

still present. In this sense, the archival openness work of CWIHP, through relations with scholarly and archival authorities in many countries, indirectly measures the Cold War's lasting legacy. Success in obtaining documentation on a given topic is the ultimate proof that that moment of Cold War can finally be made into history, one more thread in the new international history of the twentieth century.

¹ One of the few things that all of these events have in common is that Stalin's thoughts on them were decisive in shaping Soviet policies viewed simultaneously as international actions and reactions. In order to broaden and deepen this discussion of Cold War origins, CWIHP has begun a project on "I.V. Stalin as a Cold War Statesman." Transcripts and memcons of Stalin's meetings with foreign leaders are being collected for future publication and research in

connection with a major CWIHP-sponsored international conference, scheduled for late 1998. The Yugoslavia section of this *Bulletin* has a first installment from the Stalin project. Additional conversations with Stalin will go up on the CWIHP website (cwihip.si.edu) in the course of 1998.

² Russian archives are an exception on the East-bloc side with post-1969 documents emerging only in special cases. On the American side, extensive declassifications have taken place on certain post-1969 topics due to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) suits that generated the National Security Archive's foreign policy series. These include: Afghanistan, 1973-80; El Salvador, 1977-84; Iran, 1977-80; Iran-Contra Affair, 1983-88; Nicaragua, 1978-1990; Philippines, 1965-86; South Africa, 1962-89; US Nuclear Non-Proliferation, 1945-91.

³ For an insightful discussion and demonstration of "critical oral history" with reference to the Cuban Missile Crisis, see James Blight and David Welch, *On the Brink* (New York, 1989).

When did the Cold War End?

by Thomas Blanton

When the Cold War memorial rises on the Mall in Washington D.C., what exactly will be the date carved therein as the end of the Cold War?

Ambassador Robert Hutchings writes that "Americans of an earlier generation knew when V-E Day and V-J Day were; there were dates on the calendar marking victory in Europe and victory over Japan in 1945. But the Cold War ended on no certain date; it lacked finality.... The end of the Cold War thus evoked among the American public little sense of purpose fulfilled—and even less of responsibility for the tasks of postwar construction."¹

Other commentators have picked the obvious candidate—25 December 1991, when the Soviet Union ceased to exist.² Yet this date is far too neat, since by any rational measure the Cold War was already over by then. Well before December 1991, the Cold War featured many symbolic and substantive markers of its demise. Among these, and on the basis of new archival evidence from Soviet files, this article nominates Christmas Eve 1989—when a hitherto somewhat obscure U.S.-Soviet meeting in Moscow discussed the violent revolution then taking place in Romania—as a strong contender for the title of Cold War finale.

The process of carbon-dating the end of the Cold War benefits from having December 1991 as the latest outer limit of the period. Similarly, the literature gives an earliest limit as well. This occurred on 1 June 1988, when then-Vice-President George Bush, on vacation in Kennebunkport, reacted to President Reagan's buoyant May 31 stroll through Red Square in Moscow by telling reporters dourly, "The Cold War's not over."³

By the end of the year, many Cold Warriors disagreed with President-elect Bush. On 7 December 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev made his famous speech at the United Nations, which Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan summed up as follows: "In December 1988, Gorbachev went to the General Assembly

of the United Nations and declared, 'We in no way aspire to be the bearer of ultimate truth.' That has to have been the most astounding statement of surrender in the history of ideological struggle."⁴

For other observers of Gorbachev's speech, it was not so much the ideological concessions as the unilateral military cutbacks that most impressed. Retired Gen. Andrew Goodpaster, a former NATO commander and top aide to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, called the cuts "the most significant step since NATO was founded" and said they opened the way to broad military reductions on both sides.⁵

The stream of Soviet eulogies for the Cold War continued throughout 1989. In January 1989 in Vienna, for example, Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze greeted the opening of the Conventional Forces in Europe talks by saying that disarmament progress "has shaken the iron curtain, weakened its rusting foundations, pierced new openings, accelerated its corrosion."⁶ Then, on 6 July 1989, Gorbachev told the Council of Europe in his famous Strasbourg speech that the "common European home excludes all possibility of armed confrontation, all possibility of resorting to the threat or use of force, and notably military force employed by one alliance against another, within an alliance, or whatever it might be."⁷

And on 25 October 1989, as Communist governments began to tumble in Eastern Europe, Gorbachev's spokesman, Gennadii Gerasimov, coined the most memorable phrase of all, when he told reporters with Gorbachev in Helsinki, Finland, that the "Frank Sinatra Doctrine" had replaced the Brezhnev Doctrine for the Soviets, referring to the singer's signature ballad, "I did it my way."⁸

From the U.S. perspective, the most important signals were not so much the rhetorical flourishes of Gorbachev's "new thinking" (since contradictory rhetoric could be found in the official Soviet press throughout this period),

but the actual shifts in power within the Warsaw Pact. These included the beginning of the “roundtable” discussions in Poland in January–February 1989, which ultimately produced free elections in the summer (swept by Solidarity), and the March 1989 multicandidate elections in the Soviet Union, which put reformers and dissidents, including Andrei Sakharov, into the Congress of People’s Deputies. By May 1989, these extraordinary developments led former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski to tell the *Washington Post*’s Don Oberdorfer: “We are quite literally in the early phases of what might be called the postcommunist era.”⁹

The most public finale of the Cold War, of course, came with the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989. In the words of then-deputy national security adviser and future CIA director Robert Gates: “No one who watched on television will ever forget the images of crowds of East and West Germans dancing on top of the Wall, hacking away bits of it for souvenirs, and finally dismantling whole sections with construction machinery. If there ever was a symbolic moment when most of the world thought the Cold War ended, it was that night in Berlin.”¹⁰

One of Gates’ staff at the time, Robert Hutchings of the NSC, puts the date of his “epiphany” a little earlier. “Most of us dealing with these issues in the United States or in Europe had our epiphanies, our moments of realization that the end of Europe’s division might actually be at hand—not just as an aspiration for the 1990s but as an imminent reality,” Mr. Hutchings writes. “For many it came with the opening of the Berlin Wall on November 9; others may have had premonitions already in early 1989 (although surely not as many as later claimed such prescience). Mine came with the election of Tadeusz Mazowiecki and the early steps taken by his government. The United States was working hard to persuade the Soviet Union that self-determination in Eastern Europe could be achieved in a manner consistent with legitimate Soviet security interests; now, in Poland, the Mazowiecki government was living proof of that contention, offering an early glimmer of what post-Cold War Europe might look like. (To be sure, even the most optimistic scenario for this transition was still being measured in years, not months.)”¹¹

But all of these memorable moments represented initiatives by Gorbachev or by the East Europeans themselves forcing change. Where was the evidence of “new thinking” by the United States?

For the Russian historian Vladislav Zubok, that evidence appeared at Malta, at the Bush–Gorbachev summit in early December 1989. President Bush’s restraint, his unwillingness to “dance on the Wall,” so to speak, his reassurance to Gorbachev as superpower-peer, their joint press conference (the first in the history of superpower summitry)—all adds up to the end of the Cold War.¹² More support for this view comes from Gorbachev’s own statement, which appeared in *Pravda* on 5 December that “The world is leaving one epoch, the

‘Cold War,’ and entering a new one.”¹³ Gennadii Gerasimov told reporters after Malta: “We buried the Cold War at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea.”¹⁴

But, again, these are the Soviet announcements of the end of the Cold War. For the American announcement, we must turn to Christmas Eve, Sunday, 24 December 1989. Secretary of State James Baker, appearing on NBC Television’s “Meet The Press” show, said the United States would not object if the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies used military force to assist the Romanian revolutionaries who had just deposed the Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.¹⁵ Raymond Garthoff describes this statement as “an extraordinary illustration of how rapidly and far the changing situation in Eastern Europe had affected American thinking and U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union.... It would have been hard to find a more striking example reflecting American recognition of the end of the Cold War.”¹⁶

For Robert Hutchings, however, Baker’s statement was “an unfortunate comment, but one that was not quite as egregious as it seemed.”¹⁷ According to Hutchings, “The context was this. The day before Baker made his remark, officials of the provisional [Romanian] government appealed to Moscow and the West for help, claiming they were running out of ammunition and feared being overwhelmed by the well-armed Ceausescu loyalists. Responding to this appeal, French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas offered to send a brigade of volunteers and said he would welcome Soviet assistance as well, without specifying whether he meant sending fresh supplies of ammunition or rendering more direct ‘assistance.’ It was in response to a question about Dumas’s position that Baker made his statement. The desire not to offend his French counterpart may be part of the explanation, but Baker evidently was swayed by the argument that Soviet intervention on the side of pro-democracy forces, in response to their specific appeal for help, would be preferable to seeing the revolution fail and the Ceausescu returned to power.” Hutchings says this was by no means the “dominant view” among U.S. policymakers, and the next day a White House “clarification” of Baker’s remarks expressly opposed any Soviet intervention in Romania.¹⁸

But Baker had already sent instructions to Moscow, tasking Ambassador Jack F. Matlock, Jr., to feel out Soviet intentions on Romania. And so, on Christmas Eve, 24 December 1989, with Moscow some eight hours ahead of Washington, Ambassador Matlock went to the Soviet Foreign Ministry and met with Deputy Foreign Minister I. P. Aboimov. According to the Soviet documents attached to this article, Matlock’s message—while veiled in diplomatic indirection—was as striking as anything Baker said on TV, amounting to an invitation for the Soviets to intervene in Romania. In 1994, the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation declassified and published these selected documents, for the obvious reason that the Soviets come off quite well in the exchange with the Americans.¹⁹ The complete record of Soviet actions and conversations

remains to be seen.

The key document for this discussion is the final one in the series published by the Foreign Ministry, a 25 December memorandum of conversation written by Deputy Foreign Minister Aboimov of his meeting the day before with Matlock. Since 24 December was a Sunday, presumably Foreign Minister Shevardnadze as well as Secretary General Gorbachev were not to be found at the office, but in their dachas.

Interestingly, Ambassador Matlock's 1995 book on the fall of the Soviet Union does not mention the discussion detailed here in the Soviet notes of the conversation. Only a very indirect hint emerges from the Matlock passage that reads as follows: "After Germany, the most traumatic event in the onetime Soviet bloc for the Communist Party and the KGB was the bloody revolution that took place in Romania at the end of the year. The violence directed at Ceausescu and his family, and members of the hated Securitate secret police, was covered in great detail by the Soviet press, and television did not spare its viewers the scenes of violence. But when the anti-Ceausescu forces invited Soviet intervention to support them, Moscow refused, signaling that the days of military intervention in Eastern Europe—even under conditions the West might have found tolerable—were over."²⁰

Compare the language Matlock uses here—even under conditions the West might have found tolerable—with the language his Soviet counterpart uses to describe the U.S. approach: "Then Matlock touched on the issue that, apparently, he wanted to raise from the very beginning of the conversation. The Administration, he said, is very interested in knowing if the possibility of military assistance by the Soviet Union to the Romanian National Salvation Front is totally out of question. Matlock suggested (*probrosil*) the following option: what would the Soviet Union do if an appropriate appeal came from the Front? Simultaneously, the Ambassador hinted at the idea, apparently on instructions from Washington. He let us know that under the present circumstances the military involvement of the Soviet Union in Romanian affairs might not be regarded in the context (*podpadat' pod*) of 'the Brezhnev doctrine.'"

The Soviet diplomat Aboimov quickly refused Matlock's implied invitation: "To this sounding out (*zondazh*) by the American [Ambassador] I answered completely clearly and unequivocally, presenting our principled position. I declared that we did not visualize, even theoretically, such a scenario. We stand against any interference in the domestic affairs of other states and we intend to pursue this line firmly and without deviations. Thus, the American side may consider that 'the Brezhnev doctrine' is now theirs as our gift."

This last phrase clearly refers to the American invasion of Panama which had just occurred on 20 December 1989. Some 13,000 U.S. troops had moved overnight into that Central American country to remove its dictator, Manuel Noriega, a long-time U.S. intelligence

asset. The Soviet language here indicates that they believed the U.S. invitation to be at best "stupid," as Foreign Minister Shevardnadze later told American writers Michael Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, and at worst a provocation intended to put the Soviet Union in a position parallel to that of the U.S. in Panama.²¹

The Beschloss and Talbott account, clearly based on their interviews with Shevardnadze, leaves the impression that the Soviet Foreign Minister made his remonstrances directly to Matlock. At least according to the documents at hand (as well as Ambassador Matlock's own memory), this was not the case. Similarly, Aboimov's pointed comment—"Thus, the American side may consider that 'the Brezhnev doctrine' is now theirs as our gift"—differs somewhat from the version provided by Beschloss and Talbott, who have Aboimov saying "with unconcealed bitterness, 'It seems that we've turned the Brezhnev Doctrine over to you!'"²²

At the heart of Matlock's case to the Soviets was the notion of an "appropriate appeal" from the Romanians for military assistance. According to the Soviet memcon, his question on 24 December couched this in the conditional—what if such an appeal came?—suggesting that no such appeal had yet been made. However, Matlock's memoirs turn the conditional into a past tense: "the anti-Ceausescu forces invited" and "Moscow refused."²³ Likewise, Hutchings' account cites a Romanian appeal on "the day before Baker made his remark,"²⁴ which would have been the day before Matlock's meeting. In contrast, a contemporary account, by Don Oberdorfer in *The Washington Post* on 25 December quotes "Washington officials" as saying "the only [Romanian] requests as of yesterday [24 December, the day of Matlock's meeting and Baker's TV appearance] were part of a general appeal for medical supplies and other emergency aid."²⁵

The Aboimov memorandum of his meeting with Matlock certainly ranks as the headline document of this small batch, but the other five released by the Russian Foreign Ministry also reward close attention. They include some highly suggestive details on the Romanian situation in December 1989, in two additional categories: First, on the issue of possible Soviet involvement in plotting the fall of Ceausescu; and second, on the actual events in Timisoara and elsewhere in Romania, as expressed in Soviet discussions with the Romanian, Hungarian, and Yugoslav ambassadors to Moscow.

Did the Soviets plot the fall of the dictator Ceausescu? The second document here, of a conversation of Aboimov with the Romanian ambassador I. Bukur (on 21 December) describes specific allegations from Ceausescu, directed to the Soviet charge d'affaires in Bucharest, that the Timisoara protests arose because "the Soviet Union and other states, members of the Warsaw Treaty" were involved in "coordinated activities allegedly aimed at the SRR."

However, the first Russian document published here suggests, but does not prove, that the answer is no, at least

for the highest levels of the Soviet Union. Here we have the Foreign Minister saying to Secretary General Gorbachev, both of them leaders of the Politburo, that the Soviets were having to rely on Western telegraph services for their news of Romania as of 20 December—the day the army ceased its attack on the Timisoara demonstrations and the protesters proclaimed Timisoara a liberated city, five days after the first protests sought to protect pastor Lazslo Tokes, and three days after the army-Securitate crackdown.²⁶ This Shevardnadze-to-Gorbachev message does not mean that the lower levels of the Soviet apparatus, for example the KGB resident in Bucharest, were not plotting; indeed, based on a Ceausescu-mocking editorial in *Izvestiia* on 17 November 1989, R. Craig Nation concludes that “the involvement of Soviet security forces in the plot to topple the dictator is a distinct possibility.”²⁷ But this evidence does suggest strongly that the KGB was not providing much good information to the top. If the Soviet experience in East Germany one month earlier is any parallel, the KGB could well have become hostage in an informational sense to the very secret police forces it had nurtured and the outside world assumed to be so powerful. In that case, the Stasi completely underestimated the power of the public protests and the likelihood of the fall of the Wall.

Why should we believe this document? I think there is a relatively simple answer: If evidence existed in the Soviet files of Gorbachev plotting with the KGB to overthrow Ceausescu, against all of Gorbachev’s public speeches about non-intervention, President Yeltsin would probably have released such documents, as he did so many others derogatory of Gorbachev, during the consolidation of power after 1991 and certainly in time for the Presidential campaign in 1996, in which Gorbachev won about 1% of the vote.²⁸ The Politburo files continue to be under Yeltsin’s direct control, with access strictly limited to favored researchers.²⁹ Likewise, these Foreign Ministry files are declassified today clearly because they make the Foreign Ministry look good. We have not seen the same kinds of files on other revolutions in Eastern Europe, nor the complete record groups of any of these files, and until we do, we cannot draw complete conclusions about Soviet behavior in 1989.

But for Romanians and for historians of that epochal year 1989, these documents, limited as they are, provide some fascinating detail on Warsaw Pact diplomatic conversations at the very end of the Cold War. Almost quaint, were they not so dripping with venom, are the representations of Ceausescu’s ambassador to Moscow, I. Bukur. In this view, the heroic pastor Tokes simply serves as an agent of “outside” (read revanchist Hungarian) interests and possibly Western intelligence services as well.

The conversations with the Hungarian and Yugoslav ambassadors also give us a wealth of detail about the events in Romania from the perspective of three very concerned (and still Communist) governments. Hungary’s

Birnbauer visits the Soviet Foreign Ministry on December 22 only hours after Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu had boarded a helicopter on the roof of the Communist Party headquarters in downtown Bucharest to flee from massive street demonstrations and chaotic violence in the form of a Securitate-versus-army shootout. Referring to an atmosphere of concern and mourning in Budapest, Birnbauer says, “No doubt that the events of the past few hours will drastically alter this mood.” For his part, the Yugoslav ambassador clearly has the best information from the ground in Romania, probably because the Yugoslav consulate staff in Timisoara served as eyewitnesses to the events there.

The day after Ambassador Matlock received the Brezhnev Doctrine as a Christmas gift, a Romanian firing squad shot Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu after a farcical trial. Over the next month, the Romanian revolution turned out to be a coup d’état in effect, stage-managed by nomenklatura of the Ceausescu regime who did not hesitate to bring in the traditional Party enforcers, the truncheon-wielding miners, to crush dissent (as in the University of Bucharest student protests of April-June 1990).³⁰ This murky history exemplifies precisely the lack of finality that Ambassador Hutchings refers to in his history of the end of the Cold War. For many Romanians, the internal Cold War did not really end until November 1996, when voters replaced Ceausescu’s former aide, President Ion Iliescu, with the rector (Emil Constantinescu) of the University of Bucharest, which to this day carries the sign: “Neo-Communist Free Zone.”

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¹ Robert L. Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War: An Insider’s Account of U.S. Policy in Europe, 1989-1992* (Washington, D.C. and Baltimore: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 343.

² See, for example, Charles Krauthammer, “Build a Cold War Memorial,” *The Washington Post*, 28 March 1997, p. A29: “We know its exact dates. On March 12, 1947, the United States entered the fight (late, as usual: Stalin had been at it at least since V-E Day). And it ended at the stroke of midnight, Dec. 31 [sic], 1991, when the Soviet Union didn’t just surrender, it vanished from the map.”

³ Alessandra Stanley, “More Worldly Than Wise,” *Time*, 15 August 1988, p. 18, quoted in Don Oberdorfer, *The Turn: From the Cold War to a New Era* (New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 329.

⁴ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "The CIA's Credibility," *The National Interest* (Winter 1995/96), p. 111. For the full text of Gorbachev's speech, see FBIS-SOV-99-236, 8 December 1988, pp. 11-19.

⁵ Quoted in Don Oberdorfer, *The Turn*, p. 319.

⁶ R. Craig Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star: A History of Soviet Security Policy, 1917-1991* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 308.

⁷ R. Craig Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star*, p. 308: "A more straightforward repudiation of the Brezhnev Doctrine could scarcely be imagined...."

⁸ Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston: Little Brown, 1994), p. 134.

⁹ Quoted in Don Oberdorfer, *The Turn*, p. 346.

¹⁰ Robert M. Gates, *From The Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 468.

¹¹ Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War*, p. 74.

¹² Personal communication, March 14, 1997; see also Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels*, p. 135.

¹³ Quoted in Raymond Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1994), p. 408.

¹⁴ Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels*, p. 165.

¹⁵ Don Oberdorfer, "Baker Implies U.S. Would Back East-Bloc Military Aid to Rebels; French, Dutch Would Support Soviet Role in Romania," *The Washington Post*, 25 December 1989, pp. A37, A40.

¹⁶ Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, p. 408.

¹⁷ Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War*, p. 86. Ambassador Jack F. Matlock, Jr. does not agree that Mr. Baker's comment was "unfortunate"; rather, "under the circumstances we would not have minded some limited Soviet assistance to the NSF [National Salvation Front] and it did not hurt to let the Soviets know." Matlock letter to the author, 21 May 1997.

¹⁸ Statement by the press secretary, White House, 25 December 1989, cited in Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War*, p. 381.

¹⁹ The Russian versions, in transcript rather than facsimile, are to be found in *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, No. 21/22, November 1994, pp. 74-80. The present writer has filed Freedom of Information Act requests with the State Department for Secretary Baker's instructions and Ambassador Matlock's response, neither of which has yet been declassified. Ambassador Matlock notes that the memcon accords with his own memory of the conversation. Matlock letter to the author, 21 May 1997.

²⁰ Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, (New York: Random House, 1995), pp. 261-262.

²¹ Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels*, pp. 170-171.

²² Matlock letter to the author, 21 May 1997; Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels*, p. 171.

²³ Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire*, p. 262. Ambassador Matlock "was told that there had been Romanian appeals for Soviet assistance - thus the instruction to me—but I have no direct knowledge of such appeals." Matlock letter to the author, 21 May 1997.

²⁴ Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War*, p. 86.

²⁵ Oberdorfer, "Baker Implies U.S. Would Back East-Bloc Military Aid to Rebels," p. A40.

²⁶ For a detailed hour-by-hour chronology of the Timisoara events, based on eyewitness reports and contemporary documents, see Florin Medeleit and Mihai Ziman, *O Cronica a Revolutiei Din Timisoara 16-22 Decembrie 1989* (Timisoara: Muzeul Banatului Timisoara, April 1990, 31 pp.).

²⁷ R. Craig Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star*, p. 309.

²⁸ Ed. note: Most of these documents were gathered in the Storage Center for Contemporary Documentation (TsKhSD) as fond 89. It is also available on microfilm from Chadwick-Healey.

²⁹ For an incisive review of the Soviet archival situation, see Raymond Garthoff, "Some Observations on Using the Soviet Archives," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Spring 1997), pp. 243-257.

³⁰ For the best review in English of these events, see Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel* (New York: The Free Press, 1993 pb.), pp. 223-236. See also Martyn Rady, *Romania in Turmoil* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 1992), pp. 91-144; and for a literary view, Andrei Codrescu, "Romania Today: A Bad Novel," in *The Muse Is Always Half-Dressed In New Orleans and other essays* (New York: Picador USA, 1995).

To Comrade GORBACHEV M.S.

Mikhail Sergeevich:

On the events in Romania in the last few days we can still only judge on the basis of information that comes from news agencies, primarily Western ones. This information is often contradictory and does not allow one to construct a true picture.

Our attempts to obtain the official version via Bucharest produced no results. Today, 20 December the Romanian ambassador will be invited to the MFA USSR [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics] in order to obtain from him information on this issue.

Until we have complete and objective information, we should not, in our opinion, be in haste to make a statement of the USSR Congress of People's Deputies, at best we could go not further than instructing the Commission on Foreign Affairs [of the Congress' Supreme Soviet] to prepare a draft proposal on our possible reaction with all circumstances in mind.

E. SHEVARDNADZE

20 December 1989

[Source: *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, no. 21/22, November 1994, pp. 74-79. Translated by Vladislav Zubok.]

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**From the diary of
ABOIMOV I.P.**

21 December 1989

**Memorandum of conversation
with the Ambassador of the SRR [Socialist Republic of
Romania] in the USSR**

I. BUKUR

21 December 1989

I received I. Bukur, fulfilling his request.

The Ambassador recounted the address of N. Ceausescu on Romanian radio and television on 20 December and handed over its complete text.

When I asked if the events in Timisoara involved human casualties and what the present situation was in that region, the Ambassador responded that he possesses no information on this issue. He referred to the fact that the address of N. Ceausescu also says nothing on this score.

I told the Ambassador that during the meeting of N. Ceausescu with the Soviet charge d'affaires in the SRR on 20 December [the former] expressed surprise that Soviet representatives made declarations on the events in Timisoara. Besides, during the meeting it was asserted [by Ceausescu] that the Romanian side possesses information that the action in Timisoara was allegedly prepared and organized with the consent of countries [that are] members of the Warsaw Treaty Organization. Moreover, the actions against Romania were allegedly plotted within the framework of the Warsaw Treaty Organization.

According to our information, officials in Bucharest in conversation with ambassadors of allied socialist states expressed an idea about some kind of action of interference into the internal affairs of the SRR allegedly under preparation in the Soviet Union.

I must declare on behalf of our side that such assertions can only puzzle us, have no foundation and do not correspond with reality [until this part Aboimov probably read the instructions.]

Answering the Ambassador's question as to whether my words reflected the official viewpoint of the Soviet government, I told him that so far I have no instruction to make any declarations on behalf of the Soviet government, but my words certainly reflect our official position which postulates that the Soviet Union builds its relations with allied socialist states on the basis of equality, mutual respect and strict non-interference into domestic affairs. Considering the grave character of the statements of Romanian officials I cannot help expressing in preliminary order our attitude to these statements....

[Source: *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, no. 21/22, November 1994, pp. 74-79. Translated by Vladislav Zubok.]

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**From the diary of
I.P. ABOIMOV**

23 December 1989

**Record of conversation with the Ambassador
of the SFRY [Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia]
in the USSR, MILAN VERES
22 December 1989**

I received M. Veres on his request.

He referred to the instruction of the Union Secretariat on Foreign Affairs of the SFRY and shared the available information on the events in Romania, corroborated by the General Consulate of the SFRY in Timisoara and by numerous Yugoslav citizens who returned from the SRR. He also reported on the Yugoslav evaluations of the developments in Romania.

The beginning of the dramatic development could be traced to the events of 15-16 December in Timisoara where a large group of people protested against the action of the authorities with regard to the priest L. Tokes. This process grew into a huge demonstration of the population of the city against the existing order. According to the estimates of officials of the General Consulate of the SFRY, there were up to 100,000 people, including workers, university and school students, who participated in the demonstration. Protest actions took place also in Arad, Brasov and Cluj. Large contingents of militia and military were used against demonstrators in Timisoara. According to the Yugoslavs, during those clashes several hundred people died, and according to some unchecked data the number of casualties exceeded 2,000. In the downtown area shops, restaurants, cafes were destroyed, many streetcars and automobiles were also burnt down. Timisoara is surrounded by troops, but protest actions continue in the city. Workers seized factories and are threatening to blow them up if the authorities do not satisfy the people's demands. Officials of the General Consulate of the SFRY, the Ambassador remarked, noticed that a number of soldiers and militiamen expressed their sympathies with demonstrators. There were also slogans "The Army will not shoot at students and school children."

The Yugoslav-Romanian border is practically sealed; its defenses are fortified by troops along its whole length, including check-points. So far the Romanian side authorized only the passing of people with diplomatic and other service passports. The Ambassador informed us that the Yugoslavs had evacuated members of the families of officials of their General Consulate. He disavowed reports of a number of Western news agencies that participants of the demonstration [in Timisoara] found refuge on the territory of the Yugoslav compound, whose premises allegedly were penetrated by Romanian militia.

According to Yugoslav estimates, stressed M. Veres, the main reason for disorders in Timisoara and their spread subsequently around a number of other cities, including the capital of the SRR, is rooted in profound popular dissatisfaction with the economic situation in the country

accumulated over [many] years, with low living standards, the lack of basic food and consumer goods, and with the unwillingness of the leadership to undertake at least some measures to democratize the political system.

The Ambassador pointed out that the Yugoslav public is very concerned about the situation in the neighboring country. The mass media of the SFRY are informing the population in detail about the events, including many reports about reactions abroad. On 19 December the Union Executive Vece [executive branch of the Yugoslav state] came out with an appropriate declaration, expressing profound concern and regret with regard to casualties during the crack-down on the demonstrations. On 20 December the Presidium of the CC CPY [Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia] denounced the actions of the Romanian authorities and laid political responsibility at the door of the leadership of the RCP [Romanian Communist Party]. It declared a temporary suspension of all contacts with the RCP and repealed an earlier invitation [to the RCP] to send a delegation to the 14th Congress of the CPY (January 1990). All public organizations of Yugoslavia, as well as both chambers of the Skupcina [parliament] made sharp protests. Late on 21 December the Presidium of the SFRY adopted a resolution denouncing reprisals against the demonstrators, that led to a large loss of human life.

M. Veres stressed that of particular cause for concern in Belgrade is the situation with Yugoslav ethnic minorities in the SRR. He said that the SFRY supports a peaceful resolution of the situation in Romania and is against any foreign interference into Romanian affairs....

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR
I. ABOIMOV

[Source: *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, no. 21/22, November 1994, pp. 74-79. Translated by Vladislav Zubok.]

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From the diary of ABOIMOV I.P.

25 December 1989

Record of conversation with U.S. Ambassador to the USSR, J. MATLOCK 24 December 1989

I received U.S. Ambassador J. Matlock at his request. Referring to instructions received from Washington, the Ambassador said that, in the opinion of the American leadership, the Soviet Union and the United States should continue the exchange of opinions with regard to the events in Romania. The situation in Romania still is very uncertain. The American side is very concerned by the fact that warfare between the forces of state security and army units continues, and casualties among the civilian population are mounting. In this regard Matlock referred

to the positive significance of the fact that the opinions of the Soviet Union and the United States coincided to the effect that there should be support given to the group that is trying to govern Romania and to fulfill the will of the Romanian people.

Then the American presented the following thought. The United States paid attention to the conviction expressed by the Soviet Union that military intervention is out of question. With equal interest the United States regarded the declaration of the Soviet government about its readiness to give immediate humanitarian assistance to the Romanian people. The American side would be greatly interested to hear the Soviet assessment of the developments in Romania, as well as the opinion of the Soviet side with regard to the most effective ways of supporting the Romanian people and the new leadership of Romania....

I informed the Ambassador that earlier, in addition to the Declaration of the Soviet government, a TASS Declaration was published. This step by our side was necessitated by grave concern over the very tense situation around the house populated by officials of the Soviet trade mission in Bucharest. It turned out to be in the epicenter of combat and for some time was partially seized by the terrorist forces. Only by the end of the day were they dispersed and we could evacuate the inhabitants from the house. I drew the attention of the American to the fact that among them two people were lightly wounded, and not one—as it was earlier reported. Now these people are located on the territory of the Soviet Embassy.

At the present moment the main task is to carry out the evacuation of Soviet citizens from Romania, first of all women and children. I informed the U.S. Ambassador of those options that are under consideration....

We maintain contact with representatives of the new Romanian leadership, if only via telephone. We informed them about our steps directed at giving humanitarian assistance to the Romanian population. Several times we inquired of the new leadership of Romania about what urgent needs they have. We received no clear answer to our question. It looks like the Front's Council still lacks clear ideas on this score.

With regard to the question raised by the American about the most effective approaches to the organization of humanitarian assistance to Romania, I repeated that there is no full clarity about it. The Soviet Union is carrying out measures to prepare such assistance, and its practical implementation, according to its own understanding of Romania's needs.

We informed the new Romanian leadership and also informed the International Red Cross Committee and the International Health Organization that we had set up hospitals in the frontier cities of the Soviet Union to receive wounded from Romania. In Moldavia they are already expecting the first group of 600 wounded.

About the means of assistance. The first load valued at a half million rubles (11 rail-cars) will be sent by rail. Trains in Romania still function. In addition, we gave instruction to the leadership of Moldavia to get in touch with border districts in Romania and clarify two issues. First, what do they need most. Second, to ask for their advice as to the best way to transport the loads.

To finish the exposition of our thoughts on the situation in Romania, I remarked that we are in close contact on these questions with our Warsaw Treaty allies as well as with all other states that approach us. So we take as a positive sign the desire of the American side to exchange opinions. We consider contacts of this kind very useful.

Reacting to our words, Matlock thought that now the United States is seeking optimal ways of cooperation in order to give assistance to Romania. According to Matlock, the United States would be ready to give assistance in medicine and food, as well as in logistics of transporting this assistance. In this context the American ambassador made the following request. If the Soviet side develops some ideas on this score, the American side is very interested in being kept up to date.

I responded that naturally we would be ready at any moment to share our considerations with the American side.

Then Matlock touched on the issue that, apparently, he wanted to raise from the very beginning of the conversation. The Administration, he said, is very interested in knowing if the possibility of military assistance by the Soviet Union to the Romanian National Salvation Front is totally out of question. Matlock suggested the following option: what would the Soviet Union do if an appropriate appeal came from the Front? Simultaneously, the Ambassador hinted at the idea, apparently on instructions from Washington. He let us know that under the present circumstances the military involvement of the Soviet Union in Romanian affairs might not be regarded in the context of "the Brezhnev doctrine."

To this sounding out by the American I gave the entirely clear and unequivocal answer, presenting our principled position. I declared that we did not visualize, even theoretically, such a scenario. We stand against any interference in the domestic affairs of other states and we intend to pursue this line firmly and without deviations. Thus, the American side may consider that "the Brezhnev doctrine" is now theirs as our gift.

Developing this thesis further, as a clarification, I drew the interlocutor's attention to the fact that it was on the basis of these considerations that the Soviet Union was and still is against convening the Security Council (SC) to consider the situation in Romania.

The American, however, immediately inquired what would be the Soviet reaction if the National Salvation Front itself appeals to convene the SC.

I said that we are still not ready to contemplate such a hypothetical possibility.

In the end both sides confirmed the positive evaluation of the exchange of opinions that took place. They expressed support of continuing contacts with regard to the rapidly changing situation in Romania.

Participants of the meeting included deputy head of the Directorate of the USA and Canada I.N. Podrazhanets, third secretary of the DUSAandC [Directorate of USA and Canada in the Soviet Foreign Ministry] N.N. Spassky and first secretary of the U.S. embassy in Moscow J. Shoemaker.

Deputy minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR
I. ABOIMOV

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