

December 21, 1989
**Informational Note from the Romanian Embassy in
Moscow to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
(Bucharest)**

Citation:

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Summary:

Informational Note from the Romanian Embassy in Moscow to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Bucharest) regarding requests by Soviets for more information on the situation in Romania due to various press reports

Original Language:

Romanian

Contents:

Translation - English

21 December 1989, 8:00 am

Cde. Ion Stoian, Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Cde. Costantin Oancea, Deputy Foreign Minister,
DR1

During the evening of 20 December 1989, I was invited in audience at I. P. Aboimov, Deputy Foreign Minister of USSR. He related to me the following:

1. Lately, the Soviet press published news in connection to events unfolding in Romania, specifically with the events in Timisoara. It is true that some of the published materials are based, generally, on foreign [i.e. not Romanian] sources. It is evident that the [Soviet] mass media need information on the basis of which to inform the public. Aside from this, during meetings with foreign journalists, there were many requests addressed to the Soviet [government] to state its position in regards with the events taking place in Romania as they were presented by various press agencies. Furthermore, during his recent visits in Brussels and London, [Foreign Minister Edward] Shevardnadze was asked to state his opinion vis-à-vis those events. In London, after the official talks ended, the Soviet Foreign Minister had a difficult time convincing [Prime Minister Margaret] Thatcher that there should be no comments to the press on the events allegedly taking place in Romania. The [Romanian] Foreign Ministry is also informed that interest in this matter was expressed during working meetings of the Second Congress of the People's Deputies taking place in Moscow at this time. The [Soviet] ambassador in Bucharest was instructed to contact the Romanian government and obtain, from authorized officials, information to confirm or refute the version of the events distributed by foreign press agencies. To this date, the Soviet Embassy was unable to obtain and transmit any such information.

Due to such problems, the Soviet government asks that the Romanian government send an informational note, even one that is restricted [cu caracter inchis] regarding the events that are really taking place in Romania. [The Soviet government] is interested in receiving information that is as comprehensive as possible. If information is not received, it would be extremely difficult to create an effective set of directions for the Soviet mass media, with which there are, even so, many difficulties. [The Soviet government] is worried that, based on the news reported in the press, some of the deputies participating at the sessions, would ask that the 2nd Congress of the People's Deputies take a position vis-à-vis the alleged events taking place in Romania. The MFA prepared for the deputies an information note in which it stresses that it does not have any official information, but it is possible that this argument will not be accepted long. Based on the information available to the MFA, the Congress will adopt a resolution with regards to the US military actions in Panama.

Of course, there is no connection between the two events. In Panama, a foreign military intervention is taking place, while in Romania the events are domestic in nature. I. P. Aboimov stressed his previous request that the Romanian government send, in the spirit of cooperation between the two countries, an informational note truthfully describing the current situation in the country.

2. The Soviet MFA received a series of complaints that the border between the Soviet Union and Romania has been closed for Soviet citizens, especially tourists. The Soviet government was not previously informed with regards to this development. [T]his omission causes consternation. The Soviet government is not overly concerned with the situation, but [notes that] it creates difficulties with tourists that have already paid for and planned their vacations accordingly.

3. With regards to the above statements, I said that I would, of course, inform Bucharest of this. At the same time, I expressed the displeasure [of the Romanian government] with the fact that the Soviet radio, television and newspapers have distributed news regarding events in Romania taken from foreign news agencies, agencies that are distributing distorted and overtly antagonistic stories regarding the

situation in Romania. I gave concrete examples of such stories published in newspapers such as Izvestia, Pravda, Komsomolskaia Pravda, Krasnaia Zvezda, stories distributed by western press agencies as well as the Hungarian Press Agency MTI, which is known for its antagonistic attitude towards our country. In that context, I mentioned that the Romanian government has not requested that the Soviet Union inform it concerning events unfolding in Grozny or Nagornii-Karabakh, nor has it published any news stories obtained from Western press agencies, believing that those [events] are strictly an internal matter concerning [only] the Soviet government.

I expressed my displeasure with the fact that some Soviet correspondents in Bucharest-including the TASS correspondent-have transmitted materials from unofficial sources, which contain untruthful descriptions of the events and which create in [the mind of] the Soviet public an erroneous impression of the situation existing in our country. I stressed the point that such behavior is not conducive to strengthening the relationship between our peoples and governments, on the contrary, causing [only] serious damage [to said relationship]. I brought to the attention of the Deputy Foreign Minister in no uncertain terms that a resolution of the Congress of the People's Deputies [concerning] the alleged events taking place in Romania would be an action without precedent in the history of relations between the two countries and would cause serious damage to the relationship.

At I. P. Aboimov's question, I described the events regarding the situation of pastor László Tokes, as described in your memorandum, stressing that this information does not have an official character. I presented, in no uncertain terms, the decision of [the government of] Romania to reject any attempts at interference in the internal matters of Romania. I expressed the decision [of the Romanian leadership] to take any necessary measures against disruptive and diversionary actions perpetrated by reactionary, anti-Romanian circles, by foreign special services and espionage agencies (servicii speciale si oficinele de spionaj staine). With regard to the issue of tourists crossing the border in Romania, I said that I did not possess an official communication in this regard. I suggested that some temporary measures were adopted due to the need to limit access of certain groups of tourists [in the country]. [Those limitations were imposed] due to difficulties in assuring their access to hotel rooms and other related essential conditions. Those limitations do not apply to business travel or tourists transiting Romania. I reminded [I. P. Aboimov] that the Soviet government had introduced at different times such limitations on travel for Romanian tourists to certain regions [of the Soviet Union] (Grozny and Armenia), which [had] provoked dissatisfaction.

4. The conversation took place in a calm, constructive atmosphere.

(ss) [Ambassador] Ion Bucur

[1] Edward Sevardnadze traveled to Brussels and London at the end of 1989. On 19 December he met at NATO HQ with NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner and Permanent Representatives of NATO countries.

[2] Prime Minister Thatcher met Shevardnadze in London on 19 December 1989.

[3] The Second Congress of the People's Deputies began its session on 12 December 1989."