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Conversations Between Emil Bodnăraș, Romanian Party and Government Delegation Leader, and Zhou Enlai, Prime Minister of the State Council of the Peoples Republic of China in Beijing (excerpts)

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Summary:

Bodnaras and Enlai discuss both Romania and China's strained relations with the Soviet Union.

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Cde. Emil Bodnaras: Regarding the Soviet Union, we have had the most serious divergences on a wide range of issues. These issues are well known to you and you know that we have defended our point of view. We know that tendencies to promote the old orientations in our economic, political and military relations can appear, but we have not ceded to them. We have again met with similar tendencies very recently. Even with all that, we cultivate and develop our relations when we can. 68% of the total volume of our foreign trade is with the socialist countries, trade with the Soviet Union accounts for 40% of it. We are interested in having good relations with our powerful neighbor, the first socialist state in the world, despite the different perspectives that we have. Everywhere we meet with them we say "no" on those issues with which we disagree and we seek places where we can say "yes". If we find no such place, each goes back to their home and gets on with their business.

A Party and governmental delegation led by Comrade Ceausescu, in which Comrades Maurer and Niculescu-Mizil also took part, visited Moscow last September [1965]. On that occasion there was a sincere exchange of opinion and we arrived at the common conclusion that, on the basis of the principles of relations between communist, the principles springing from Marxism-Leninism, on the basis of mutual respect, equality, and non-interference in domestic affairs, we can move ahead.

Likewise, we have participated in the work of the XXIIIrd Congress of the CPSU, where Comrade Ceausescu spoke, explaining our party's opinion. But the speech of Kádár, which immediately followed that of Comrade Ceausescu – and therefore could not have been coincidental – was not of a nature to shake us from our orientation or decision. [1] The keystone of proletarian internationalism is devotion to the principles of Marxism-Leninism, and the fact that we have differences with the leadership of the CPSU does not mean that we are adopting an anti-Soviet attitude. At least that is what we believe.

As you know, Brezhnev attended our Party's Congress. Yesterday, when I arrive here I received information from Bucharest that, as a result of an older arrangement, Brezhnev is now visiting Bucharest unofficially. It seems to me that he came with Rusakov, whom I do not know.

Cde. Paul Niculescu-Mizil: I believe he is the deputy head of section in the Central Committee.

Cde. Zhou Enlai: Rusakov knows the problems of China.

Cde. Emil Bodnaras: Brezhnev will stay in Bucharest for three days. When you come to Bucharest you will find out what was discussed.

Cde. Zhou Enlai: Wherever he goes, he talks about us; and the same with us – everywhere we go we talk about them.

Cde. Emil Bodnaras: Never be afraid when you are in Bucharest!

Cde. Li Xiannian: No.

Cde. Zhou Enlai: Suslov is also a great theoretician. Two years ago, when I went to Moscow with some small hopes, Suslov proved to be very obstinate in his views.

Cde. Emil Bodnaras: We saluted your initiative, which was extraordinarily important. We regret that the Soviet comrades did not understand it. But you should know that there those among them who regret that they did not understand. But let's not discuss this now; we will talk about it in Bucharest

At the CPSU Congress the Soviet side proposed to hold a meeting of representatives of all the countries that make up the CMEA and the Warsaw Pact, in order to analyze whether it is possible hold a broader meeting in the shortest time possible. Our delegation agreed to hold such a consultation there, on the spot, only to analyze how such a meeting could be organized. We have been long-proposing that the future meeting at the highest level should take place in Bucharest. On this occasion, we renewed our proposal. Now, a meeting is being along the lines of the CMEA and the Warsaw Pact, of all countries that participate in these organizations. In Moscow, all agreed that this meeting should take place in Bucharest between 1-10 July, with the participation of the general secretaries of the various party Central Committees, the presidents of the Councils of Ministers [prime ministers], and the ministers of foreign affairs and of the armed forces of the countries participating in the CMEA and Warsaw Pact.

We will discuss the details of these issues in Bucharest. There we will have time to analyze them. What I can say is that we are currently involved in a divergence regarding several fundamental problems, with the Soviet side as well as with the others, both along the line of the CMEA – although possibly less there – and, especially, along the line of the Warsaw Pact. Within the Pact we have met with an attempt to institute supra-state organs in order to achieve – as you may remember us discussing last year – someone’s political and military control. Up until now we have said “no” on two occasions: at the meeting of deputy foreign affairs ministers and in the meeting of deputy ministers of the armed forces. Regarding this tendency to organize supra-state organs, political and military, we continue to say “no” and we will say “no” up to the very end. Only this time we’ll say it in Bucharest.

Cde. Paul Niculescu-Mizil: No such supra-state organs will be created with Romania’s participation.

Cde. Emil Bodnaras: Neither within the CMEA nor within the Warsaw Pact.

Cde. Paul Niculescu-Mizil: Nor in any other domain either.

Cde. Emil Bodnaras: Outside of these organizations, whoever wants to create such organs is free to do so on their own responsibility, but we will not permit this within the organisms of which we also are members. We will never agree to the institution of supra-state organs no matter where, and no matter along what lines.

[...]

[1] This was the first time Janos Kádár delivered what became his “well-worn incantation” that “devotion to the USSR” was the “touchstone of internationalism.” This then became a standard refrain of the Hungarian party. See e.g. Zoltán Komócsin, “National Interests and Proletarian Internationalism,” *Pravda*, 18 September 1966; Fritz Ermarth, “Komócsin’s Article in *Pravda* – Excerpts & Comments,” *RFER*, 21 September 1966, OSA, Box 33, Folder 3, Report 105, pp. 3-4. See also Kádár in *Pravda*, 17 September 1967.