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"The Chivu Stoica Plan" (September 1957) A Step on the Road to the "Open Balkans"

Abstract: The author unravels the history (from June to September 1957) of the origin, formalization and promotion of the initiative of the Romanian government ("the Chivu Stoica Plan") to organize multilateral cooperation in the Balkan region. An analysis of the course of events is presented as a result of a study of recently declassified documents from Russian archives (RGANI, AVP RF). The consulting of them allowed the author to supplement significantly previous knowledge of the course of events and their various actors, identify in detail the degree of participation of the Soviet Union in them, clarify and expand the agenda of issues discussed during interactions between Bucharest and Moscow, and clarify the dates and planned options for the development of this initiative. This article supplements and corrects pre-existing opinions of world historiography about the allegedly sharply negative attitude of the Kremlin to this proposal of the Romanian leadership, as well as the perception of this initiative by historians as not only aiming to establish multilateral regional cooperation but also as a result of the Soviet bloc's desire to establish a nuclear-free zone in the Balkans already in 1957.

Keywords: Chivu Stoica, Gheorghiu-Dej, Balkan Pact, Soviet-Romanian relations, Balkan regional cooperation, coexistence, Cold War, 20th century, Diplomatic History

Proposals for the establishment of multilateral cooperation of the Balkan countries or the "Chivu Stoica Plan", advanced by the leadership of Romania in September 1957 and the attitude of the Soviet Union towards them, resonated from the very moment they were put forward. H.E. Salisbury reported from Sofia (Bulgaria) in late September 1957 that "Moscow certainly has given the Balkan conference idea its blessing, it is believed here. Moscow has been repeatedly nudging the East European countries to become more active diplomatically and in particular to develop better relations with their neighbors".¹ Subsequently, this assessment persisted, but under the influence of the ensuing various antinuclear initiatives, the attitude towards them was formed through the perception of the idea of cooperation in the Balkans as a measure to turn the region into a zone free of nuclear weapons. In the political studies literature

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¹ *New York Times*, (27. IX, 1957), 3.

of the late 1970s, Romania was considered “the strongest and most persistent advocate of Balkan co-operation – both bilateral and multilateral”. Researchers traced Romania’s national interest back to 1957, when, “as part of Khrushchev’s policy of détente, Premier Chivu Stoica addressed messages (the ‘Stoica Notes’) to all other Balkan states proposing a conference to promote Balkan détente”. At the same time, his ‘plan’ was described as “closely related to Soviet foreign-policy goals of the time – in particular the desire to prevent the installation of nuclear weapons on Greek and Turkish soil”.²

The waves of declassification of archival documents of communist regimes in the Balkans after 1989–1991 had no impact on the interest in this topic. “New histories” of these countries scarcely even mentioned the “Chivu Stoica Plan” of 1957. Historians preferred the brighter topics of later periods³, at best devoting only a few lines to it even in special monographs on regional or European security.⁴ Interest in the topic appeared only after the publication (in 2003) of a memorandum written by experts of the MFA of Romania in early August 1957 to justify the organization of regional cooperation before consultations in Moscow⁵. After this, the attention of historians was drawn to certain aspects of events in the history of the Balkan countries. The narrative of these actions of the Romanian Prime Minister, as not only aimed at regional cooperation but also an expression of the desire to make Balkan a nuclear-free zone, became dominant again. Of the numerous points of the published memorandum (there was nothing about denuclearization there), attention was paid mainly to those confirming the desire of the Soviet bloc to weaken NATO, the unveiling of the “anti-social policy of the Western governments in the public opinion of Greece and Turkey. The mentioning of the idea of regional denuclearization became dominant in the majority of texts.⁶ In the same paradigm, an article by I. Gridan

² F. S. Larrabee, “Balkan Security: Problems and Prospects.” *The Adelphi Papers* 17/135 (1977), 34.

³ D. Deletant, M. Ionescu, *Romania and the Warsaw Pact: 1955-1989*. Cold War International History Project. Working Paper N 43 (Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2004).

⁴ Й. Баев, *Системата за европейска сигурност и Балканите в годината на Студената война* (София: Издателство «Дамян Яков», 2010), 229.

⁵ Memorandum of the Romanian MFA to the Central Committee of the CPSU (not later than 8 August 1957), in: *KPSS i formirovanie sovetskoj politiki na Balkanah v 1950-h – pervoj polovine 1960-h gg. Sbornik dokumentov*, eds. N. G. Tomilina, K. P. Kozhda-georgi-Zimari, N. D. Smirnova, A. A. Yaz’kova i dr. [The CPSU and the formation of the Soviet policy in the Balkans in the 1950s – the first half of the 1960s. Collection of documents] (Saloniki: Paratiritis, 2003), 136–140. This volume was published in Thessaloniki (Greece) by the Institute for Balkan Studies in Greek and Russian.

⁶ E. Chatzēvasileiou, *Greece and the Cold War: Frontline state, 1952-1967* (London: Routledge, 2006), 93–95; L. Kourkouvelas. “Denuclearization on NATO’s Southern

emphasized the relations between Romania and Greece in the shadow of the great powers in connection with the Bucharest initiative. Her research analyzed the goals of the Romanian Greek rapprochement in this period, and its limits and benefits in terms of propaganda. It revealed that, for Bucharest and Moscow, the Stoica Plan led to a peripheral destabilization of the West. As for the Greek side, it allowed a kind of blackmail around the participation in the NATO alliance. At the end, the global logic of the Cold War won over the regional commentary that described Moscow's attitude to this Romanian initiative extremely harshly, pointing out the logic of Balkan cooperation.⁷ However, later on, some researchers continued to ignore "the Chivu Stoica Plan", failing to mention it even in cases where the discussed topic or chronological framework seemed to require it.⁸ Even the seminal work by Serbian historian V. Cvetković sees this Romanian initiative of September 10th 1957, as an insignificant episode.⁹

In Russian historiography, a negative attitude towards the "Chivu Stoica Plan" was rooted in special Soviet expert works of limited distribution. It was formed before 1989, when any foreign policy step of the Ceausescu regime was perceived with suspicion. This attitude spilled over into this commentary on the publication of the Memorandum of the Romanian MFA (August 9th 1957). The authors of this note considered that "the Soviet Union from the very beginning did not support the idea of inter-Balkan cooperation, seeing it as a possibility for creating, beyond its control, a regional bloc with the participation of its allies in the Warsaw Pact and COMECON". According to these influential ex-Soviet (and by the early 2000s, Russian, but no less influential) experts on

Front Allied Reactions to Soviet Proposals, 1957–1963," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14/4 (2012), 202–203; A.S. Gladysheva, "Poziciya Rumynii po nerasprostraneniyu yadernogo oruzhiya (1955–1968)", [Romania's position on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons], *Slavyanovedenie* 5 (2018), 63. This dominant interpretation of Stoica's initiative (1957) as regional denuclearization was challenged only once, by Prof. John O. Iatrides (Southern Connecticut State University) in his review of one of those texts. See: *H-Diplo Article Reviews* (2013. No. 411), 4. Updated, 13 June 2014; <http://h-diplo.org/reviews/PDF/AR411.pdf>

⁷ I. Gridan, "Le plan Stoica et les relations entre la Roumanie et la Grèce au tournant de la guerre froide (1957) [The Stoica Plan and the Relationship between Romania and Greece at a Turning Point in the Cold War (1957)]". *Cahiers Balkaniques* 44 (2016), 1–14.

⁸ A. Florin, "Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Romania's Eastern Neighbourhood", *Eurimedes* 11 (2011), 11–29; I. Gridan, « L'influence du facteur soviétique sur les relations entre la Roumanie et la Syrie (1955–1975) », *Outre-mers* 94/354–355 (2007), 107–132.

⁹ V. Cvetković, *Pogled iza gvozdena zavese. Jugoslovenska politika prema zemljama narodne demokratije u susedstvu 1953–1958*, [A look through the Iron Curtain. Yugoslav policy towards the neighboring countries of people's democracy 1953–1958] (Belgrade: INIS, 2013) 428–429.

the Balkan region, the proposals of Ahivu Stoika of September 10th “were not published in the official Soviet press”.¹⁰

These assessments heavily influenced the views of subsequent Russian texts. A.S. Stykalin also believed that “the Soviet Union did not support the idea of Balkan cooperation in forms that did not involve the active (and guiding) participation of the Soviet side in it” considering it “a danger of the emergence of a regional bloc out of Soviet control” [...] “capable of strengthening centrifugal tendencies inside the Soviet camp”. The renowned author also considered as “indicative” that the Romanian proposals “found very little echo in the Soviet press”. In his opinion, the reason for the initiative was the “geopolitical vacuum that appeared as a result of the stagnation of the Balkan Pact.” He also paid attention to the position of Romanian leader Gheorghiu Gheorghiu-Dej, who (from the end of 1956), according to Stykalin, “already at that time showed a tendency towards a more independent foreign policy”, trying to create “more purposeful mechanisms to counter Soviet liberal influences generated by the 20th CPSU Congress and Khrushchev’s anti-Stalinist revelations”.¹¹ Several years later, the productive Russian academic scholar A. A. Ulunyan, in his voluminous book *The Balkan Shield of Socialism*, sidelined the “Chivu Stoica plan” of 1957, depicting it by synthesizing the works of Russian and Western historians and agreeing with the majority of previous judgments about the negative assessment of it in Moscow and the minimal interest in it expressed by Balkan Pact member countries, including Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, at the same time, the experienced researcher mentioned the importance of the “Stoica Plan” for “the Romanian leaders for strengthening the position of their state in relations with the Balkan countries”.¹²

The contradictory processes of de-Stalinization that had been unfolding in the Soviet camp since the spring of 1953 (and especially from the summer of 1956) went in parallel with the creation of the Warsaw Pact (May 1955) and questioned the legitimacy of the presence of Soviet troops in the territory of Romania and Hungary. All these events became elements of Moscow’s new foreign policy course after unrests in Poland and Hungary (June – early November

¹⁰ KPSS *i formirovanie sovetской politiki na Balkanah ...* [The CPSU and the formation of Soviet policy in the Balkans...], 140.

¹¹ A. S. Stykalin, “Proekty regional’nogo sotrudnichestva chernomorskih i balkanskikh gosudarstv i poziciya SSSR (1950-e – nachalo 1960-h godov)” [Regional Cooperation Projects of the Black Sea and Balkan States and the Position of the USSR (1950s - early 1960s)], *Studia Balcanica* (2010), 328; 334–335.

¹² A. A. Ulunyan, *Balkanskij «shchit socializma». Oboronnaya politika Albanii, Bolgarii, Rumynii i Yugoslavii (seredina 50-h gg. – 1980 g.)* [Balkan “shield of socialism”. Defense policy of Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia (mid-1950s – 1980)] (Moskva: Russkij fond sodejstviya obrazovaniyu i nauke, 2013), 24.

1956). The Soviet leadership sought to streamline new frames of relations with its post-Stalinist ex-satellite states. Moscow sought ways and methods to transform its relations into partnership, trying to implement principles proclaimed in the Declaration on equal relations between the countries of the Soviet camp of October 30th 1956, after Moscow began to implement them in practice in January 1957. At the same time, forceful methods of organizing confrontation with the West continued to be relevant in the spring of 1957. Moscow reacted positively to Tirana's proposal to strengthen the naval base on the Albanian coast. Having studied this proposal, the Defense Minister of the USSR, G.K. Zhukov, reported to the Soviet leadership the desirability of accepting Tirana's initiative, describing it as "expedient". Nevertheless, in his opinion, it was "desirable" "given the political side of this issue [...] that this base should be Albanian, since the creation of a Soviet naval base on the coast of the PRA [People's Republic of Albania] could provoke a sharp reaction from the Western powers." The Minister "judged it possible to organize the deployment of 4 medium submarines, 4 small anti-submarine ships and auxiliary vessels in the Gulf of Vlora. On April 18, the Kremlin decided to send a group of six Soviet specialists headed by the Deputy Commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Vice Admiral S.K. Chursin, to Albania to exchange views on the creation of a naval base there.¹³ Over the same days, the Soviet leaders, agreeing with the plans of the military leadership of the USSR (after discussions at an earlier meeting with the military delegations of the countries of the Soviet bloc in January 1957) took the decision "to send a group of specialist officers of the Navy to Poland, Romania, Bulgaria to assess the possibility of using the naval bases of these countries "in case of temporary deployment of USSR Navy forces in them, if the situation should require".¹⁴

In mid-June 1957, Moscow received a telegram from the USSR Ambassador to Romania, A.A. Yepishev, who reported that "Comrade Gheorghiu-Gheorghiu-Dej expressed the desire to take some steps to further ease international tension and improve relations between the countries of the socialist camp with Greece and Turkey". Yepishev informed Moscow that "as one of these steps Gheorghiu-Gheorghiu-Dej suggests, it is possible to take the initiative to sign a non-aggression pact between the Balkan countries." The Ambassador also transmitted Dej's view that, if the Soviet leadership should agree to this idea, Bucharest was ready to "send Romanian representatives to Moscow for consultations and development of possible practical measures".¹⁵

¹³ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 205. L. 25–27. Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj arhiv novejshej istorii (hereinafter – RGANI). F. 3. Op. 12. D. 205. L. 25–27. Russian State Archive of Contemporary History.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, L. 37.

¹⁵ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 235. L. 26. Yepishev's message was transmitted in two cipher telegrams Nos. 207–208, which, like most such reports, are still inaccessible to research-

Experts from the Soviet MFA positively assessed Dej's proposal. On June 18th, Foreign Minister Gromyko advised the Soviet leadership to respond affirmatively to Dej's proposal. He believed that "the implementation of such an event by the countries of the socialist camp would help to strengthen their leading role in the struggle for peace and ease tension in the Balkans" and would expose the hostile propaganda of the reactionary circles in Greece and Turkey about a danger to them "from their northern neighbors"; In his opinion, such a step "would intensify the activities of the democratic circles in these countries in their struggle to improve relations with the socialist countries and would also benefit the cause of normalizing relations between Albania and Bulgaria with Greece and Turkey." Gromyko believed that "the event, to a certain extent, will contribute to the undermining of the Baghdad and Balkan pacts and the rapprochement of Yugoslavia with the countries of the socialist camp". Bucharest's initiative was called "appropriate ... considering that Romania has the closest relations with Greece and Turkey, as well as Yugoslavia, and the leading circles of these countries are interested in further improving relations with Romania." According to experts of the Soviet MFA, "the government of Romania could turn to the governments of Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia with a proposal to conclude a non-aggression pact in which the participating countries mutually undertake to refrain from any attack against each other and respect independent rights, sovereignty, territorial integrity and, in the event of disputes and conflicts, the parties will resolve these disputes exclusively by peaceful means in a friendly exchange of views".¹⁶ Gromyko suggested that the top Soviet leadership would decide on a positive answer at their next meeting on June 22nd.¹⁷ However, the political struggle that unfolded in the Soviet leadership in the last weeks of June in the aftermath of the unsuccessful attempt by the majority of the members of the Presidium to remove Khrushchev (supported by the majority of CC CPSU members) from senior government positions did not allow them to give an answer to Gheorghiu-Dej in that period.¹⁸

The instructions to the USSR Ambassador to Romania were adopted only on July 5th in the same version as the Foreign Ministry had proposed on June 18th: "Inform Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej that Moscow is positive about the proposal he made regarding measures to conclude a non-aggression pact be-

ers for academic purposes. Therefore, the exact date of the meeting and the details of its content remain unknown.

¹⁶ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 235. L. 26–27.

¹⁷ A. Sorokin, *Prakticheskij rabotnik Georgij Malenkov*. [Practical Worker Georgij Malenkov] (Moskva: AFK «Sistema» – Politicheskaya enciklopediya, 2021), 649–653.

¹⁸ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 234. L. 5. To discuss the issue, Gromyko, his deputy Semyonov, and Zamchevsky, head of the IV European Department of the USSR Foreign Ministry, were summoned to the meeting.

tween the Balkan countries. It would be expedient for our Romanian friends to take this initiative. Say that, for the purpose of a preliminary discussion of the issue and preparation of possible practical steps, we agree to see Romanian representatives, as suggested by Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej".¹⁹

It took the Romanian side a month to prepare the proposals. During this time, the circumstances for the implementation of the initiative in the Balkans had become much more favorable. On August 1–2, near Bucharest, in the village of Snagov, a summit was held between the delegations of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.²⁰ These talks created the impression that a new fundamental rapprochement between Moscow and Belgrade was beginning, which would inevitably have a positive effect on the situation in the region. To date, researchers are unaware of any evidence that the Soviet delegation during this visit to Romania had consultations on this issue or at least touched upon it in some form during brief meetings with the hosts.

In early August, the Romanians transmitted through diplomatic channels to Moscow two documents containing detailed proposals elaborating on Dej's idea. The first of these was a memorandum substantiating the importance of an attempt to foster cooperation between the Balkan countries. The second was the draft text for the future letter to the Prime Minister of Turkey from the Romanian government. A delegation from the Romanian MFA was about to arrive in Moscow to discuss them.²¹

In this memorandum of the Romanian Foreign Ministry, the authors went much further than the necessity to "conclude a non-aggression pact between the Balkan countries", which Dej had proposed to Yepishev "as one of the steps" in mid-June. The Romanian text outlined a whole package of measures to create multilateral regional cooperation among the Balkan countries. In the introductory part, it was stated that the international environment now allowed the RPR [Romanian People's Republic] to take this initiative. The authors believed that, in order to create strong security guarantees, the Balkan countries should commit to refraining from any act of aggression in their relations, resolv-

¹⁹ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 234. L. 25.

²⁰ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 260. L. 3; 6–8. A. B. Edemskij, "O fiksacii dogovorennostej sovetko-yugoslavskoj vstrechi v Rumynii 1–2 avgusta 1957 g." [On fixing the agreements of the Soviet-Yugoslav meeting in Romania on August 1–2, 1957] *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya v XX veke. Sbornik nauchnyh statej*. Вып. 5. (Kirov, 2016), 228–249; Н. Ж. Петровић, *Војна сарадња Југославије са Совјетским Савезом 1953–1964 године. Погледи из Београда* [Yugoslav Military Cooperation with the Soviet Union 1953–1964. Views from Belgrade] (Београд: Медијациентар Одрбана, 2016), 99–103. The assumption by I. Gridan that the idea of Balkan cooperation was discussed in Moscow on July 18 by Khrushchev, Zhivkov, Hodza, Kardelj and Ranković (see: I. Gridan, "Le plan Stoica...", 4) still lacks archival findings to support it.

²¹ RGANI... F. 5. Op. 49. D. 19 L. 186.

ing disputed issues through peaceful mediation and arbitration. They also considered the peaceful development of the region as an important contribution to the easing of international tension. The fact that this initiative was put forward not by a great power (USSR – A. E.) but by Romania was considered by the authors to be important for its success, “since in the past, albeit under different conditions”, Romania had developed fruitful relations with the Balkan countries. With a view to the comprehensive development of economic and cultural cooperation, the Romanian government proposed the creation of special bodies that take into account the interests of the Balkan participating countries and submit appropriate recommendations to the governments. The cooperation was supposed to cover all spheres, ranging from transport, energy, and other economic sectors to “the establishment of common scientific and cultural institutions, such as the Institute of Balkan History, the Institute of Balkan Folklore, etc.”

A serious specific measure, the document pointed out, was the proposal to send letters on behalf of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Romanian People’s Republic to prime ministers of other countries in the region, suggesting to convene in Bucharest in November 1957 a conference of the heads of state of all Balkan countries to discuss the proposal of the Romanian government and any other issues related to the cooperation in the Balkans that the participants of the conference may put forward. Its minimum result, according to experts from the Romanian MFA, would be the adoption of a general declaration, like that of the Bandung Conference, concerning peace, security, non-aggression and all-around cooperation between the Balkan countries based on the principles of peaceful coexistence. A second general document could be adopted as a special declaration containing mutual assurances of non-aggression.

Justifying the need for the initiative, experts from the Romanian MFA emphasized the importance of developing economic ties with Greece and Turkey. Bucharest also believed that “the signing of an agreement and the establishment of cooperation between Turkey and Greece and the Balkan socialist countries could influence and, under public pressure, gradually weaken Greece and Turkey’s ties with the North Atlantic Pact” and “put into question the Balkan Pact” as well even if it would “continue to the memorandum hoped, would be “a step towards the abolition of the three-sided Balkan Pact”.

Romanian experts also planned “preliminary consultations on these issues with the Albanian and Bulgarian governments.” Bucharest stressed the particular importance of Yugoslavia’s position, believing that statements of official Belgrade in support of this proposal “would have a positive impact on the position of Greece and Turkey”. The document exuded confidence that Belgrade would be able to attract cooperation because the Yugoslav government “would find it difficult to explain to the Yugoslav people” why the country had joined the Balkan Pact but refused to cooperate with the Balkans as that would contradict

the policy of 'active peaceful coexistence' proclaimed by Belgrade. In this memorandum, the experts espoused a realistic approach, considering the possibility that Turkey and Greece might reject the listed proposals. They believed that the listed measures, if Turkey and Greece did not agree to them, would contribute "to exposing the anti-people policy of their ruling circles".²²

The second document submitted to Moscow, along with the memorandum, was the draft for a letter to the Prime Minister of Turkey. This text consisted of 18 points of different lengths. The content of most of them echoed or was close to the content of the note. Only Paragraph 11 was new. It proposed "to provide for the development of fruitful cooperation [...] in research in the field of peaceful use of nuclear energy".²³ Some of the others recalled the positive experience of the previous successful cooperation between Romania and Turkey. The title of the proposed document showed that, although letters were to be sent to the heads of all governments of the countries in the region, as indicated in the memorandum, Bucharest put a special emphasis on Turkey.²⁴

The content of both documents convincingly indicates that the main idea expressed by Gheorghiu Gheorghiu-Dej in June (Non-Aggression Pact between the states of the region) was significantly expanded, becoming a proposal "on the organization of collective regional cooperation among the Balkan countries." The initial proposal, a non-aggression pact, was included in a broader cooperation platform.

The positive Soviet assessments of the Romanian proposals were detailed in the materials prepared in the Soviet MFA. In a brief note dated August 12th, Gromyko's deputy V. V. Kuznetsov considered it possible "to agree in principle with the proposals of the Romanian comrades." Kuznetsov thought it important to suggest some adjustments ("During the upcoming conversations, make some comments on the draft letter to the Prime Minister of Turkey"). MFA was to "suggest that the text ought to more clearly express the idea that the Balkan regional cooperation should help reduce tensions in relations between countries and should be an important step towards creating a system of common European security". Kuznetsov considered it necessary for Bucharest to consult not only with Albania and Bulgaria but "with all the members of the Warsaw Pact." The Soviet MFA's experts also judged it "expedient to hold consultations with the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, which should be agreed with the Romanian delegation." The memorandum also discussed consultations with Yugoslavia: "if the Romanian side should raise the question of holding this consultation by the Soviet Union, consent to this". The idea of sending letters to

²² RGANI. F. 5. Op. 49. D. 19. L. 190–191.

²³ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 49. D. 19. L. 198.

²⁴ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 49. D. 19. L. 194.

the Greek and Turkish heads of government was also approved. The timing of their delivery, as well as their date of publication, was to be determined after an exchange of views with other socialist countries. All these suggestions were included in the draft instructions to the Soviet delegation for the meeting with the Romanian side. The draft and accompanying documents were urgently considered and approved by the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU on the day the Romanian delegation, headed by Foreign Minister Maurer, arrived in Moscow. In the adopted decision, the upcoming meetings were described as “an exchange of views with the delegation of the Romanian Foreign Ministry.”²⁵ That day, a document with the full title “Instructions to Soviet representatives in the exchange of views with representatives of Romania”, prepared by the USSR Foreign Ministry, was also adopted. The last point in this text discussed the importance of the agreement with the Romanians that the Soviet side had to “give consent to the Romanian friends to assist in the final preparation of the text of the documents” after they finish consultations with all the countries of the socialist bloc and Yugoslavia.²⁶

The results of the consultations held on June 15–16 are known from the “Record of negotiations between the delegations of the Romanian Foreign Ministry and the USSR Foreign Ministry.”²⁷ A comparison of “Instructions...” and “Records...” demonstrates that, during the consultations, the Romanian side accepted the Soviet recommendations. The parties specified the goals of the initiative: “The proposal of the Romanian government to create a collective regional cooperation of the Balkan countries is a useful initiative in easing international tension and strengthening peace not only in Europe but also in Asia. This measure will help strengthen the socialist camp and serve to undermine the positions of the imperialist powers in the Balkan region.” Sending letters on behalf of the Government of Romania to the heads of state in the region “as a first step, was considered expedient.”²⁸ As for the draft letter to the Prime Minister of Turkey, in early August, it was agreed to use it as “the basis of the letter to the heads of governments of other Balkan countries.” It was also decided “to express in a letter more clearly the idea that Balkan regional cooperation should help reduce tensions in relations between countries and should be an important step towards creating a system of common European security.” It was also considered important in the texts of the letters to governments “to emphasize the idea that

²⁵ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 14. D. 141. L. 125–126.

²⁶ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 14. D. 141. L. 159.

²⁷ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 14. D. 142. L. 16–18. The document was signed by Romanian Deputy head of MFA Lazarescu, and by I.K. Zamchevsky, head of 4th Department of Soviet MFA (responsible for relations with South-East Europe) as a member of the Collegium of the Soviet MFA (*Ibid.*, L.18).

²⁸ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 14. D. 142. L. 16.

this cooperation is not a separate action of the Balkan countries and will not impede the development of friendship between these countries and other countries that are part of the regional cooperation of the Balkan countries." The result of the exchange of opinions in Moscow between the two delegations was also "the recognition as expedient" of holding preliminary consultations in the following sequence: first of all, with Albania and Bulgaria, then with Yugoslavia and the countries participating in the Warsaw Pact. The delegations also "agreed that extensive consultations with Albania and Bulgaria as parties to the proposed agreement, and then with Hungary, the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia, would be held by Romania simultaneously. A special approach to Poland was agreed: "It was considered expedient that the Romanian government should do this after negotiations on this issue with the above countries." Joint actions regarding Belgrade were also agreed upon. "In consultation with Yugoslavia, the Romanian side will report that the issue of collective regional cooperation of the Balkan countries was discussed with the Soviet Union and received its full support." Additional consultations (a "corresponding meeting" of representatives of the USSR and Romania) on Yugoslavia were specifically stipulated if "in the course of consultations with Yugoslavia, the Romanian friends need to consult with the government of the USSR." For its part, the USSR took upon itself the task of exchanging "information and consultations with China and other socialist countries of Asia." The attitude towards the Balkan Pact was also specifically stipulated. Both sides confirmed that it was "essentially directed against the socialist countries". It was also described as "expedient", "in the event that its participants, in response to the proposal of the Romanian government, offer the rest of the Balkan countries to join the Balkan Pact", the participants in the Soviet bloc should "without rejecting this proposal, stipulate entry into this Pact with the conditions that this step would aim to eliminate the military side of this Pact and bring it closer to the proposed regional cooperation".²⁹

As can be seen from the signed document, at this stage, the initial Romanian emphasis on the letter to the Turkish Prime Minister was glossed over, and sending letters to both Turkey and Greece was considered an equally important step. During the consultations, an additional decision arose on the information and propaganda support of the Romanian initiative: "It was also recognized as expedient to send an informative letter to the United Nations with a request to forward it to all UN member states" simultaneously with sending letters to the Prime Minister of Greece and Turkey, in the expectation that this "will attract the attention of the general public to the peace initiative of the Romanian government". The last agreed item of the document was the synchronization of the deadlines: "[...] to complete all consultations and preparation of relevant

²⁹ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 14. D. L. 17–18.

materials” for their publication before the opening of the 12th session of the UN General Assembly. In addition, it was decided (“deemed appropriate”) to use the press to shape public opinion (the wording in the document is “mobilization of public opinion” – A. E.) in support of this proposal.” The press departments of both foreign ministries were instructed to “develop appropriate plans for this campaign.” In addition, “it was considered desirable, after the completion of preliminary consultations with other socialist countries, for representatives of the Romanian MFA and the Soviet MFA to meet to finalize the text of documents on this issue”.³⁰

The results of consultations in Moscow between the diplomats of the two countries were discussed in Bucharest at a meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Romania on August 19. As soon as Yepishev, the Soviet ambassador to Romania, was informed about the results of this meeting, he reported to Moscow that the Romanian leadership “for tactical reasons, considers as expedient to begin an exchange of views with the Yugoslav leaders at a high level simultaneously with consultations with Albanian and Bulgarian friends”.³¹ Therefore, they were planning to send to Belgrade “after August 23rd a delegation of members of the Politburo headed by comrade Gheorghiu-Dej”. Explaining the position of the Politburo of the Romanian Workers’ Party (henceforth RWP), Yepishev added: “The Romanian friends proceed from the fact that their informal negotiations with Yugoslav representatives at a high level will help clarify Yugoslavia’s attitude towards the Romanian proposal, bypassing the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the FPRY K. Popović as Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej said Romanians do not trust him”.³²

On August 22nd, at a meeting of the Presidium of the CC CPSU, the action plan developed at a joint meeting of the Soviet MFA and the Romanian MFA was approved in the final document after the consultations. In addition, information was sent to the Soviet Ambassador to Beijing to inform the Chinese leadership of the ongoing preparations.³³ Beijing was informed of “the preliminary discussion at the request of Romanian friends” held in Moscow at

³⁰ *Ibid.* L. 18. On August 18, Deputy Gromyko Kuznetsov succinctly and briefly reported to the Soviet leadership on the consultations, drawing attention to the most important agreed points (RGANI, F. 3. Op. 12. D. 257. L. 29–30.)

³¹ RGANI. F.3. Op. 12. L. 25. Op. 14. L. 18.

³² RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 257. L. 34. Bucharest’s interest in Belgrade’s position was not surprising. Even at the very beginning of the development of the “Stoica Plan”, the experts of the Romanian MFA believed that “special attention should be paid to how this issue will be presented to Yugoslavia”. And they considered it necessary “to interest the Yugoslav leaders in accepting the invitation to take part in the conference, because this would affect the position of Greece and possibly of Turkey. See: *KPSS i formirovaniye sovetsskoy politiki na Balkanah*, 139–140.

³³ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 14. D. 142. L. 2.

the Foreign Ministry level, and the upcoming consultations "with all countries of the socialist camp", with a subsequent return "to this issue to prepare appropriate proposals, taking into account the opinions of friends." The text of the telegram to the Soviet Ambassador ended with a request to Beijing to report "the opinion of Chinese friends on the essence of the Romanian proposal". A special expression of trust in Beijing (unlike the Polish leadership these months) was the instruction to the Soviet ambassador that, "if the Chinese comrades ask for the text of the messages, you can do so".³⁴ The Romanian visit to Yugoslavia was also discussed. The day before, on August 21st, experts from the USSR Foreign Ministry evaluated the decision of the Romanian leadership: "The arguments of the Romanian comrades about having consultations with Yugoslavia simultaneously with consultations with Albania and Bulgaria are justified". As for the suggestion to send a delegation headed by Gheorghiu-Dej to Belgrade, they thought it appropriate "to express doubts to the Romanian friends about the expediency of Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej's trip" since "the trip of such a representative delegation emphasizes the special interest of Romania in this event and puts Gheorghiu-Dej in the position of a petitioner in front of the Yugoslavs". Soviet experts admitted the possibility of a negative attitude of the Yugoslavs to the Romanian proposal, which "would make it difficult for the Romanian comrades to continue the negotiations". The hope of the Romanians to use a direct top-level meeting between Dej and Josip Broz Tito to "isolate the negative influence of Koča Popović" seemed to the experts as ill-conceived since "there are no sufficient grounds to believe that K. Popović would not be informed about the Romanian proposal". With this in mind, the experts considered it possible "to advise the Romanian friends to hold preliminary consultations with Yugoslavia without the participation of Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej, so that, if necessary, Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej would be able to take some additional steps, taking into account the identified preliminary position of the Yugoslavs".³⁵

The following Soviet officials discussed Yepishev's telegram on Gheorghiu-Dej's idea to go to Belgrade and talk to Tito: Suslov, Brezhnev, Pervukhin and Kuznetsov. It was decided that Yepishev ought to inform the leadership of Romania that Moscow "considers it desirable [...] to exercise caution" and postpone the trip to Belgrade of the Romanian delegation headed by Gheorghiu-Dej". An "incognito" trip to Belgrade for consultations was also described as "inappropriate", since the visit of "such an authoritative delegation ... would be impossible to hide".³⁶

³⁴ RGANI. F. 3, Op. 14, D. 142, L. 19–21.

³⁵ RGANI. F. 3, Op. 14, D. 142, L. 19–21. RGANI. F. 3, Op. 12, D. 257, L. 34–35.

³⁶ RGANI. F. 3, Op. 14, D. 142, L. 2.

To this day, we know only the most general and fragmentary facts about the consultations of the representatives of Romania with their counterparts in the countries of the Soviet bloc and Yugoslavia on August 29th.³⁷ On that day, Belgrade hosted Bodnăraș, a member of the Romanian Politburo, and Foreign Minister Maurer “to discuss final plans for the proposed conference”.³⁸ However, the subsequent developments showed that the consultations were successful.

At the beginning of September, the preparations were proceeding smoothly. On September 5th, during a visit to Moscow by Maurer, the head of the Romanian MFA, the draft of a letter from Chivu Stoica to the Prime Minister of Turkey was finalized. On September 6th, the Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, reporting to the top Soviet leadership on the final consultations with Maurer, wrote that Bucharest intended to send a letter to Ankara and “letters of similar content to the governments of Greece, Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria on September 10–12”. The Soviet minister recalled that “the draft letter submitted by the Romanian comrades was prepared with taking into account the exchange of views with Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia” and the comments made during the Soviet-Romanian consultations in mid-August in Moscow. Gromyko also reported that the Soviet MFA had considered the draft letter brought by Maurer and, together with representatives of the Romanian MFA, agreed on its text.³⁹ The following day, the decision proposed by Gromyko was formalized as a resolution of the top Soviet leadership “On the Letter of the Romanian Government to the Prime Minister of Turkey on the establishment of collective regional cooperation of the Balkan countries.” It was decided to “agree with the prepared text”.⁴⁰

The personal messages Chivu Stoica sent on September 10 to the Balkan heads of state (found in the Archives of Athens and Belgrade)⁴¹ marked the

³⁷ On the meeting with the Albanian side on August 29, 1957, see: A. S. Gladysheva, “Poziciya Rumynii po nerasprostranenyu”, 63.

³⁸ The consultations became public knowledge when they were revealed in the American press just three weeks later. See: H. Salisbury, “Tito-Rumania Tie Close”. *The New York Times*, 27. IX 1957, 3. A day earlier, a short vague note about this visit was included in the daily CIA Briefing Bulletin. See: 5 Yugoslavs favor Rumanian proposal for Balkan states meeting. *Current CIA Intelligence Bulletin* (19th Sept. 1957), 7. There is also a doubtful version of the content of the conversations known in historiography. See: A. S. Stykalin, “Proekty regional'nogo sotrudnichestva”, 327, 335.

³⁹ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 12. D. 264 L. 105.

⁴⁰ RGANI. F. 3. Op. 14. D. 148 L. 5.

⁴¹ E. Chatzēvasileiou, *Greece and the Cold War*, 95; V. Cvetković, *Pogled iza gvozdene zavese*, 428. The basic version of Russian historiography that the initiative was launched with the publication of his Appeal in the Romanian central newspaper *Scienceia* on September 10th (see: KPSS *i formirovanie sovjetskoj politiki na Balkanah*, 140) should be considered erroneous.

beginning of the third stage of the Romanian initiative – the stage of implementation. On September 13, Tito replied to Stoica.⁴² After Bucharest received the reply, the initiative became public. On September 17th, the Romanian newspaper *Scinteia* published an Appeal to the Heads of Government of the Balkan countries. It occupied almost the entire front page of the issue. On September 18, the message of Chivu Stoica and J. Broz Tito's reply were published on the front pages in the central Yugoslav newspapers simultaneously with the publication of Tito's reply on the same day in *Scinteia*. The popular Belgrade newspaper *Politika* also published a positive editorial commentary on the same day.⁴³ On September 19th, *Scinteia* once again ran a lengthy commentary on its front page, praising the "Stoica plan" and its enthusiastic reception it in the world.

The Soviet central press, in accordance with the arrangements made at the consultations on August 15–16, began to report in detail on the Stoica Plan from September 18, when an article entitled "For all-round peaceful cooperation between all Balkan countries. Message from Chivu Stoica to the Heads of Government of the Balkan States" was published by *Izvestia* and "Pravda."⁴⁴ On September 19th, the Soviet media published an article titled "Yugoslavia Supports the Romanian proposal". The next day, both *Pravda* and *Izvestia* reported the responses of the heads of government of Bulgaria and Albania.⁴⁵ On September 27th, the central Soviet press reported a positive commentary on the "Chivu Stoica Plan" published a day earlier in the Belgrade-based newspaper *Borba*. A detailed review of the situation with the "Stoica Plan" was made on September 29th in a generalizing Soviet article called "In the interests of peace and security in the Balkans."⁴⁶

From the very beginning, when substantiating the plan for multilateral cooperation, experts from the Romanian MFA considered the possibility that Athens and Ankara might refuse to participate in the general meeting proposed by Bucharest. After the consent of Belgrade, Tirana and Sofia, the development of events went precisely according to this scenario. Greek Prime Minister Karamanlis did so in a mild manner. In his reply to Stoica on September 23rd, he said that trust between the Balkan states had not yet been re-established, high-

⁴² V. Cvetković, *Pogled iza gvozdene zavese*, 429.

⁴³ *Борба* (18. IX 1957), 1; *Политика* (18. IX 1957), 1; 3.

⁴⁴ The Soviet central press published articles entitled "President Tito's response to the message of the Prime Minister of Chivu Stoica". See: *Известия* (19. IX 1957) 4; *Правда* (19. IX 1957), 4. Both articles were marked as news received from Bucharest by TASS on September 17, citing the Romanian news agency as a source.

⁴⁵ The article was titled "Balkan peoples should live in peace and friendship". See: *Правда* (20. IX 1957), 4.

⁴⁶ Besides other things, the text also cited the response of the President of the FPRY Tito, describing it as a positive reaction to the message of Stoica (*Izvestia* 29. IX 1957. P. 3).

lighting the need to discuss existing bilateral problems in relations among the Balkan countries. Already on the same day, the Yugoslav news agency TANJUG reported on the letter, and the following day, the Yugoslav press reported its content. Karamanlis' reply, dated September 23rd, was published (like all previous materials – in a conspicuous place – in the upper right part of the front page) in *Scinteia* on September 26th. Official Ankara did not reply to Bucharest at all. Therefore, this part of the planned Romanian initiatives – the letter to Ankara, so long and carefully prepared already by early August, specifically intended for Turkey, involving, from August 9th, the active participation of Soviet experts – did not succeed.

The available Soviet documents from the Russian archives (despite the still limited access) suggest that, at the end of September, Romanian diplomacy showed no signs of despondency about the position of Greece and Turkey. In late September, a Romanian delegation headed by the Secretary of the Central Committee of the RWP Preotyas paid an unofficial visit to Yugoslavia to discuss with the Yugoslav officials (Deputy Chairman of the SIV Ranković, member of the Yugoslav government M. Todorović and Deputy State Secretary for Foreign Affairs D. Vidić) a number of issues related to Stoica's proposals on Balkan regional cooperation. On September 30th, the Romanian Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Nicolae Guine,⁴⁷ shared his assessments of the current situation with the Soviet envoy in Belgrade Brykin. The Soviet diplomat understood them as the opinion of the Romanian government about the reactions of the Balkan countries to the proposals of the Prime Minister of Romania. Guine said that Bucharest considers positively the reply of the Greek government "as it opens up opportunities for further negotiations with Greece about convening a meeting". Guine also lamented that Bucharest was counting on Ankara's response, which "would not close the door for Turkey's participation in the proposed meeting". In his memorandum on this conversation, Brykin wrote that the Romanians considered it possible "to take measures that would contribute to fostering trust between the socialist countries and Turkey and Greece in order to create the preconditions for holding the conference. Prior to this, it was believed in Bucharest that bilateral negotiations should be held between those Balkan countries that have unresolved bilateral issues, provided that they "be conducted on the initiative of the countries concerned and without any mediation of a third country". At the same time, Bucharest believed that, already at this stage, it would be possible to organize "a number of events with the participation of all Balkan countries", including preparations for the organization of a regional conference of the Balkan countries through UNESCO, the creation of a Balkan

⁴⁷ Nicolae Guine (1911–1999) Romanian Ambassador to Yugoslavia in 1954–59, in 1960–66 – Romanian Ambassador to the Soviet Union.

group within the Inter-Parliamentary Union, etc. Brykin also marked the words of Guine, who said that in Romania, they intended "to renew the activities of the Balkan Institute in Bucharest", which operated there before the Second World War and researched the history and culture of all the Balkan countries with the participation of scholars from these countries. According to Guine, the Yugoslav side shared the views expressed by the Romanians. As a result, the Romania delegation was "satisfied with the negotiations with the Yugoslavs and believed that there [was] complete unity of views between Romania and Yugoslavia and opportunities for further close cooperation on this issue". The Romanian ambassador described Belgrade's position: "From the very beginning, the Yugoslavs reacted very positively to the proposal of the Romanian government. The response of the Yugoslav side to this proposal was as agreed in advance". Guine also mentioned the intention of Bucharest to further consult with Belgrade, as well as with Sofia and Tirana, on all issues related to the implementation of their proposals, which will not only strengthen trust between the two countries", but also "allow maintaining the initiative to convene a meeting of all Balkan countries". The ambassador noted that this was being done "not because Romania claims to be a leader among the Balkan countries", but based on the common interests of the Soviet bloc and the fact that Romania "of all the Balkan countries, has normal relations with all participants in the proposed meeting". Guine also noted that the Romanians had not noticed any Yugoslav "desire to seize the initiative of the Romanian government in this matter and achieve some of their goals". The Soviet diplomat understood that Bucharest believed that Yugoslavia "went into close cooperation with Romania in convening a conference of the Balkan countries, proceeding from its common foreign policy line" and was "not opposed to nullifying the significance of the Balkan Pact, primarily its military aspect, through the cooperation of all Balkan countries". Success in this, according to the Romanians, was possible "only by continuing this tactic and patient, persistent work", as well as building confidence in the Bucharest proposal from Greece and Turkey [while] neutralizing the negative publications of the Bulgarian press regarding Greece". The Soviet diplomat Brykin also took note of his interlocutor's statement that Bucharest "would not like for the proposal of the Romanian government to be discredited by the Western press as being inspired by the Soviet Union and under the pretext that Romania [was] playing the role of a Trojan horse in the cause of separating Greece and Turkey from the capitalist camp."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 49. D. 39. L. 303–307. This conversation is so far the only known document with a positive and optimistic assessment by both official Bucharest and Belgrade of the Chivu Stoica initiative by the end of September 1957. This contradicts the conclusions made in historiography and needs additional research. According to the Serbian researcher V. Cvetković, after Greece's graceful refusal to participate in the

It is known that already by October the “Chivu Stoica Plan” was not only minimized in the further actions of the Soviet bloc countries but simply disappeared from any international agenda without any serious reasons mentioned. The personal priorities of the participants, in one way or another connected with this Romanian initiative, should not be discounted. The Soviet leader Khrushchev and his inner circle, as it is now obvious, were busy for most of October 1957 preparing and implementing a plan to politically discredit and remove the “Marshal of Victory” Zhukov from power in order to strengthen Khrushchev’s personal power and consolidate the dominance of the Soviet Communist party apparatus over other social strata and groups in the Soviet Union. In addition, the appointment of Zamchevsky, the chief coordinator of the Soviet side in interactions with Romanian diplomats concerning the “Stoica plan”, as the Soviet ambassador to Yugoslavia on September 12th temporarily weakened the abilities and bureaucratic interest of the Soviet MFA in interactions with Bucharest on this issue. It should be also stressed that, as a result of Zamchevsky’s Belgrade appointment, even analytical materials on both Romania and Yugoslavia produced by the Soviet MFA at the very beginning of November 1957 contained no mention of either the “Stoica Plan” or any evaluations of activities of both states in the Balkan region.⁴⁹

An analysis of the new documents used in this study allows us to draw a number of conclusions, including that so far, there is no documentary evidence to allow one to reasonably believe that the Romanian initiative of September 10th 1957, was conceived as a response to the growing threat of the deployment of US nuclear weapons in the Balkan region. At the same time, the available archival documents make it possible to judge the initiative of Bucharest as Romanian, which appeared and was formulated without the direct influence of Moscow in its initial stages. It had various aims with an emphasis on the future large-scale interaction of the Balkan countries while taking into account the interests of the Soviet bloc as a whole. At the same time, there are no documentary grounds to assert that from the very beginning Moscow was resolutely against this attempt to organize such regional cooperation. After concretizing the initiative of

events proposed by Romania, Yugoslavia “was no longer in favor of holding some” conference, and its position evolved towards the approach of Greece, although Belgrade “did not declare such a position openly.” According to the researcher, “in Belgrade, where the connection between the Stoica initiative and the Balkan Pact was clearly understood as the ultimate goal to “...decompose the Balkan Pact”. On September 23, D. Vidić spoke about this to the Ambassador of Hungary, L. Cheby. V. Cvetković, *Pogled iza gvozdene zavese*, 429–430.

⁴⁹ In the foreign policy segments of both memorandums on Romania and Yugoslavia produced by the advisers of the 4th European Department at Soviet MFA A. Golichenko and F. Gryaznov, there was no mention of the “Chivu Stoica Plan”. See: RGANI. F. 5. Op. 49. D. XX. L. 207–219; AVP RF. F. 0144. Op. 42. Pk. 177. D. 27. L. 69–76.

Gheorghiu-Dej in early August in two documents of the Romanian MFA, these proposals, originally intended to supplement Moscow's efforts in international affairs towards diffusing international tensions and resolving the situation in Europe, were adjusted and supplemented in Moscow during constant consultations until the very beginning of September 1957. Moreover, Stoica's appeals to the Balkan governments were covered in detail in the central Soviet and Romanian press after their public promotion on September 17th 1957.

To what extent was the "Stoica Plan" conceived by Gheorghiu-Dej in the frameworks of Soviet-Romanian interactions on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania and his desire to protect his authoritarian regime from the external influence of de-Stalinization from Moscow?⁵⁰ These questions require further research and careful consultation of new materials held mainly in Romanian archives, starting from the moment when Gheorghiu-Dej presented the idea to the Soviet ambassador to Romania in mid-June 1957, during the development of detailed Romanian proposals in July and early August, their discussion with the Soviet side in Moscow mid-August and final approval by the top leaderships of Romania and the Soviet Union. In any case, taking into account the preliminary reservations of Romanian diplomats about the possible negative reactions of Athens and Ankara in early August in the presented documents for further actions, the "Stoica Plan" and the subsequent actions for its implementation could not be considered a complete failure. Further research and careful study of documents is desirable, primarily in the archives of Romania and Balkan and other countries of the Soviet camp with which the Romanian representatives held consultations at the end of August and interacted in the autumn of 1957. Undoubtedly, it is important to include the relevant documents from American and Turkish archives in this research (at least on the same level as it was already done for Greece), bearing in mind the necessity for a more detailed study of the Turkish reaction to Stoica's proposal and the pressure exerted on Ankara by Washington to "neutralize" or even disrupt the implementation of Romanian efforts during September 1957.

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