

Serbian/Yugoslav-Romanian Relations and Interactions in the 20th Century

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In the Shadow of the Moscow Declaration: Official Visit of Josip Broz Tito to Romania, June 23–26, 1956.

Abstract: The process of normalizing Yugoslav-Romanian relations after the conflict between Tito and Stalin was complex and protracted. In contrast to other people's democracies, Romania showed no initiative for a long time. Yugoslavia was not in a hurry either. In analysing Romania's position within the bloc, Belgrade took the view that normalization would occur the moment Bucharest received clear guidelines from the Kremlin. Perhaps the most important one came during Tito's visit to the USSR with the signing of the Moscow Declaration on June 20, 1956. The Yugoslav delegation that arrived in Bucharest after its stay in Moscow considered Romania an ideal place to propagate the foreign policy goals and commitment to the further development of relations with the Eastern European countries on the basis of the aforementioned declaration. The aim of this work is to shed light on the circumstances and the course of Josip Broz Tito's official visit to Romania from June 23 to 26 and to analyse the results. Using archive material and relevant literature, it will also examine how the Soviet leadership shaped the atmosphere during the official Yugoslav-Romanian talks and to what extent the Romanian leadership was able to negotiate independently. Some attention will be paid to the Western perception of the further foreign policy orientation of Yugoslavia and Romania and the development of their bilateral cooperation.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Romania, official visit, Bucharest, Moscow Declaration, bilateral cooperation.

Relations between Yugoslavia and Romania after the Second World War until the 1960s were overshadowed by Yugoslav-Soviet relations. Good relations with Moscow meant a favourable atmosphere for the development of cooperation with Bucharest. Until 1948, the shared ideology contributed to an accelerated development of cooperation, in which many issues were resolved in the spirit of „brotherhood and friendship.” After that, the conflict between Tito and Stalin led to a sharp break in all relations between Romania and Yugoslavia. Moscow's influence on Bucharest was so great that the

leadership carried out all of Stalin's orders unconditionally. In the following five years, this resulted in pronounced hostility, fuelled by anti-Titoist propaganda, numerous incidents and actions against members of the Serbian minority. After Stalin's death in 1953, a new period began in which conditions were created for the normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet bloc. However, the caution of the Romanian leadership led to a slow approach to this issue. Yugoslavia was not in a hurry either, because it believed that the normalization process with Romania depended primarily on Moscow. The Romanian Workers' Party (RWP), under the leadership of Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej, approached reconciliation cautiously for two main reasons. First, an admission of guilt for the deterioration of relations would have further damaged the regime's popularity among Romanians. Second, there were doubts about the durability of the Soviet policy of reconciliation toward Tito. Nevertheless, Romania attempted to follow the general course of the bloc, albeit with a slight delay. During 1954, diplomatic relations were normalized and transport and postal links were restored. The following year, the border was opened and a number of agreements were signed, notably hydrotechnical and trade agreements. A decisive factor in the further development of relations was the release of members of minorities and Yugoslav citizens from Baragan and from prisons. It is worth mentioning that Romanian citizens were also released from Yugoslav prisons during this period, regardless of the reason for their conviction. For the Romanian leadership, however, admitting guilt was not an easy task, nor was it possible due to Romania's internal and external development. One indication of this was the fact that prisoners were granted amnesty without full rehabilitation. As a result, they were marginalized in society and had no prospect of finding employment that matched their qualifications.¹

After three important events in 1955 and 1956 – the Belgrade Declaration, the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the Moscow Declaration – the Romanian leadership was convinced that reconciliation represented a lasting change in Soviet policy towards Yugoslavia. The Belgrade Declaration was issued during Nikita Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia. The fact that the Soviet leader visited Tito first can be seen as a symbolic admission of guilt for the conflict. Even more significant were the principles laid down in the Belgrade Declaration. The two leaders agreed that Yugoslav-Soviet relations were based on the principles of respect for sovereignty, integrity and equality, mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Tito managed to include in the declaration points

¹ Миодраг Милин, „Срби из Румуније у Бараганској голготи”, *Брајсџиво*: часопис Друштва „Свети Сава”, 17 (2013), 321–335; *Diplomatski arhiv Ministarstva spoljnih poslova Republike Srbije* [Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia] (DAMSPS), Fond Politička arhiva (PA), 1957, Rumunija, f. 88, dos. 38, Položaj jugoslovenske nacionalne manjine u Rumuniji (posle puštanja sa Baragana i iz zatvora), Pov. br. 426670, 7–8.

relating to the improvement of economic cooperation and the cessation of negative propaganda, but also the view that the policy of military blocs undermines trust and increases international tensions.² The high point of the Belgrade Declaration was the Soviet recognition that Yugoslavia was an independent, socialist country going its own way in building socialism. On the one hand, this recognition strengthened the country's foreign policy position; on the other, it reinforced Tito's regime, reaffirmed the model of self-government and allayed concerns about the country's security.³ Although the Romanian leadership welcomed the Belgrade Declaration, it was not yet ready to discuss the most urgent unresolved issues. This is evidenced by the fact that the Romanian Workers' Party held its Second Congress in a Stalinist spirit at the end of 1955,⁴ just two months before the 20th Congress of the CPSU, at which Khrushchev, in a secret speech, denounced the cult of personality and initiated the process of de-Stalinization. The Congress of the Soviet Party was a great shock for the RWP, especially because the conclusions of the Second Congress were contrary to the conclusions of the 20th Congress. This shows that Dej had no intention of making major changes.⁵

Even so, Yugoslav-Romanian relations improved, but key issues such as the minority question, the question of dual ownership and debt were left aside. Some of the reasons for this were related to the situation in the Romanian Workers' Party, such as the strong restriction of Stalinist cadres, the isolation of the party from the people and the lack of broader support. Such a situation in the RWP led to the fear of abandoning Stalinist methods and losing the support of the Soviet Union.⁶

Over the course of 1956, the situation changed rapidly and events pointed to the conclusion that some changes were inevitable. Uncertainty about the direction intended by the Kremlin and the existence of some room for manoeuvre led the Romanian leadership to consider alternatives. Improving relations with the West and closer economic ties appeared to be worthwhile long-term goals. In this context, the good relations with Yugoslavia began to

² Љубодраг Димић, „Јосип Броз и Никита Сергејевич Хрушчов: разговори у Београду 27. мај–2. јун 1955”, *Историјски гласник*, 1–2/1997, 35–67; DAMSPS, PA, 1960, Jugoslavija, f. 56, dos. 2, Informativni materijal o međunarodnom razvitku, Pov. br. 435330, 31–33.

³ Douglas A. MacGregor, „Uncertain Allies? East European Forces in the Warsaw Pact”, *Soviet Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2 (April 1986), 227–247; Андрей Борисович Едемский, *Ой конфлик-та к нормализации. Советско-югославские ойношения в 1953–1956 йодах*, (Москва: Наука, 2008), 476–477; Đoko Tripković, *Jugoslavija –SSSR 1956–1971*, (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2012), 16.

⁴ Raportul de activitate al C.C. al P.M.R. prezentat de Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, *Congresul al II-lea al PMR, 23–28 decembrie 1955*, (Bucureşti: Editura de stat pentru literatura politica, 1956), 21–30.

⁵ Vladimir Lj. Cvetković, „Jugoslavija, Zapad i susedne zemlje „narodne demokratije” posle Beogradske deklaracije 1955”, *Istorija 20. veka*, 3/2012, 149–162.

⁶ DAMSPS, PA, 1956, Rumunija, f. 78, dos. 2, Situacija u Rumunskoj radničkoj partiji i njen razvoj posle 20. kongresa KPSS, Pov. br. 4621, 20.

appear in a new light.⁷ The news that Tito would visit the Soviet Union in June was seen as a favourable circumstance for Romanian interests. For this reason, and because the visit took place prior to Tito's official trip to Romania, it warrants a bit more attention.

In the spring of 1956, the conditions were created for the final act of normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR, for ideological reconciliation and the restoration of relations between the parties. The dissolution of the Cominform in April 1956 and the rehabilitation process contributed even more to this confirmation. In this atmosphere, the date for the return visit of the Yugoslav delegation to the Soviet Union was set for June 1–23, 1956.⁸

Tito's invitation to pay an official visit to Moscow was also seen as a good opportunity to strengthen contacts between the Yugoslav and Romanian leaders. Belgrade took the first step by deciding that the delegation should travel by train via Romania and not, as usual, via Hungary. Tito also expressed the wish to stay in Bucharest for a while to greet the Romanian leadership. According to documents and some memoirs, Tito did not give a moment's thought to the nature of the journey or the route. The train and the road through Romania were his only choice. This first step was also motivated by Tito's wish to meet Gheorghiu-Dej face-to-face again after 1947.⁹ It should be emphasized that this wish had a positive effect on the position of the Romanian General Secretary and the legitimacy of his authority. Tito thereby indicated that Dej bore significantly less responsibility for the execution of anti-Yugoslav policies than figures such as Mátyás Rákosi, the General Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party. This indicates that Belgrade accepted the statements that Ana Pauker, and not Gheorghiu-Dej, was the main organizer of the anti-Yugoslav policy, or that it believed that Romanian participation in the anti-Yugoslav campaign was forced by the Kremlin. Judging by the impression that the Yugoslav embassy made on the Romanian political elite, one can say with great caution that Dej was the best choice for cooperation at that time.¹⁰

An important informal conversation between Dej and the Yugoslav ambassador Nikola Vujanović took place in mid-May 1956. The Romanian leader tried to explain the history of the RWP and the situation created by the new Soviet policy after World War II. During the conversation, Dej tried

⁷ Arhiv Jugoslavije [Archives of Yugoslavia] (AJ), Fond 507, Savez komunista Jugoslavije, IX, 107/1–10, DSIP Rumunija, odnosi Jugoslavije i Rumunije, 1956, 30; DAMSPS, PA, 1956, Rumunija, f. 78, dos. 2, Politički život NR Rumunije posle posete druga Tita, Pov. br. 4621, 11.

⁸ Đoko Tripković, „Uspon i pad jugoslovensko-sovjetskih odnosa 1956. godine”, *Istorija 20. veka*, 2/1998, 129–141.

⁹ Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine 1956–1958*, (Beograd: Jugoslovenska revija, 1984), 78–79.

¹⁰ Maurice Pearton, „The Romanian Leadership and its Problems, 1956–1957–1958”, *Romania Observed. Studies in Contemporary Romanian History*, ed. Dennis Deletant, Maurice Pearton, (București: Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1998), 228–229.

to show all the time that his responsibility for relations with Yugoslavia in the period from 1948 to 1952 was much smaller and that during that time he only formally held the position of Secretary General of the RWP. He also emphasized that the dismissal of Ana Pauker had created the conditions necessary for improving bilateral relations. However, this could only happen once the conflict between Belgrade and Moscow had been resolved. Dej admitted that he, like many others, was brought up to carry out every decision that came from Moscow without questioning it. An important statement was that „Romania is implementing the new course towards Yugoslavia with enthusiasm, but does not want to take an accelerated path that could give the enemies a certain advantage”.¹¹ The aforementioned conversation took place shortly after the Romanian embassy in Belgrade had announced that Tito was planning to travel to the Soviet Union via Romania and that the Yugoslav leadership wished to take a break in Bucharest. This suggests that the purpose of the conversation was to help foster a favourable atmosphere in advance of the meeting.¹²

The second step was taken by the Romanian leadership. They did everything in their power to ensure that the Yugoslav State-Party delegation's journey through Romania went smoothly and with full honours. The delegation was formally received at the border crossing at Jimbolia and has since been accompanied by the Romanian government delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister Miron Constantinescu. In the places where the „Blue Train” stopped, such as Timișoara, Lugoj, Caransebeș, Turnu Severin, Craiova, Bucharest, Ploiești and Iași, a reception was organized where the delegation was presented with greetings and flowers. The main reception took place on May 31 in Bucharest at the Băneasa train station. The delegation was welcomed by top Romanian officials such as Chivu Stoica, Prime Minister, Mihail Sadoveanu, Vice President of the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly, and Dej, General Secretary of the RWP.¹³ During the two-hour meeting, the Romanian representatives proposed that the Yugoslav delegation extend their stay in Romania upon returning from the Soviet Union. As the talks took place in an atmosphere that was better than either side had hoped for, this proposal was accepted. In the following days, plans were modified several times, eventually resulting in the agreement for an official three-day visit, from June 23 to 26.¹⁴

¹¹ DAMSPS, PA, 1956, Rumunija, f. 78, dos. 8, Telegram iz Bukurešta od 20. 5. 1956, Pov. br. 47916, 4–6.

¹² Dan Cătănuș, „Reluarea relațiilor româno-iugoslave. Vizita lui Tito la București, 23–26 iunie 1956”, *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, 3–4/2004, 72–86.

¹³ Аноним, „На путу у Москву председник Тито пропутовао кроз Румунију где је био топло поздрављен”, *Борба*, 1. 6. 1956, 1; Аноним, „Кроз Румунију, Молдавију и Украјину”, *Борба*, 2. 6. 1956, 2.

¹⁴ 1956 iulie, Raport cu privire la vizita efectuată în România, între 23–26 iunie 1956, decătre delegația iugoslavă condusă de Iosip Broz Tito, *Triunghiul suspiciunii: Gheorghiu-*

Since the agreement on Tito's official visit to Romania was made during the stay on the way to the Soviet Union, where the Yugoslav State-Party delegation, consisting of key leaders such as Edvard Kardelj, Koča Popović, Mijalko Todorović and others, stayed from June 1 to 23, the visit to Romania can therefore be seen as a continuation of the first visit. The close connection between the two visits leads to the view that considering one visit without understanding the other would not lead to a true assessment of their significance. Before we begin to analyse the visit to Romania, it is therefore necessary to answer the question of what impressions Tito took away from his three-week stay in Moscow and in what mood he left Khrushchev.

The program of the visit to the USSR was very extensive; in addition to Moscow, the Yugoslav delegation was also warmly welcomed in Leningrad (St. Petersburg), Stalingrad (Volgograd), Kyiv, Sochi and other cities. Touched by the way in which the Soviet citizens received him, Tito emphasized the bond between the two nations, spoke of the wartime alliance and expressed the hope that Yugoslavia and the USSR would „walk together into the future.” Such statements created a certain amount of concern among Western politicians, as they considered Yugoslavia's continued independent course to be questionable.¹⁵ During the official talks on numerous topics, the delegates showed a similar attitude. These included economic and cultural cooperation, European security issues, the German question, disarmament and Hungary, which was a growing concern for the Soviet leadership. However, the use of certain terms such as „camp” and the principle of ideological unity were controversial. Yugoslavia did not want to jeopardize its hard-won independence by accepting Soviet definitions and giving the false impression that it had returned to the Eastern Bloc.¹⁶ As for Yugoslavia's relations with other socialist countries, Tito tried to show understanding for Soviet interests. Aware that the changes in these countries were not brought about by a revolution but by the arrival of the Red Army, he made it clear to Khrushchev that Yugoslavia had no interest in weakening relations between the USSR and the other members of the camp. He later pointed out that the principles that applied to Soviet-Yugoslav relations did not necessarily apply to the USSR's relations with other socialist countries.¹⁷

At the last two meetings of the delegations on December 18 and 20, the main topic of the visit - cooperation between the parties - was discussed. This is where the greatest differences of opinion emerged, which threatened to jeo-

Dej, Hruščiov și Tito (1954–1964), vol. II, Documente, ed. Mihai Croitor and Sandra Borsa, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura MEGA, 2014), 57–63.

¹⁵ Ђорђе Борозан, „Посредник мира између „гвоздених завјеса”: разговори Тито–Хрушчов у Кремљу 1956”, *Војноисторијски гласник*, 1/1997, 93–114.

¹⁶ Dragan Bogetić, „Podsticaji i ograničenja na putu normalizacije jugoslovensko-sovjetskih odnosa tokom 1956”, *Токви историје*, 3–4/2005, 160–181.

¹⁷ Љубодраг Димић, *Између Истиока и Зайада, Југославија, Велике силе и ишшање безбедности у Европи (1945–1975)*, (Београд: Филип Вишњић, 2022), 146–147.

pardize the success of the visit. Yugoslavia did not want to give up the position that cooperation should be based on the principles of equality and independence and the right to a different path to socialism. On the other hand, it did not want to accept the idea of imposing positions on other parties and including points critical of colonialism and imperialism in a joint declaration. However, the concession made by the Soviet side led to the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Principles of Cooperation between the Parties, i.e. the Moscow Declaration.¹⁸ For Tito this was a great victory, for the Soviet leadership it was a document that should be forgotten as soon as possible.¹⁹ Thus, the Yugoslav delegation travelled to Romania with a sense of triumph and the expectation that bilateral relations would now develop at a markedly faster pace.

On June 23, the „Blue Train” crossed the Soviet-Romanian border near Ungheni. The Yugoslav delegation was received in Iași by representatives of the Romanian government and the party led by Petre Borilă, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers.²⁰ At a brief rally, Tito delivered a speech expressing hope for Romania’s continued progress and the further development of bilateral relations, which was warmly received by a large crowd. Afterwards, Romanian pioneers showered the Yugoslav delegation with bouquets of flowers. In other places on the way to Bucharest – Bârnova, Ciurea, Bârlad, Focșani, Buzău and Ploiești - the reception was similarly enthusiastic. As in Moscow and other cities, Tito’s reception in the Romanian cities, especially in Bucharest, was pompous and full of friendly exclamations from the population.²¹ Josip Broz’s popularity in Romania was enormous, as evidenced by the fact that the leadership did not have to force people to come to a meeting or to warmly welcome a foreign statesman. The Romanians themselves took to the streets to see and hear the man who had successfully stood up to Stalin and emerged victorious from the conflict. The Yugoslav embassy in Bucharest recorded visits from Romanians who declared that they „never doubted the justice of the struggle of the Yugoslav peoples and their party,” or from people who brought pictures and books of Tito to obtain

¹⁸ Заједничка изјава влада СССР и ФНРЈ, Москва 20. јун 1956, *Југословенско-совјејски односи 1948–1956*, зборник докумената, приредили Љ. Димић, М. Милошевић, Ђ. Борозан, И. Бухарин, Л. Внукова, Ј. Зеленко..., (Београд: Министарство спољних послова, 2010), 912–916.

¹⁹ The key reason for such a position was the fear of the Soviet leadership that other Eastern European countries would follow the Yugoslav example (Ljubodrag Dimić, „Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi 1953–1956”, *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski sukob 1948*, Zbornik radova, ur. Đoko Tripković, (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1999), 289).

²⁰ In addition to Borilă, the delegation consisted of Avram Bunaciu, Secretary of the Presidium of the Great National Assembly, Stefan Clej, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Caius Frantescu, Head of Protocol of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nicolae Guina, Ambassador in Belgrade and Nikola Vujanović, Yugoslav Ambassador in Bucharest.

²¹ Anonim, „Entuziasta primire din gara Iași”, în *Scînteia*, an XXV, 24 iunie 1956, 1; Anonim, „Președintele RPF Iugoslavia, Iosip Broz Tito, a sosit în capitală”, în *Scînteia*, An XXV, 25 iunie 1956, 1.

the signature of the Yugoslav president. There were also examples of citizens and cultural workers who asked the Romanian authorities to return the medals that Tito had given them during his visit to Romania in 1947 and which the government confiscated in 1950.²²

The widespread enthusiasm surrounding the visit stemmed from high expectations, some of which extended beyond rational boundaries. Some of the predictions were that it would accelerate the process of de-Stalinization of the country, lead to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania and ultimately to independence from Moscow. Many believed that by improving relations with Yugoslavia, Moscow would no longer have a reason to keep troops in neighbouring countries. They expected that Yugoslavia would also demand the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the territories it sought for its security. A fairly widespread idea, which took longer to realize, was the creation of a union of states to replace the problem of the position of the Eastern European countries and thus enable cooperation between East and West. This union was to preserve the socialist order, but Yugoslavia was to play an important role in it. With Tito at the helm, it could not be said to be under Soviet domination. Because of the sphere in which the USSR's policy began, this idea seemed realistic at the time, and its realization was considered necessary due to the further development of East-West relations. The main supporters of this idea in Romania were former social democrats and liberal citizens. In other words, people who were close to socialist ideas, but not to the Soviet way of implementing them.²³

Those who were more familiar with the political situation believed that Romania would adopt a more equal position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, at least on the basis of the principles of the Moscow Declaration. It was also expected that the visit would lead to a renewal of party relations between the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) and the RWP.²⁴ The hope that the latter prediction would come true was dashed with Dej's invitation to Moscow on June 21, just as the Yugoslav delegation was on its way to Romania. On that day, Dej and Bodnăraş as well as the Soviet ambassador to Romania, Alexei Epishev, and representatives of other Eastern European countries travelled to Moscow. The official reason for this visit was negotiations on some economic issues, the unofficial one was consultations prior to Tito's visit to Romania and information about the talks the Soviet leadership had with Tito in Moscow.²⁵ A day later, Khrushchev dispelled any illusion of in-

²² DAMSPS, PA, 1956, Rumunija, f. 79, dos. 37, Telegram Ambasade FNRJ u Bukureštu od 31. 7. 1956, Pov. br. 412394, 1; Аноним, „Председник Тито стигао у Румунију”, *Борба*, 24. 6. 1956, 1-2.

²³ DAMSPS, PA, 1956, Rumunija, f. 78, dos. 28, Telegram Ambasade FNRJ u Bukureštu od 14. 6. 1956, Pov. br. 49803, 1-2.

²⁴ Dan Cătănuş, „Reluarea relațiilor româno-iugoslave. Vizita lui Tito la București, 23-26 iunie 1956”, *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, 3-4/2004, 72-86.

²⁵ DAMSPS, PA, 1956, Rumunija, f. 78, dos. 28, Telegram Ambasade FNRJ u Bukureštu od 21. 6. 1956, Pov. br. 49855, 1.

dependent action for Dej and other Eastern European leaders by emphasizing that the declaration applied only to Yugoslavia. Dej was also instructed on how to conduct talks with Tito. While bilateral issues were acceptable, ideological and party-political matters in which Yugoslavia took a different position were to be avoided.²⁶ Since Tito was not informed about the content of the aforementioned meeting, he freely expressed the Yugoslav positions during the official talks in Bucharest, but was puzzled by the fact that the Romanian interlocutors Dej, Bodnăraș, Chivu Stoica, Grigore Preoteasa, Petre Borilă and others responded to the Yugoslav delegation's observations with formulaic and evasive replies. After Tito's presentation on the results of his visit to the Soviet Union, the Romanian side felt that they should also say something about their trip to the capital of the socialist world. Bodnăraș presented to the Yugoslav delegation the talks held in Moscow on June 22 and 23 on economic problems and mentioned in passing ideas for the further development of the international labour movement. He explained that there were no plans to establish a body of communist parties similar to the Cominform in the future, but only a journal through which informal and non-binding cooperation in the socialist bloc could be achieved. According to his statements, the Yugoslav representatives did not have the impression that Dej had received instructions in Moscow that would have a negative impact on the further development of bilateral cooperation. Tito explained Romania's reticence in the talks with the character of the Romanian leadership and the principle that they approached everything cautiously and slowly.²⁷ After Bodnăraș, Dej also took the opportunity to speak. Following the instructions from Moscow, he could say no more than that he fully agreed with Tito's view. His speech focused on how Tito's visit to the Soviet Union was received in Romania, framing its results as a foundation for friendship and broader cooperation.²⁸

In contrast, on bilateral matters, the Romanian delegation was considerably more forthcoming. The visit provided an opportunity to address issues of mutual interest, including the construction of the Iron Gate project, tourism and information exchange, and the signing of agreements in economic, cultural, scientific, and technological domains. On the first issue, it was agreed to form a joint commission to examine the options and draw up a joint plan for the construction of the hydroelectric power plant, while the other two issues were crowned with the signing of the agreement.²⁹ There are opi-

²⁶ *Yugoslavia. Political Diaries 1918–1965*, ed. by Robert L. Jarman, vol. IV: 1949–1965, (SloUGH: Archive Editions, 1997), 657.

²⁷ Nemanja Mitrović, „Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1954–1968”, (doktorska disertacija, Univerzitet u Beogradu, Filozofski fakultet, Odeljenje za istoriju, 2023), 266–267.

²⁸ AJ, Fond 837, Kabinet predsednika Republike (KPR), I - 2/7 - 2, Zabeleška o razgovorima u Bukureštu prilikom posete Predsednika Republike Rumuniji od 23. do 26. juna 1956. godine, 10–12.

²⁹ 1956 iulie, Raport cu privire la vizita efectuată în România, între 23–26 iunie 1956, decătre delegația iugoslavă condusă de Iosip Broz Tito, *Triunghiul suspiciunii: Gheorghiu-*

nions that the main topic of the visit was a high-level discussion on the possibilities of building the Iron Gate hydropower and navigation system. While the Romanian leadership was ready to take more serious steps in this direction, the Yugoslav delegation used the initiation of the topic to get to know the Romanian view of the project better. For example, it was very important for Tito to find out what form of cooperation Dej had in mind. Was it a bilateral or multilateral project that would involve Bulgaria and possibly the Soviet Union in addition to Yugoslavia and Romania? The first option was acceptable to Yugoslavia under certain conditions, the second was not, as the USSR and its satellites Romania and Bulgaria could implement the project in a way that would be contrary to their interests. To Tito's satisfaction, Dej replied that Romania was considering the realization of the project exclusively on a bilateral basis. Based on the report of the British ambassador to Romania, historian Dan Cătănuș has identified one of the first signs of Romania's desire for an independent policy. The fact that the Iron Gate was at least one of the more important topics is shown by the talks that subsequently took place in Belgrade and Bucharest, as well as the attention that the media in both countries devoted to this topic in the following months.³⁰

The Romanians sought to maximize the visit's significance by signing as many agreements as possible and they prepared various drafts. The most important documents were „Proposals for the development of relations between Romania and Yugoslavia,” „Possible contentious issues between the two states,” „Development of relations between Yugoslavia and Romania for the period 1953–1956,” and a draft they named „Joint Declaration.” Following Moscow's direct example, Bucharest wanted to prepare a joint declaration of the parties in addition to the government declaration, which would de facto establish cooperation between the LCY and the RWP.³¹ Tito could not simply trample on the Yugoslav position that the normalization of party relations depended on the degree of bilateral cooperation and the impression that both sides were ready for the next step. For this reason, the signing of the declaration was rejected, but as a compromise, a joint statement on principles that would lead to the renewal of party cooperation was offered. During the talks, the Yugoslav delegation frequently referred to their recent Soviet visit, and it was in this context that Tito informed the Romanians that he had had a similar conversation with Khrushchev. The Soviet leadership took the view that the LCY should establish inter-party relations with other parties on a similar basis as soon as possible. The Yugoslav response to such a position was that, given the fact that bilateral cooperation was not equally

Dej, Hruščiov și Tito (1954–1964), vol. II, Documente, ed. Mihai Croitor and Sandra Borsa, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura MEGA, 2014), 57–63.

³⁰ Dan Cătănuș, „Reluarea relațiilor româno-iugoslave. Vizita lui Tito la București, 23–26 iunie 1956”, *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, 3–4/2004, 72–86.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

developed with all countries, Yugoslavia could not be expected to re-establish relations with all parties in one day.³²

The Yugoslav delegation was particularly pleased that it was able to discuss the situation of the Serbian minority in Romania with Dej. In contrast to previous occasions when this topic had been raised, this was the first time that the conversation had been initiated by the Romanian side. During the meeting, the Romanian interlocutors described the problems of the Serbian minority and presented the measures that have been taken or are planned to improve the living conditions of the minority. Particular attention was paid to the problems of the return of the deportees, their accommodation and the condition of all those who were released from prison. The fact that Romania, unlike Yugoslavia (which released all Romanian prisoners until June 2, 1956), kept some members of the minority behind bars, fuelled a certain mistrust in what was presented. However, after the Yugoslav delegation was assured that these were minorities for whom there was solid evidence of their hostile activities, it gained the impression that the Romanian leadership had changed its policy towards the Serb minority. After Dej expressed his willingness to offer better conditions to the minority, Tito declared that suffering should be a thing of the past and expressed the hope that friendship, understanding and mutual support would soon flourish in line with the wishes and feelings of the two peoples. During the meeting in Timisoara, where numerous members of the minority had gathered, Tito gave a speech that delighted all those present. In his speech, the Yugoslav president emphasized that he encountered the „the greatest understanding” from the Romanian leaders and that most of the minority's problems had been resolved satisfactorily. To further develop friendly ties between the two countries, Tito emphasized that the Yugoslav minority's attachment to their motherland should not come at the expense of loyalty to the country in which they live. That was well received in Bucharest.³³

The Romanians were particularly pleased that Tito emphasized the need for the minority's loyalty and that „our countries are now friends and as friends will build a happier future”.³⁴ Tito's official visit gave the minorities hope that their status would soon improve and that they could act more freely. The visit and Tito's speech contributed to the encouragement of the Serb minority, which shortly after the visit began to submit various demands to the Romanian authorities, which was something that the Romanian leadership had not wished for.³⁵

³² Vladimir Lj. Cvetković, *Pogled iza gvozdene zavese*, (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2014), 392.

³³ Јосип Броз Тито, *Говори и чланци*, књ. XI, (Загреб: Напријед, 1959), 142–143.

³⁴ *Triunghiul suspiciunii: Gheorghiu-Dej, Hrușciov și Tito (1954–1964)*, vol. I, ed. Mihai Croitor and Sandra Borsa, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura MEGA, 2014), 48–50.

³⁵ DAMSPS, PA, 1956, Rumunija, f. 79, dos. 39, Telegram Ambasade FNRI u Bukureštu od 13. 6. 1956, Pov. br. 49366, 1.

In practice, there was no visible improvement in the minority's situation following the visit. Those who returned from Baragan remained second-class citizens. In most cases, their land and houses were not returned. Some had their land returned, while others received compensation for only half the value of their property; for the remaining half, they were offered long-term loans instead of direct compensation. The situation was similar for the amnestied prisoners. They received no compensation for confiscated property or forced labour. Regarding employment, they were only offered the most menial jobs, and none were appointed even to the lowest managerial positions. The Yugoslav delegation raised this problem several times during the visit, and even Tito, in informal conversations with Dej, stressed that resolving this issue would significantly contribute to improving relations between the two countries and parties.

Tito's words were not enough to take major steps in this direction. The Romanian leadership approached this problem particularly hesitantly because its solution entailed many other problems, especially the question of responsibility. A concession was usually only achieved after numerous appeals and pressure from Yugoslav representatives. In Belgrade, it was even assumed that Dej and Kivu Stoika showed the greatest willingness to comply with Yugoslav demands and resolve the issue of material compensation for the amnestied persons and possibly remove the last obstacle to the normalization of relations by rehabilitating individuals. However, the risk for the top leadership gathered around Dej was extremely high. Raising the question of responsibility for past mistakes and lawlessness, acknowledging and correcting them, could lead to a deterioration of relations at the top of the party and to a conflict between Dej's current and that of Iosif Chişinevschi and Emil Bodnăraş.³⁶ Perhaps this is why Tito called on the Yugoslav minority to be loyal to the Romanian government at the rally, but also added that all mistakes committed against the minority must be corrected and the damage repaired. Aware of the precarious position of the Romanian leadership and the sensitivity of the minority issue, especially given the large Hungarian population, Josip Broz contented himself with a demonstrative willingness on Romania's part to solve some problems.

The Romanian leadership invested enormous efforts in the second part of the visit, which included banquets, cultural events and visits to important economic and tourist-cultural centres. A city tour of Bucharest, a wreath-laying ceremony in the square next to the Military Academy, where a memorial to the fallen soldiers who fought for the liberation of the homeland from fascism is to be built, and a visit to the Yugoslav embassy in Bucharest were planned for June 24. The following day, the Yugoslav delegation visited the metal products factory „1 May” and the refinery in Ploieşti. A festive lunch was organized in Snagov in honour of the delegation. After returning

³⁶ *Ibid*, 16.

to Bucharest, a rich cultural program was organized. In the evening, a gala concert was held in the Opera House, featuring soloists including famous names such as Zenaida Pally, Gabriel Popescu, Ion Voicu, as well as the Philharmonic Orchestra, the Opera, the Ballet, the „Barbu Lăutaru” Orchestra, the Serbian Ensemble from Timișoara and others. At every turn, the Yugoslavs felt the great sacrifice of the Romanians and the desire to pay the greatest possible tribute to the delegation. As Trailović, *Borba's* special correspondent, noted, „never before had a statesman in Bucharest experienced such a reception, such a program and such a farewell.”³⁷

Although the visit had tangible outcomes, its primary significance lay in the realm of propaganda. It was seen by the Romanian leadership as an event that would improve the position of the Romania and raise the country's profile abroad. Tito used the visit particularly skillfully for propaganda purposes. His goals included not only reinforcing his image among the Romanians but also showcasing his stature on the world stage. He also used the rally in front of around 200,000 people on the Piața Victoriei in Bucharest on June 26 for propaganda purposes, to promote the Belgrade and Moscow declarations and to influence the Romanian population as well as the populations of other Eastern European countries. In his speech, Tito made it clear that the reason for the meeting of the Yugoslav and Romanian delegations was to improve relations and „the willingness of the Romanian leadership to follow the path marked by the spirit of the Belgrade and Moscow Declarations”.³⁸ It was also an important stage in sending a clear message from Bucharest to the West, immediately after the visit to Moscow and the listing of the declaration, that Yugoslavia would maintain its independent position. What particularly disturbed the capitalist countries about Tito's speeches in Romania was the glorification of the socialist system, the friendship between Yugoslavia, the USSR and the Eastern European countries, and the praise of Soviet peace policy. Nevertheless, according to the analysis, Yugoslavia's position remained unchanged. For them, Yugoslavia was still an independent country. This was good news for Tito, as he continued to receive US aid.³⁹

The West was paying great attention to Romania at the time. The fact that Tito came to Bucharest immediately after Moscow entailed a certain secrecy, that Western diplomats wanted to uncover as quickly as possible. The course of the visit could show them the possible direction of the development of relations between Belgrade and the socialist countries. Based on the results

³⁷ Аноним, „Букурешт срдачно дочекао југословенске државнике”, *Борба*, 25. 6. 1956, 3. Аноним, „Југословенски државници посетили индустријски центар Плоешти. Свечана представа у Опери”, *Полиџика*, 26. 6. 1956, 1; Аноним, „Președintele RPF Iugoslavia, Iosip Broz Tito, a sosit în capitală”, *Scînteia*, An XXV, 25 iunie 1956, 1; *Scînteia*, An XXV, 27. iunie 1956, 4; *Borba*, 27. 6. 1956, 4.

³⁸ Аноним, „Велики митинг у Букурешту”, *Борба*, 27. 6. 1956, 1, 3.

³⁹ Dragan Bogetić, „Saradnja Jugoslavije sa zapadnim silama u vreme normalizacije njenih odnosa sa socijalističkim lagerom 1956. godine”, *Istorija 20. veka*, 2/2005, 113–128.

of its investigations, the British Foreign Office soon assessed the visit as significant for the rapprochement between Yugoslavia and Romania. Even if such an atmosphere was supported by Moscow for long-term reasons. It was believed that Khrushchev was sure of the loyalty of the Romanian leadership and that he chose their country as bait to eventually bring Yugoslavia back into the socialist bloc. The strengthening of Romania's economic ties with Yugoslavia and thus also with the West was not seen as a major threat in Moscow. These assessments will prove to be largely accurate. Romania skilfully used the visit to move closer to the West, but also to quietly incorporate some of the principles from the Belgrade and Moscow declarations into its foreign policy course. Of particular importance were the principles of independence, peaceful coexistence, equality, non-interference in internal affairs and the right to one's own path to socialism, which are to be publicly manifested during the next decade.⁴⁰

The euphoria that prevailed during and after the visit is best illustrated by the abundance of inscriptions about the visit. The Yugoslav newspapers *Borba* and *Politika* and others carried the most important sections, excerpts from speeches and toasts and published interviews with Romanian politicians. The most important was certainly Dej's interview for *Politika*, in which he emphasized the importance of the meeting, but also spoke about Romania's foreign policy, which in his opinion was based on the principles of peaceful coexistence. A certain euphoria continued in the following months. The development of Yugoslav-Romanian relations was increasingly seen as an example for other socialist countries to follow.⁴¹

It follows that the Yugoslav leadership was very satisfied with the implementation of the visit and its scope. The only thing they could complain about was the passivity in studying the conclusions through the lower party organizations. Although the importance of the visit was sufficient for such a practice, the danger of elaboration at the lower party levels was enormous. Bucharest was aware that there was great interest in relations with Belgrade among its members. The numerous questions that would arise at such meetings required answers that the Romanian leadership preferred not to give. However, at the Central Committee plenum in mid-July, Dej read out a positive report on relations with Yugoslavia. The public and the lower party members were of course not informed about this.⁴²

⁴⁰ DAMSPS, PA, 1956, Rumunija, f. 78, dos. 28, Telegram Ambasade FNJR u Bukureštu od 2. 7. 1956, Pov. br. 410695; Dan Cătănuș, „Reluarea relațiilor româno-iugoslave. Vizita lui Tito la București, 23–26 iunie 1956”, *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, 3–4/2004, 72–86; Dragan Bogetić, *Nova strategija jugoslovenske spoljne politike: 1956–1961*, (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2006), 60.

⁴¹ Аноним, „Реч Георгиу Дежа”, *Борба*, 27. 6. 1956, 3; Аноним, „Интервју Георге Дежа Политици, Развој пријатељских односа Румуније и Југославије доприноси миру и међународној сарадњи”, *Полиџика*, 14. 8. 1956, 2–3.

⁴² DAMSPS, PA, 1956, Rumunija, f. 78, dos. 2, *Politički život NR Rumunije posle posete druga Tita*, Pov. br. 4621, 12.

In contrast to the acquaintance of the people and the subordinates with the results of Tito's official visit, the Romanian leadership was more agile in the practical implementation of everything that was agreed upon during the negotiations. It can be said that it was ahead of Yugoslavia in everything concerning interstate relations. Immediately after the end of the visit, a committee headed by Chivu Stoica was formed with the task of implementing everything that had been agreed during the visit. In addition, numerous commissions were formed to deal with specific issues such as the project for the construction of a hydroelectric power plant at the Iron Gate and conventions on economic, technical and cultural cooperation.⁴³ The goal of accelerating the implementation of the agreement was the Romanian leadership's plan to finalize all negotiations and prepare the agreements by October, when Dej's visit to Yugoslavia was scheduled. By signing the already prepared treaties and agreements, much greater importance would be attached to this visit. By October 1956, most of the negotiations had been concluded. The talks on economic cooperation were successful. Delegations of Yugoslav and Romanian experts met in the Iron Gate and identified the fundamental problems. Their work led to the proposal to set up a joint commission to prepare a joint project for the construction of a hydroelectric power plant.

During Dej's visit in October 1956, a long-term trade agreement, a scientific-technical and a cultural agreement were signed in Brioni, relations between the parties were established and an investigation into the possibilities of utilizing the Danube's hydropower and shipping potential in the Iron Gate area was initiated. In addition, a willingness was expressed to initiate a solution to the issue of dual-ownership properties, the restitution of pre-war and wartime claims and the rehabilitation of convicted members of the minority. The Brioni Agreements were of outstanding importance and were long regarded as the basis for the development of bilateral relations.⁴⁴ However, their scope was soon limited by two international crises that began during Dej's visit - the Hungarian uprising and the Suez War. The first crisis in particular affected the Soviet army's stay in Romania for two more years and was also the reason why democratization was halted, de-Stalinization was slowed down and the struggle for Romanian independence was postponed to happier times.

⁴³ DAMSPS, PA, 1957, Rumunija, f. 87, dos. 2, Odnosi Rumunija–Jugoslavija u periodu od juna 1956. do maja 1957. godine, Pov. br. 29055, 2.

⁴⁴ Nemanja Mitrović, „Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1954–1968”, (doktorska disertacija, Univerzitet u Beogradu, Filozofski fakultet, Odeljenje za istoriju, 2023), 272–278.

Summary

Josip Broz Tito's official visit to Romania from June 23 to 26, 1956, followed a three-week stay of the Yugoslav delegation in the Soviet Union. The significance of this visit on the one hand and the influence of the USSR on Romania on the other determined the scope of Tito's visit to Romania. Despite the Soviet shadow, the talks between the Yugoslav and Romanian delegations in Bucharest ushered in a new period in the development of bilateral relations. Although the visit was primarily of a propagandistic nature, it shaped various aspects of bilateral cooperation and laid down the plan and basic principles of cooperation for the following decades. Among the concrete results achieved during Tito's stay, the signing of a tourist agreement and an agreement of the information exchange, the establishment of joint commissions to examine the possibility of building the Iron Gate hydroelectric power plant, the possibility of concluding a long-term trade agreement, a cultural and scientific-technical agreement, etc. should be emphasized. Tito's visit also had some positive effects on the position of the Serbian minority. On the other hand, through the visit Romania improved its foreign policy position and adopted certain principles that were important for the process of gradual independence from Moscow. Since then, the Romanian leadership no longer strictly adhered to Soviet foreign policy, which meant that the poor Yugoslav-Soviet relations could no longer radically change the friendly atmosphere and pragmatic cooperation between Yugoslavia and Romania.

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