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Romania and Poland During the '80s Crisis. Aspects of Romanian-Polish Economic Cooperation Between 1985 and 1987¹

Abstract

In the first half of the 1980s, the Western sanctions against Poland led both to an increase in Romanian-Polish trade, and to closer political relations. With Gorbaciov's reforms and Poland opening up to the West in the second half of the 1980s, the relations which had improved between 1982 and 1984 suffered a setback. The present paper starts from the premise that the

1 The present paper is the result of presentations made at international conferences, such as: „O relacjach polsko-rumuńskich na przestrzeni wieków w stulecie nawiązania stosunków dyplomatycznych”, between 29/08/2019 and 31/08/2019, where I talked about: *The Year 1985 and Its Importance for Romanian-Polish Relations*, a conference organised by Dom Polski from Suceava. The second conference was “Romania and Poland in the Forefront of European Security. Tradition and Continuity (1919–2021)”, between 24/06/2021 and 26/06/2021, organised by the General Staff of Defence through the Iasi Branch of the National Military Museum „King Ferdinand I”, where I gave a talk on: *Nicolae Ceaușescu's Last Official Visit to Warsaw (1987) and the Decline in Romanian-Polish Relations*. Finally, the paper was also based on my PhD thesis, entitled *Romania and the Crisis of the Communist Regime in Poland 1980–1989*, where, in the third chapter, I discussed at length about the development of Romanian-Polish relations in the period 1985–1987.

development of Romanian-Polish economic relations during the 1980s was influenced by the crisis which both countries were facing, as well as by changing international conditions.

One aim of the paper is to present the domestic situation in the two countries in 1985, in order to understand the context which fostered bilateral economic cooperation. The second aim is to analyse the development of relations between Romania and Poland after Gorbachev's coming to power and the implementation of his reforms. Here we shall mainly focus our attention on the regular summit meetings between the two leaders. Finally, we shall assess the impact of these reforms and the way in which they affected the Romanian-Polish cooperation. In undertaking this investigation, we shall, first of all, use the transcripts of the meeting between Ceaușescu and Jaruzelski, found in the National Archives, Foreign Relations Section, as well as the diplomatic correspondence of the Romanian embassy in Warsaw. The press of the time, in particular *Scanteia* – the official newspaper of the Romanian Communist Party [RCP], provides a general framework for understanding how the relations with Poland were represented by the communist regime.

Keywords

Jaruzelski, Ceaușescu, crisis, economy, cooperation, bilateral, communism.

In 1985, there was a dramatic change in the relations between the two superpowers. If at the beginning of 1980 the balance of power was ostensibly in favour of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics [USSR], this changed rapidly over the following five years. The weakening of Soviet hegemony, which began with the 'Solidarity' crisis in Poland, when the leadership in Moscow refused to give military support to General Wojciech Jaruzelski, continued with the Western sanctions imposed at the end of 1981. The succession crisis, the deadlock in domestic and foreign policies, the international isolation, but also the technological decline weakened the international position of USSR

in the first half of the '80s, when the Kremlin was confronted with ideological, economic and social stagnation. Change became possible with the appointment on 10th March 1985 as general secretary of CPSU of Mikhail Gorbachev, who made the thawing of relations with the West one of his top priorities.

This was facilitated by the Geneva summit, which took place on 19th-20th November. Even though no official document was signed during the meeting, the two leaders, Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan, had the chance to learn more about their mutual intentions and to speak openly about the peaceful continuation of competition between the two superpowers. Soon afterwards, one of Gorbachev's closest advisors, Alexander Iakovlev, addressed to him a memorandum titled "The Imperative of Political Development", in which he referred to a series of reforms necessary in the Soviet Union, such as: democratization of society, multi-candidate elections, a true separation of powers, but also the obligation to respect human rights and liberties (Iakovlev, 1985). Iakovlev's proposals did not pass unnoticed, but led Mikhail Gorbachev, several months later, to adopt his well-known reform programme, "glasnost" and "perestroika", at the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [CPSU]. The decision was a turning point for the subsequent evolution of the entire socialist bloc, because it would change the relations between Moscow and the satellite states, but also between Moscow and the way in which it projected its vision on Marxist-Leninism. The obligation to follow the Soviet model of development would be relaxed, giving rise to centrifugal movements within the Soviet bloc, especially in Poland and Hungary (Harman & Zebrowski, 1988).

The present paper starts from the premise that the development of Romanian-Polish economic relations during the 1980s was influenced by the crisis which both countries were facing, as well as by changing international conditions. Thus, in the first half of the 1980s, the Western sanctions against Poland led both to an increase in Romanian-Polish trade, and to closer political relations. With Gorbaciov's reforms and Poland opening up to the West in the second half of the 1980s, the relations which had improved between 1982 and 1984 suffered a setback. In undertaking this investigation, we shall,

first of all, use the transcripts of the meeting between Ceaușescu and Jaruzelski, found in the National Archives, Foreign Relations Section, as well as the transcripts of the meetings of Romanian-Polish delegations, found in the same Section. In order to offer an insight into the context and outcome of the meetings, we shall use the diplomatic correspondence of the Romanian embassy in Warsaw. Finally, the press of the time, in particular *Scanteia* – the official newspaper of the Romanian Communist Party [RCP], provides a general framework for understanding how the relations with Poland were represented by the communist regime.

The present study aims to answer the following questions: What was the stake of the relations with Poland for Bucharest? What was it for Warsaw? Were the bilateral relations influenced by the changing international situation? If so, how? Did the Romanian-Polish cooperation reflect a common political platform or rather specific conditions? Starting from these questions, one aim of the paper is to present the domestic situation in the two countries in 1985, in order to understand the context which favoured bilateral economic cooperation. The second aim is to analyse the development of relations between Romania and Poland after Gorbachev's coming to power of and the implementation of his reforms. Here we shall mainly focus our attention on the regular summit meetings between the two leaders. Finally, we shall assess the impact of these reforms and the way in which they affected the Romanian-Polish cooperation.

Generally speaking, in Romanian historiography, the development of Romanian-Polish relations has been of interest rather in relation to the crisis in Poland, either in the early '80, or towards the end of the last decade. One of the historians who approached the early period of the crisis is Petre Opreș (Opreș, 2008), his work being one of the most complex on the situation in the Polish People's Republic [PPR] from August 1980 to December 1981. As for the final stage of the crisis, in 1989, things were completely different. Nicolae Ceaușescu's "Appeal" on 19th August, for the use of any means necessary to prevent "Solidarity" from gaining control of the government, sparked off heated debates. Thus, discussions polarized the communist leadership, pitting the opponents against the supporters of a military intervention in Poland (Deletant, Watts, Burakowski & Kramer, 2016).

While the first half of the '80s attracted some attention, and there were a number of studies on the mutual summit meetings between Bucharest and Warsaw (Burakowski, 2015; Filip, 2019a; Filip, 2019b; Filip, 2020), however there are no studies on the period 1985–1988. We aim to close this historiographical gap.

The Situation in Poland and Romania in 1985

In 1985, the socio-economical situation in Poland and Romania was absolutely dire. Regarding Romania, at the macroeconomic level, following the decision adopted in December 1981 to pay off the entire foreign debt, the balance of payments was in equilibrium, as the Romanian government had repaid half thereof, compared to Poland, whose foreign debt had reached 30 billion dollars, the highest in the Socialist Bloc. Romanians had the lowest standard of living in the socialist bloc with the exception of Albania, and there was an alarming slowdown in the industry caused by the leaders' refusal to import the equipment required to keep factories running. With regard to Poland, in the mid-'80s it became increasingly obvious that the general's effort to stabilize Poland's economy and crush the opposition after introducing the martial law had ended in failure.

In this context, Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power and his openness to reforms would be welcomed by General Jaruzelski, being seen as an opportunity. The first sign came as early as January 1985, when the leadership in Warsaw was apprised of Konstantin Cernenko's declining state of health, as well as of his possible successor in the Kremlin. In an annual report drawn up by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MFA], entitled "The Key Objectives of the Foreign Policy of the PPR in 1985", it was noted that the top priorities were "activities aimed at putting an end to Poland's political isolation by the West, developing high-level relations, especially with officials in Western Europe" (Domber, 2014, p. 144). As far as economic issues were concerned, the MFA continued to focus on obtaining credits by "expanding economic relations with the West [...] renegotiating the repayment of foreign debt, speeding up the process of Poland's joining the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and the World Bank, as well as removing discriminatory and protectionist measures

against Poland” (Domber, 2014, p. 144). Pursuing these objectives did not remain without effect, so that, as early as July an agreement was signed by Poland and 17 Western creditor states which “provided the rescheduling over 11 years of 12 billion dollars in unpaid quotas and interest payments” (AMAE 1104/1985, 93). As a result, the PPR had no more outstanding debts.

Concerning the Social Republic of Romania [SRR], things took a different turn. While Poland was slowly recovering from the ‘disease’ which had turned it into ‘the sick man of Europe’ in the first half of the ‘80s, and in 1985 it revoked the remaining emergency provisions still in force, this disease seemed to strike Romania next. Thus, on the 18th October, in ‘Scanteia’ a presidential decree was published which declared a state of emergency in areas where there were power stations and hydroelectric power stations, to which military commanders, whose names were not made public, were assigned to supervise them (ANIC 349/1985, 9). According to the report written by Paul Gafton for Radio Free Europe [RFE], it was the first time that a state of emergency had been declared, although no natural disaster had occurred. In the author’s view, some of the reasons for that decision included, first of all, Romania’s failure to meet the energy production target for 1985. Thus, of the projected output of 87 million tons of coal, only 64,3 were mined, and coal imports increased from 700.000 tons in 1965, to 5,3 million tons in 1983. Likewise, in 1984, crude oil imports reached 12,5 million tons. The same applied to the electricity output, as, of the 4.000 MW per day projected to be produced by hydroelectric plants, because of the draught, a daily average of 1.000/1.500 MW was generated. Finally, Gafton noted that the measures taken by Romania were similar to the special regulations introduced in Poland in 1983, which were intended as a substitute for the martial law. They provided for the military supervision of strategic economic units. (ANIC 349/1985, 10).

The Continuation of Romanian-Polish Negotiations in 1985

Apparently, in 1985, there was an “upward trend” in the official Romanian-Polish relations (AMAE 1090/1985, 1). They were marked by consultations between the foreign ministers of the two countries,

on 21st–24th May 1985 (AMAE 1100/1985, 35), the visit of the Romanian prime minister, Constantin Dăscălescu, to Warsaw, on 30th October (AMAE 1107/1985, 22–23), and, finally, that of General Jaruzelski to Bucharest, on 22nd November. Concomitantly, at the bilateral level, proposals were put forward to mark different moments in the history of bilateral relations. Thus, on the 7th August 1985, the Polish MFA indicated its wish to revive the custom of marking the re-establishment of relations with the Socialist countries, and suggested that on 13th August 40 years from the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Romania be celebrated. To that effect, it was decided that between the foreign ministers of the two countries “greetings telegrams should be exchanged, the content of which should be reported in the press as a news item [...] and the newspapers *Scînteia* and *România Liberă*, as well as *Lumea* magazine should publish articles covering the event” (ANIC 153/1985, 2). On the anniversary day, the newspaper *Życie Warszawy* ran a lengthy leader on the event, headed “Poland-Romania – an Advantageous Cooperation” (AMAE 1097/1985, 10–11). Meanwhile, an article came out in *Scînteia* under the heading “Under the Auspices of a Fruitful, Friendly Cooperation”, with a mid-page subheading: “40 Years since the Re-establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Poland and Romania”, by Alexandru Câmpeanu (1985, p. 3).

On the economic front, things looked differently. Following the breakdown of negotiations between the two leaders in June 1984 and Poland’s opening up to the West, only 1.3 million tons of coal were contracted for, compared to 3 million tons of coal in previous years, (AMAE 1105/1985, 52, 57), and for the first time after 1982 there was a decline in trade (ANIC 397/1985, 25). That was also confirmed by the Polish ambassador in Bucharest, who stated that “there was a slower growth in Romanian-Polish trade when compared to previous years” (AMSZ 242–2-85, 12).

The reason for the standstill was, first and foremost, the demand by the Romanian side to double coal imports from PPR, during the five-year plan period spanning 1986–1990. These data were presented during one-on-one talks between Ceaușescu and Jaruzelski, on the former’s visit to Warsaw, in June 1984, when the RCP leader told the general that

we would be interested in concluding a long-term contract or agreement for the import of coking coal. [...] We could consider a long-term contract divided into two parts: about 50% of the amount of coking coal would be paid for by a compensation, and as for the remaining 50%, we agree to pay for it in a hard currency. We are thinking around 4–5 million tons of coking coal annually. This would mean around 2 million tons to be paid for through barter, on commonly agreed terms, and the rest, about 2–2.5 million tons, in a convertible currency, as mentioned earlier. Along the same lines, we would like to settle the issue of a special long-term contract for the sulphur import. We are thinking around 440 000 tons (Filip, 2020, p. 193).

Ceașescu told his interlocutor that “regarding coal and, if necessary, sulphur as well, Romania is prepared to participate in creating new production facilities” (Filip, 2020, p. 193).

The lack of an explicit answer from Warsaw, during the official visit in June 1984, spurred the RCP leader to approach the import question in a more decisive manner the following year. Thus, during talks between Manfred Gorywoda and Nicolae Ceașescu in May, the latter clearly stated that “we regard this problem (the coal import s.n.) as a substantive issue in Romanian-Polish relations” (ANIC 397/1985, 9). Talks were resumed on 21st October, that time at a meeting between the Polish ambassador in Bucharest and Miu Dobrescu, a member of the Executive Political Committee [EXPC], at the former’s behest. During the meeting, Bogusław Stachura pointed out that the projected doubling of foreign trade over the following five-year period was at a standstill because Poland “did not receive from Romania any proposals for commodities to serve as a consideration” (ANIC 483/1985, 1). At the same time, the Polish ambassador strongly emphasized that Poland was no longer interested in barter trade with Romania. Thenceforth, his country aimed to export coal only in return for “convertible currency”, in order to pay off its foreign debt, which had already reached 30 billion dollars, as well as to acquire commodities which the Romanian side was not able to supply as a consideration, such as wheat, corn, aluminium blocks, carbon black, hot-rolled steel plates, due to insufficient stock. This emerges clearly from the mandate of Roșca Bujor, vice-president of the State

Planning Committee [SPC], at the meeting of vice-presidents of the central planning bodies in the SRR and the PPR, in Bucharest, 21st-25th October, one month prior to General Jaruzelski's visit. The mandate clearly shows Romania's demand for raw materials, as well as Poland's offer: of the 2-3 tons demanded by the SRR, the PPR only offered 0.8 million tons. The same applied to energetic coal, as, of the 1-1,5 million tons of coking coal required only 0,8 million tons were offered, and for coking coal, only 100,000 out of the 2-300,000 tons required could be delivered. (ANIC 481/1985, 3). Thus, the deadlock was both the result of the "stubborn determination" of Poland to obtain foreign currency and the inputs needed by its own industry, and by that of Romania, which lacked sufficient goods to carry on the barter trade. That fact would be debated at length during General Jaruzelski's second visit to Bucharest.

General Jaruzelski's Second Visit to Bucharest - 22nd November 1985 - and the Decline in Economic Cooperation

The earliest press account of Jaruzelski's visit to the SRR came out on 14th November, on the front page of *Scînteia*: "At the invitation of Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, Comrade Wojciech Jaruzelski will pay an official state visit to our country" (*Scînteia* 14 no. 1985, p. 1). In contrast to the reports of the 1984 visit, that time there was no update on the current state of Romanian-Polish relations (*Scînteia* 8 no. 1985: 5), but, on 22nd November, in the top right-hand corner of the front page it was stated that Jaruzelski would visit Romania at the invitation of the Romanian leader: "At the invitation of Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, Comrade Wojciech Jaruzelski is coming to our country today, on a *working visit* (s.n.)", and below that, written in bold letters: "Welcome to Romania" (*Scînteia* 22 no. 1985, p. 1). The article doesn't provide too many details, but only a little biographical information on the Polish leader. Moreover, the newspaper doesn't seem to give wide coverage to the event, with the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee [PCC] of the Warsaw Pact, which had taken place in Prague the day before, being of greater interest. The outcome of the talks between Reagan and Gorbachev in Geneva was

discussed in the article, where the Soviet-American summit received extensive coverage (*Scînteia* 22 no. 1985, p. 6). As to its purpose, it was a “working” visit, and, despite statements in *Scînteia* suggesting it was a “state” visit (*Scînteia* 23 no. 1985, p. 3), it didn’t go beyond that, because it was not a return visit after the one made by Ceaușescu in 1984, but it was structured in the same way as the 1982 visit. Regarding the way the meeting unfolded, it followed the pattern of previous meetings. In the first part, Ceaușescu had face-to-face talks with General Jaruzelski, and at the same time work groups held talks on political issues and on economical and technical-scientific issues and, in the end, the findings were presented and discussed in a plenary meeting. (AMAE 828/1987, 29, 34).

In view of the fact that for two years the two sides had been engaged in negotiations for the increase in imports of raw materials, Ceaușescu reversed the items on the agenda at the one-on-one talks, stating that “I intend to approach, first of all, the question of the economic relations – and *I would like us to come to commonly agreed conclusions* (s.n.) and afterwards, for each of us to make, either in direct talks or together with the delegations, a statement about the state of affairs in our countries and, possibly, about some international issues” (ANIC 630/1985, 2). Nevertheless, because Jaruzelski was the first to speak, he decided to tackle first political issues, in order to show Nicolae Ceaușescu that he was not the only one who was discontent with the development of bilateral relations. Thus, he compared the results of the Romanian-Polish cooperation with a multi-storey building, showing that

there are still storeys that need to be completed. It seems to me that much more progress should be made in the area of inter-parliamentary relations, those between governments, along party lines, as well as those between county and regional local authorities. Entreprises should also have direct relations, likewise our youth organisations should cooperate more closely (s.n.) (ANIC 630/1985, 3).

That is why, in the general’s view, those issues needed to be addressed during the debates, because “when speaking of economic relations. we must observe that these too have to be renewed in the sense of

actual achievement, not only looking at plans”, but also at the political bodies which implemented these decisions (ANIC 630/1985, 4).

Aware of the criticism that the Romanian leader was about to level at him, he showed that unlike Romania, “we cannot take radical cost-cutting measures, so that society makes big savings, because we are not able to impose a harsh rule that would enable us to lower the living standard of the population (s.n.)... the current political situation does not allow us to adopt radical, more drastic measures” (ANIC 630/1985, 4). At the same time, he showed that international economic restrictions caused a 15 million dollar loss to the Polish economy, and maintaining them would force Poland to import everything for “cash or raw materials”, to be able to supply the population’s needs. That meant that Poland could no longer accept the previous barter trade in machines and equipment, but only trade for foodstuff or hard currency, which Romania had also run short of. Thus, Jaruzelski continued, “we could take some measures to increase the export of raw materials to Romania if we had the long-term assurance that as a consideration we will receive goods which we have to import from the West – therefore obtain more aluminium, wheat, corn...” (ANIC 630/1985, 6).

Foreseeing, in his turn, the negative response of the Polish leadership, Ceaușescu came up with a new proposal, which had not been made before: “We propose that we import 1.5 million tons of goods under a clearing agreement, which also include some of the goods you mentioned. However we wish to import more coal from you for foreign currency – I am thinking of 2–3 million tons, but we insist for at least 2 million tons payable in foreign currency, apart from the 1.5 million under the clearing agreement. And, just so we are clear, we are prepared to make quarterly deposits, at the beginning of each quarter, in the account of Poland’s central bank, of the agreed sum, in dollars, for the delivery of the coal, of course, as well as the interest accrued to the date the coal is delivered. This, so that there is no doubt that the payment for the coal will be made, in a foreign currency. We are prepared to close a deal under these terms...” (ANIC 630/1985, 9). Still, the Romanian offer was put in too late, the general stating that Poland had already arranged deliveries to other countries and no longer had available resources to increase the export to the SRR.

As expected, the failure of the one-on-one talks was followed by that of the work groups, as it results from the briefing given by Miu Dobrescu that afternoon:

Unfortunately... *the progress in trade is modest. In any case, it is below the rate of growth in previous years...* (s.n.). In recent years, there has been a considerable growth in economic relations with our Polish comrades and it was natural that we would continue to enjoy significant growth. At the indications of Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, Secretary General of the RCP, we expressed the opinion that it would have been natural that the volume of trade doubled, or in any case, that we worked towards a doubling in the volume of Romanian-Polish trade, but very little has been achieved so far (ANIC 630/1985, p. 16).

Discontent with this setback, Ceaușescu asked to address the plenary stating that “considering the agreements made a year before, on the occasion of my visit to Warsaw, of course, this is going back on them ... What is being proposed now (on raw materials s.n.) is virtually, a 50% decrease” (ANIC 630/1985, 17). To Jaruzelski’s explanations that the exports of coal products by RPP would be reduced from 43 million tons in 1984, to 35 million tons in 1986, the RCP leader responded by emphasising that he did not understand why the decrease had to be made at the expense of Romania, “since Romania’s share in this export was 4%... Thus, considering the relations between socialist countries, the decrease should be proportionate” (ANIC 630/1985, 18). Further, Ceaușescu showed,

the proposed solution means an 80–100% reduction, in other words, by half – from two million tons of coal to 800,000 tons (sic!). *I am not an expert in planning, but any such planning, when it comes to the relations between socialist countries, is hard to accept and not consistent with the relations between our parties and with what we discussed a year ago* (s.n.) (ANIC 630/1985, 21).

It was the first time at that meeting that the Romanian leader had taken the position which he also expressed during the talks with Gorywoda in Bucharest. Despite these objections, the numbers could

no longer be changed, and the protocol on the coordination of national economic plans for the five-year plan period 1986–1990 were signed in that form on 30th November, in Warsaw, by the Romanian delegation headed by Ștefan Bârlea (ANIC 606/1985, 2).

Although Jaruzelski had asked the Romania leader “not to let some minor problems regarding industry or any other economic sector to have an impact on our relations, influence them...” (ANIC 630/1985, 24), the Romanian leadership never for a moment hesitated to voice their discontent in the pages of *Scînteia*. Thus, unlike the previous visits, when the front page was almost entirely devoted to that event, that time, in a box in the left-hand corner there was a communiqué that the Romanian leader received the special envoy of the President of the United States of America [USA], Waren Zimmermann, who “gave a briefing on the point of view and the considerations of the US President about the results of the recent Soviet-American meeting ...”, which however were not mentioned (*Scînteia* 23 no. 1985, p. 1). Underneath, there was the news item on Jaruzelski’s visit to Bucharest, the headline being partly written in capital letters, “At the invitation of Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu – and then in small letters – showing the common wish to develop good Romanian-Polish relations of friendship and cooperation, the working visit of Comrade Wojciech Jaruzelski took place yesterday” (*Scînteia* 23 no. 1985, p. 1), which is suggestive of the position held by each country, when it came to the foreign relations of the SRR. Even though the visit was described as “a new and edifying expression of the good relations, of the common wish to give new dimensions to the traditional relations of friendly cooperation, to further strengthen the collaboration between the two parties, countries and peoples” (*Scînteia* 23 no. 1985, p. 1), the common statement suggests otherwise. The fact that the results did not live up to the expectations of the Romanian leadership emerged from the following paragraph: “appreciating the cooperation of both governments and the activity of the Mixed Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation (sic!), it was indicated that efforts continue to be made to promote cooperation in production, collaboration for the rational use of resources of raw materials and energy resources in both countries (s.n.), particularly on the basis of modern technology” (*Scînteia* 23 no. 1985, p. 3).

At the same time, in the accounts of the visit, enthusiastic appraisals of the outcome of talks are lacking, the latter being reported in a neutral, dispassionate tone. Another indication of failure is the length of the common statement, smaller than in previous years, as the Romanian appraisals of the international situation were much more concise. While this was due to the fact that those aspects had already been discussed at the meeting in Prague, we don't believe that Romania would have missed the opportunity to restate its position on the international situation, which went against established practices. Moreover, the same number of the paper included numerous comments and appraisals of the outcome of the meeting in Geneva (*Scînteia* 23 no. 1985, p. 6), which suggests the refusal of the Romanian side to comment on the international situation next to the Polish one. One last indication in this respect is the article devoted to the event and published on 25th November. It was headed "New Perspectives for the Development of the Romanian-Polish Friendly Cooperation", in contrast to the optimistic tone of the accounts of the 1984 visit, this time it was simply stated that the visit was of "the utmost importance for the *operational analysis of problems which concern development* (s.n.)" (Tinu, 1985, p. 5), no mention being made of the upward trend in relations or of their being "fruitful". Unlike Jaruzelski who regarded the visit as "a continuation of our relations, of conversations which took place during the visit to Warsaw", for Ceaușescu it was merely "an expression of good relations of cooperation" (Tinu, 1985, p. 5). At the same time, the author mentioned that in the current five-year plan period the volume of trade nearly doubled, however he made no reference to the following five-year period, but only shows that "the demands of the economies of the two countries offer... vast possibilities for a closer cooperation... for the promotion of cooperation in production, for a more efficient collaboration for the rational use of raw materials and energy resources in both countries ... (s.n.)" (Tinu, 1985, p. 5).

The failure of the visit was also signalled by RFE [Radio Free Europe], it being referred to in one of the reports as a "blitz" visit. The report indicated that for Jaruzelski the main reason for the visit was to enhance his image in the soviet bloc, after his election as Chairman of the Council of State, whereas for Romania economic

issues took priority. At the same time, according to the report, it was not only Jaruzelski who sought to legitimate himself in the soviet bloc, but also the Romanian leader, who, except for the meeting with Erich Honecker, had no other bilateral meetings with other leaders in the socialist block, being actually the only leader whom Gorbachev had neither received in Moscow nor visited. Further, the author wondered rhetorically “Romania-Poland an Alliance in Crisis?”, noting that “after 1983, it seems, Poland was the country which helped România – with raw materials – rather than the other way round” (ANIC 354/1985, 35–6). Even though he was not in possession of the transcripts of the talks between the two leaders, his observations were accurate, as he noted the lack of political affinity between the two countries, which could have contributed to a lasting cooperation.

Nicolae Ceaușescu’s last visit to Warsaw – 9th July 1987 – and the end of the Romanian-Polish economic cooperation

The last attempt to halt the decline in bilateral trade relations was Nicolae Ceaușescu’s “working” visit to Warsaw, on 9th July 1987, in order to continue the Romanian-Polish negotiations aimed at concluding “The special long-term agreement (15-year agreement) on deliveries of coking coal from Poland in exchange for goods from Romania” (AMAE 827/1987, 31). Negotiations were arduous, because that year, it was the first time since the declaration of the martial law in the PPR that only 91,4% of the projected volume of trade had been achieved (AMAE 817/1987, 56). Preparations for signing the Special Agreement started in May, when the 19th Session of the Romanian-Polish Intergovernmental Commission on Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation was held, but those did not yield any tangible result, which was why issues would be settled during Nicolae Ceaușescu’s visit to Warsaw (AMAE 818/1987, 17).

Compared to Nicolae Ceaușescu’s visit to Warsaw in 1984, which was a “friendship” visit and lasted three days, the one in 1987 was a return visit after General Jaruzelski’s visit to Bucharest in November 1985. Ever since the beginning of the year, the visit promised to

be fraught, an indication being the discontent of the Romanian side that the visit had not been made back in 1986, as previously decided (AMAE 808/1987, 23), the latter suggesting that in the draft statement the visit be considered a mere “working visit”, rejecting the Polish wording “friendly working visit” (AMAE 827/1987, 3, 6). Already during the morning one-on-one talks, the RCP leader renewed his former demands for coal made in November 1985 (ANIC 30/1987, 3), but the Polish side only agreed to electricity deliveries, also rejecting the SRR proposals for taking part in building a new mine and for increasing the export of coal products (ANIC 30/1987, 28–30). At the same time, unlike the previous meetings in 1982, 1984 and 1985, when the Romanian leader denounced the domestic situation in Poland, at the 1987 meeting, Ceaușescu began his speech in a different tone, justifying his refusal to implement reforms in Romania, on Gorbachev’s model (ANIC 30/1987, 4). The meeting closed with a mere promise on the Polish side that in case there were an additional amounts of coal, they would be delivered to the Romanian side. Therefore, the visit would reinforce the failure of Romanian-Polish economic negotiations in the last communist decade.

This was also clearly apparent in the common statement, where, notwithstanding the assertion that the Romanian-Polish relations had consistently seen “an upward trend in the political, economic, scientific-technical, cultural area and in other areas...” (ANIC 377/1987, 100), that was questioned in the following paragraph. There it was stated that during discussions “the two leaders called for the continuous expansion and development of relations between parliaments, government bodies, trade unions, youth organisations and social organisations, and between counties and provinces in the two countries” (AMAE 827/1987, 49), and regarding scientific-technical and economic cooperation, the statement also refers to “the need to step up action for the consistent fulfilment of tasks embodied in the long-term programme of development of economic and scientific-technical cooperation between the SRR and the PPR, the growth in the share, within commercial exchanges, of products developed through cooperation and specialisation” (AMAE 827/1987, 50).

Conclusions

The development of Romanian-Polish economic relations during the period 1985–1987 is the result of a complicated international context, in which the ways in which the leadership of the two countries responded to the economic crisis led them in different directions. Thus, the new changes in the Kremlin, but also the thawing of Soviet-American meant both the end of the isolation of the PPR, but also of the Romanian-Polish economic cooperation. This failure was noticed very well by the BBC correspondent for Central and Eastern Europe, Gabriel Partos, who summarised the development of Romanian-Polish relations in the 1980s thus: “the sober general seems to have little in common with the Romanian president who continues the stalinist tradition of the “personality cult”, which the leaders of the soviet bloc have given up over the years. The differences refer not only to the personalities of the two, but also to the policies they pursue. Poland and Romania are, perhaps, the most diverse societies in the Warsaw Pact. The Warsaw leader tolerates pluralistic society, with a strong Catholic Church, but also a wide range of views voiced in the state-controlled or unofficial press. No such tolerance exists in Romania, where the regime systematically violates human rights... What Romania and Poland have in common is their dire economic situation, marked by the shortage of goods, selective rationing and long queues before shops...” (ANIC 354/1987, 115). He further noted, a kind of “crisis alliance” was formed between Bucharest and Warsaw, after the imposition of the martial law in Poland and the decision of Romania to fully pay off the foreign debt, which led both countries to conduct trade with members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance [CMEA]. That brought “a big increase in bilateral trade, in order to substitute goods imported from the West... but as the economic sanctions against Poland were lifted, the importance of Romania, as well as that of CMEA, for Warsaw, on the whole, declined...” (ANIC 354/1987, 115).

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