

September 3, 1968

**P. Shelest on Romanian Reactions to the Unrest in
Czechoslovakia**

Citation:

"P. Shelest on Romanian Reactions to the Unrest in Czechoslovakia", September 3, 1968, Wilson Center Digital Archive, TsDAHOU, F. 1, Op. 25, Spr. 32, Ll. 168-172.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/112461>

Summary:

P. Shelest reports on observations by small delegations of Ukrainian workers to Romania.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Top Secret C P S U C C At the invitation of the Satu Mare, Maramures, and Suceava county committees and the Tulcea municipal committee of the Romanian Communist Party,³⁵⁶ delegations of workers from Transcarpathia, Ivano-Frankiv'sk, and Chernivtsi oblasts and the city of Izmail, consisting of 3-4 people each, visited these counties of the Socialist Republic of Romania (with which they maintain permanent friendly ties) on 22-26 August to take part in ceremonies commemorating the 24th anniversary of the liberation of the country from fascist oppression. The oblast committees and Izmail municipal committee of the Ukrainian CP reported to the UkrCP CC about the results of these trips and the nature of the meetings and discussions they had with the leaders of the above-mentioned [Romanian] counties. The Soviet delegations witnessed the reactions of the Romanian side to the latest events connected with Czechoslovakia.³⁵⁷ Above all, it was evident that the population of Romania has not been given objective information about the state of affairs. It was also evident that information about the Soviet Union has been hushed up, and that a frenzied atmosphere of hostility has been stirred up against our country. Broadcasts on Soviet radio are being jammed at the same time that broadcasts on all the radio stations of capitalist countries are being received without hindrance. Over the course of three days, the delegation from Ivano-Frankiv'sk oblast (led by the deputy chairman of the oblast executive committee, Cde. A. R. Kakhno) kept on asking the Romanian comrades to give them a Soviet newspaper. These requests, however, went unfulfilled, even though in the past our newspapers always had been on sale in Baia Mare. During commemorations of the liberation anniversary in this city in previous years, Soviet films were always shown, but this year they decided to show only films from the FRG, Italy, and France. The central Romanian newspapers are refusing to publish materials from TASS and instead are providing tendentious coverage of the events in Czechoslovakia, adhering to the same position that the RCP leadership has adopted toward those events. They also frequently rely on information from underground radio stations in Czechoslovakia. The official position of the Romanian leadership vis-à-vis the events in Czechoslovakia was clearly manifested during the conferences, workers' demonstrations, receptions, meetings, and discussions in which the members of the Ukrainian oblast delegations took part. During the speeches at the workers' demonstrations, the first secretaries of the RCP county committees and the RCP Tulcea municipal committee described the assistance provided to the Czechoslovak people by the five socialist countries as an "invasion," "occupation," and other such things. The first secretary of the RCP's Satu Mare county committee, Cde. Uglar,³⁵⁸ even drew a parallel between the dispatch of troops from the socialist countries into the CSSR and the presence of U.S. forces in Vietnam. In response to these statements, certain people in the audience, who had been specially planted there, cried out: "Invaders, go home!" The demonstrations, as a rule, were opened by armed detachments of the so-called "Patriotic Guards," which were recently set up.³⁵⁹ In a speech delivered at a demonstration in Baia Mare, the first secretary of the RCP's Maramures county committee, Cde. Blaj,³⁶⁰ claimed that the sovereignty of the country is under threat. At the end of his speech he declared: "We will not permit any infringement of our sovereignty."³⁶¹ At a meeting in Suceava, the first secretary of the RCP county committee, Cde. Bobu,³⁶² proclaimed a slogan: "We will live, work, fight, and defend our country." But he did not explain whom they would be fighting and from whom they would be protecting the country. During the demonstrations and meetings, there were no slogans at all about Soviet-Romanian friendship. Nor did the speakers bother to say anything about this. The only thing they mentioned about the Soviet Army is that it struggled jointly with the Romanian army against fascism. During the receptions, meetings, and discussions, the Romanians' point of view about the events in Czechoslovakia was imposed on the members of our delegations.³⁶³ For example, in a speech at a reception hosted by the RCP's Satu Mare county committee, in which delegations from Transcarpathian Oblast (led by the chief of the Organizational-Party Work Department of the oblast party committee, Cde. V. Yu. Galla) and from the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Megyei province of Hungary (led by a secretary of the MSzMP province committee, Cde. Kállái) took part,³⁶⁴ the first secretary of the county committee, Cde. Uglar, said: "At the instruction of the RCP CC, I must make a statement to the delegations of the Soviet Union and the Hungarian People's Republic that the Central Committee of our party condemns the measures taken by the Soviet Union and the four other socialist countries toward Czechoslovakia. The Central Committee regards these measures as aggressive acts, of the sort that humanity has

never before known." He then repeated the main points in the well-known speech by N. Ceausescu on this matter.³⁶⁵ Uglar also declared that the RCP CC regrets that the CPSU CC and the Central Committees of the parties of the other socialist countries did not consult with the leaders of the RCP and SRR and did not inform the Romanian leaders of their intentions vis-à-vis the CSSR. He said that after N. Ceausescu's recent trip to the CSSR, the Romanian leader had declared that there was no danger at all of a counterrevolution in Czechoslovakia.³⁶⁶ Members of the Soviet delegations explained to the Romanian comrades that they are mistaken in their assessment of the underlying nature of the Czechoslovak events. During a farewell breakfast in Satu Mare, which was attended by members of the Bureau of the county party committee and members of the county executive committee, Cde. Yu. V. Galla declared that the delegation cannot agree with the statements that Cde. Uglar made at the county committee headquarters and during the meeting, which accused the USSR and other socialist countries of invading the CSSR. "Our army," said Cde. V. Yu. Galla, "has never taken on the role of an invader. Everyone knows that we have an army of liberation. Aggression and invasions are alien to our foreign policy and are antithetical to Marxism-Leninism, the principles of proletarian internationalism, and the essence of our social order." The next speaker, the leader of the delegation from the Szabolcs-Satu Mare³⁶⁷ province of Hungary, Cde. Kállái, also expressed regret about the unfounded allegations that our countries had committed aggression. He declared: "Having survived the counterrevolutionary rebellion of 1956, we [in Hungary] knew better than anyone else that the recent events in Czechoslovakia resembled the situation in Hungary in 1956. One must say with regret that even though the counterrevolutionaries and imperialists drew certain conclusions from the Hungarian events of 1956 and began resorting to other methods, the leaders of the KSC did not draw any sort of lessons from the Hungarian events."³⁶⁸ Of particular interest is a private conversation that Cdes. V. Yu. Galla and Kállái had with Cde. Uglar during one of the lunches. When Cde. V. Yu. Galla asked Cde. Uglar whether he really believes what he was saying during his formal speeches and whether he agrees that the KSC would have been subverted from within by rightist elements, Cde. Uglar responded that he and Dubcek had studied together in Moscow and therefore he understands Dubcek's character extremely well. Cde. Uglar said he was surprised when he learned that Dubcek had been elected First Secretary of the KSC CC. He then said it was deplorable that such a great furor had been stirred up in Romania around the Czechoslovak question. But at that point he shifted the conversation to a different topic, explaining that they were too isolated in their discussion from the others attending the lunch. It is worth noting that, as a rule, the official agenda for our delegations was arranged in such a way that the participants got together with only a small group of people and spent more of their time in transit or at enterprises that were not open on the day of their visit. During the rare contacts that the members of the Soviet delegations had with typical workers in Romania, they heard statements sympathetic to our country. For example, a mechanic on the ferry that transported the delegation from Izmail said: "Who knows where we would be now if there hadn't been the assistance from the Soviet Army and the Russians in general? . . . I wouldn't rule out the possibility that we would be slaves similar to those who are now still under the imperialist yoke." At a festive reception in Baia Mare, some old Romanian Communists asked the delegation from Ivano-Frankiv'sk oblast to convey their greetings to the Communists of the Soviet Union. Reported for informational purposes.

CC SECRETARY, CP OF UKRAINE □□□□ P. SHEBES □ September 1968 No. 1/98