁵ E. B. VALEV, *Problemele dezvoltării economice a raioanelor dunărene din România, Bulgaria și URSS*, Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta, V. M. Lomonosov University of Moscow, No. 2/1964, translation in *Viața Economică*, No. 24 of June 12, 1964

endless debates between the Romanian and the Soviet part, each trying to justify the weaknesses or the strengths of the project in accordance with their own national interests.

The Soviets tried to argue the necessity of creating economic development regions through a series of theses emphasizing the fact that the transition of popular democracy countries to communist countries should be based primarily on structural economic changes that will stop valuing individual benefit at the expense of collective good. The arguments elaborated by Valev in his thesis were the reasons to emphasize the dependence of Danube countries on raw materials from USSR, especially from districts with heavy industry such as Donbass (Soviet Ukraine) and the Dnieper river zone. Valev will support his ideas by using studies that treated the possibility of joint use, for the purpose of better use of raw materials in certain geographical areas, particularly in the south of Romania. He will bring into focus the thesis of T. Jivkov, H. Ovciarov, J. Jabimski, G. Sorokin³⁶, G. Karhin and Octavian Groza, through which he will argue the necessity of joint exploitation of existing resources in the developed region proposed to be established and will put particular emphasis on a series of works promoted in the “Fourth Congress of the Geographical Society of the USSR” held in Moscow on May 25-30, 1964.

The official point of view of PMR towards economic integration idea took shape through Costin Murgescu who wrote in the pages of “Economic Life” magazine an acid response to Romania's economic regionalization initiative. Later, the elderly economist blamed himself for the role played in that period and stated about the project initiated by Valev: “However, I see myself compelled as an economist, not as a patriot to admit that Valev formulated a thesis that could have supported the economic field. And besides, it seems more relevant than ever”³⁷.

Creating the necessary framework of distancing Romania from USSR, process finalized by publishing the Declaration of April 1964, was the topic addressed in chapter 5 in which aspects of strengthening the actions of rejection towards communist organizational plans developed in Moscow were treated in detail. Amid liberal measures adopted by the leadership of Kremlin, satellite states started actions meant to remove them from the Soviet sphere. Communist leadership of that time understood that a total ceasing of relations with Moscow would jeopardize their own position. Therefore, the path chose by Romania was totally different to the other socialist states’. Our country has continued to play the role of a

³⁶ ANIC, CC of RCP Fund, External Relations Section, File 43/1962, Excerpts from the article by G. Sorokin, *Unele probleme ale diviziunii internaționale socialiste a muncii*

³⁷ Alex Mihai STOENESCU, *Istoria loviturilor de stat în România*, Vol. 4, Editura Rao, Bucharest, 2004, p. 11

political committed ally however increasingly less willing to play in the economy. Compliance the directives set by the Soviets would have ultimately stopped the process of industrialization and would have caused loss of legitimacy of PMR.

The analysis starts with the initial position held by Romania when the setting up of Comecon, the position of a state under military occupation that followed without comment the incoming directives from Moscow all the way down to the position of dissident to the Communist Bloc, reflected in the Declaration of April 1964, when economic specialization plan proposed by Moscow was rejected. The Soviet-Romanian cooperation is the main theme of the first subchapter in which are detailed the key aspects related to trades between the two countries, assessing several periods of time. Originally, the economic cooperation limited only to finding effective ways through which Romania would have been able to cover huge war debt to the USSR. Amid destalinization, Romania normalized its activity with USSR and intensified trade with it. The most important source of information that I have used in order to properly assess the intensity of trade between the two countries is the economic press of the time in which all the necessary elements are described in detail. The two most important economic publications of the time "Economic Life" and "Economic Issues"³⁸ recount all the important transactions of goods between the two countries. Numerous economic statistics are also summarized in the volumes of collective authors³⁹ and in books of studies developed by researchers at the Institute of National Economy and also at the Comecon National Archives Fund. Among the literature of that time, I insist to mention a few propagandistic publications that had as sole purpose the demonstration of attachment to the Communist Moscow leadership: Gheorghiu-Dej was the author of several such materials, but almost at the same level there were publicized the works of other prominent leaders of the Communist Party such as Ana Pauker⁴⁰.

In the second subchapter I insisted upon the political initiative, as a starting point for trade within the "socialist camp". The Romanian government has made considerable efforts to minimalize the dependence on Soviet resources and technology that would have been

³⁸ ***, *Zece ani de activitate a Consiliului de Ajutor Economic Reciproc*, Probleme Economice, No. 4, April 1959

³⁹ ***, *Dezvoltarea economică a României, 1944-1964*, Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, Bucharest, 1964

⁴⁰ Gheorghe BUZATU, Mircea CHIRIȚOIU, *Agresiunea Comunismului în România. Documente din Arhivele Secrete 1944-1989*, Vol. 1, Editura Panideea, Documenta Collection, Bucharest, 1998, p. 37

considered a means of blackmail to imposing the economic integration plan. Consistent information about their efforts is found within documents elaborated during RCP meetings.

In subchapter three I have followed the unfolding of the political conflict between Romania and the USSR in the late 50s, with a particular focus on the ability of political leaders from Bucharest to avoid possible repercussions. This subchapter contains information related to the work carried out between 1949 and 1964 and I have put special emphasis upon the creation of the ideologist-political rupture between Bucharest and Moscow. Romania went through all the phases that marked the existence of Comecon switching from full alignment policy to a position of dissidence towards the Kremlin leadership. A special attention was paid to one of the most difficult moments at that time, and that was the confrontation with nationalistic overtones held by press in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. The episode could have easily degenerated into a total rupture between the two parties, which would have caused serious internal disturbances.

The moment was amply treated during the discussions within the PCR; numerous documents from the National Archives that address the problem were highlighting this fact. Such a dissident movement within the communist bloc could not fail to be also handled properly by Western researchers. Of those I want to mention the name of Stephen Fischer-Galați⁴¹ and Hugh Seton-Watson⁴².

At the end, the paper contains the personal conclusions regarding the manner in which the study was conducted, the bibliography consulted and also a series of annexes, in which are summarized novelty documents and excerpts from key documents in Comecon operations. The work of our country in Comecon was treated according to the evolutionary stages of this organization. The period chosen to be treated in this dissertation, 1949-1964, includes in full volume all of these trends. Successive transition from being a client state of Moscow, to that of teammate of the economic reform process of the whole camp, and finally to evolve towards the position of splinter of the socialist camp bears the stamp of permanent character in transition of the Romanian society.

⁴¹ Stephen FISCHER-GALAȚI, *The New Romania: From People's Democracy to Socialist Republic*, Cambridge, 1967

⁴² Hugh SETON-WATSON, *The Imperialist Revolutionaries. World Communism in the 1960s and 1970s*, Hutchinson & Co. Publishers Ltd., London 1980

CONCLUSIONS

My work tried to cover the most important aspects of the way in which the links between Romania and its partners in the bloc of socialist countries evolved. The international context of setting up the two working camps was amply treated in the major works that have approached the beginning of the Cold War, but there will always be a great deal of issues to be add. In this chapter the novelty elements are related primarily to the model of interpretation of the data and to the vision of the US on how they sought to win the war with the Soviet Union. Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis edited a volume of documents from the archives of the United States concerning the policy and the strategy they approached during 1945-1950 compared to the dangers represented by the USSR. The document I have brought into the attention of readers entirely explains that Americans aimed at winning the war with the Soviets not through military means, but more likely through economical ones, a fact that actually materialized later⁴³.

The emergence of Comecon had to take by surprise the Western states, proving them that the USSR is not dependent on their economic support and also sought to restrict the access of Eastern countries to the Marshall Plan. A special place in elaborating this strategy is taken by Nicolai Voznesensk, President of the State Planning Committee, which contributed to the reorganization of the postwar Soviet economy. His vision upon the economic integration of the Eastern countries could have been the winning card for the USSR, while, from this perspective, he could have been considered the Comecon founder. His removal from the order of Stalin, in March 1949, deprived of a great visionary, and those who remained to organize the new structure turned out, for various reasons, unable to do so.

For a very long time the organization has functioned as a structure of centralized data and trade statistics, economic relations between members of the organization being governed only by bilateral agreements. The only aspect with really important value, in which the Council had imposed its terms, was to establish a validity period of the bilateral agreements which theoretically could have reached up to 5 years. Despite these agreements, the countries have continued to prioritize the development only according to its own interest. The attempt

⁴³ Thomas H. ETZOLD, John Lewis GADDIS (ed.), *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1978, p. 212; *United States Policy Toward the Soviet Satellite States in Eastern Europe*, September 14, 1949, NSC 58, Records of the National Security Council on Deposit in the Modern Military Records Branch, National Archives, Washington DC

of imposing a reference system in terms of main raw materials prices has also proved a failing project. States have disregarded the provisions of Comecon regarding the unification of methods in order to determinate the costs of production and continued to charge prices in line with international quotation.

By starting the process of economic specialization, I meant to provide a manufacturing base that can compete directly with the more developed industry in Western Europe. One of the goals was the reduction or even the elimination of economic competition between socialist states in trade with capitalist ones. This had to be achieved by means of Foreign Trade Comecon Committee. In the absence of strict regulations regarding the obligation to respect the decisions of the Comecon Member States, they have built their own economic relations, continuing in this way to compete each other in markets outside the socialist bloc.

Although they advanced a long time before the competition within the common market, the idea of a convertible currency through which all trade to be settled, Comecon failed to gain international recognition for it. The lack of financial vision upon macro-economic aspects, the individual weakness of the states and the lack of cohesion in taking crucial decisions ultimately led to the blurring of this initiative and the loss of this strategic advantage conferred by a unified financial system.

Another weakness of the Comecon was the organizational framework, very weak from decision-making perspective and insufficiently well-established. The dispersal of decisional authority in many committees, the working groups and conferences, the duplication of work and especially their lack of vision regarding the development trend of the global economy have significantly diminished capabilities of the Comecon.

Late initiative of creating economic development regions in order to maximize the benefits available in each region was doomed from the start, precisely because the Soviet Union had ceased to be the economic catalyst for all the states in its sphere of influence. Even if initially USSR coordinated directly all economic activities of popular democracy states through Soviet counselors, then, after the failure of de-Stalinization process, it became a supplier of raw materials to the developed countries of the socialist bloc. Czechoslovakia and GDR, acknowledging the weakness of their protective power, have tried to build their own economic development space, using less economically developed states as markets and sources of raw materials. Romanian communists, in a late spurt of nationalism, fought this initiative and drew attention to the social and economic inequities that were formed within the block. Concluding this idea, we can say that the decisive factor that led to the collapse of the

socialist system was precisely the fact that USSR suffered a diminution of authority in favor of the two "spoiled children": Czechoslovakia and the GDR.

In the period between the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and de facto dissolution of the Soviet Union occurred on December 26, 1991, Comecon continued to function for a short time, even though many decisions were purely administrative. However, regulations of certain aspects were taken into consideration. Those aspects were outlined in the framework of the 44th session held in Prague, July 5-7, 1988, the last session before the collapse of communist regimes. The states approved the document that covered the restructure and the modernization of Comecon, known as "the complex concept of the international socialist division of labor on 1991-2005". This document provided a restructure of interaction module contained in three distinct phases. The first was to take place between the years 1988 and 1990 and covered the restructure of integrationist mechanism, the second phase between 1991 and 1995 concerned even the creation of a common market for Eastern Europe and the third stage wanted to materialize a unified customs system. Discussions on this subject continued in the early 90s intending to amend the financial exchange mechanism and the principles of cooperation of Comecon. At the end of the implementation of this plan was to be created a new structure called the Organization of International Economic Cooperation⁴⁴. Starting with January 1991, the Member States have made known their point of view regarding the future of the organization. Most of them have agreed with the idea of continuing the activity within an economic organization, but the relationship between them must take account the proposed changes and the fact that trade were to be held under the rules of the market economy.

The period of time that Romania has covered as a member of this organization for economic cooperation ends with its abolition in 1991. Her participation as a founding member in this organization not only has brought the rightful respect, but has been marked throughout its existence of an intense struggle to maintain national sovereignty.

As indicated in the Official Gazette, number 262 of December 23, 1991⁴⁵, after more than 42 years of existence, Comecon ceases its activity during a solemn assembly held in Budapest on June 28, 1991. The governments of the nine member states have jointly decided to declare void the provisions stipulated in the text of the Statute of the Council for Mutual

⁴⁴ Brândușa COSTACHE, *Activitatea României în Consiliul de Ajutor Economic Reciproc, 1949-1974*, National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, p. 30

⁴⁵ ***, *Protocolul privind desființarea CAER*, published in Monitorul Oficial, No. 262, December 23, 1991, and ratified through Law no. 78 of December 19, 1991; Adevărul, No. 432 of June 29, 1991, p. 8

Economic Assistance signed at Sofia on December 14, 1959. Within the same law, subsequent amending provisions of the text of the COMEON Statute signed in the days of June 21, 1974 and June 28, 1979, are declared null, as so happen with the Convention on legal capacity, privileges and immunities of the Comecon, signed in Warsaw on June 27, 1985⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*

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