

RADIO FREE EUROPE
MUNICH

OUTGOING CIPHER

TO: 

1972 FEB 15

17:03

URGENT

MUN 27

15 FEB 72

TO: DURKEE INFO PETZALL YARROW HOVEY DUNNING REYMAN
FM: WALTER INFO COOK BEDE BERNARD BROWN KOHAK LYON
NOWAK PECHACEK/BELLUS ZAHARIEFF

151458: U R G E N T

RFE DAILY REPORT NO. 37

1. BULGARIA: NOTHING.

2. CZECHOSLOVAKIA: NOTHING.

3. HUNGARY: OUR TRANSLATION OF THE REST OF THE PRAVDA ARTICLE ON HUNGARY (IN ADDITION TO THE FBIS TRANSLATION WHICH WE SENT DS) DOES NOT CONTAIN ANYTHING OF INTEREST. NOR DOES THE COMMUNIQUE ON THE KADAR VISIT IN MOSCOW (DS) IN WHICH ALL THE FORMULATIONS ARE STANDARD.

4. POLAND: PAP'S ITEM YESTERDAY ON OTHER CANDIDATES BEING PROPOSED FOR THE NEW SEJM IN ADDITION TO THOSE PROPOSED BY THE NATIONAL FRONT (DS) IS IN OUR VIEW UNLIKELY TO INVOLVE MUCH OR ANY SPONTANEITY. IN ANY CASE, NOT ALL THOSE CANDIDATES PROPOSED END UP ON THE FINAL LIST. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE OR DETAILS ON HOW THESE MEETINGS ARE REALLY BEING HELD. A MORE INTERESTING DEVELOPMENT IS IN THE ELECTIONS TO WORKERS COUNCILS. WE FOUND NEW "GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS" FOR HOW THESE ELECTINS ARE TO BE CARRIED OUT IN TWO OBSCURE TRADE UNION NEWSPAPERS, ACCORDING TO WHICH THE ELECTIONS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED IN FULL SECRECY, ABOUT A QUARTER OF THE CANDIDATES SHOULD BE NEW PEOPLE, AND NAMES ON THE BALLOT SHOULD BE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER. THE MAIN POLISH NATIONAL MEDIA DID NOT CARRY THIS INFORMATION, WHICH OUR BD CARRIED ON 6 FEBRUARY. RADIO WARSAW LAST NIGHT MENTIONED THE NEW INSTRUCTIONS BUT OMITTED SIGNIFICANT DETAILS.

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5. RUMANIA: SO FAR THE ONLY REAL SOURCE FOR THE SERB STORY IS AP. SEVERAL EUROPEAN PAPERS ARE CARRYING THE STORY BASED ON AP. SO FAR THE ONLY SERIOUS "NEWS BACKGROUND" STORIES AVAILABLE ARE IN THE NYT QUOTING SPECIALISTS IN WASHINGTON AND ONE BY RICHARD DAVY IN THE LONDON TIMES. TODAY'S BILD ZEITUNG HAS AN EXPECTEDLY SENSATIONAL STORY CONNECTING THE SERB CASE WITH RUMANIAN MILITARY AGREEMENTS WITH CHINA.

THE FOLLOWING ARE POINTS OF FACT AND/OR SPECULATION WHICH MIGHT BE USEFUL;

BIOGRAPHY: ACCORDING TO UNOFFICIAL REPORTS ION SERB WAS AN NCO IN THE ROYAL RUMANIAN ARMY ON THE RUSSIAN FRONT AND AFTER THE WAR WAS SENT TO THE SOVIET UNION FOR OFFICER TRAINING. A REPORT OF 1960 MENTIONS HIM AS BEING 38 YEARS OLD. IN THE MID-FIFTIES HE WAS A MAJOR-GENERAL AND A DEPUTY MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. AN UNOFFICIAL REPORT IN 1960 REFERRED TO HIM AS CHIEF OF THE GENERAL-DIRECTORATE OF THE TROOPS ATTACHED TO THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR. ON 23 AUGUST 1965 HE REVIEWED THE FESTIVE MILITARY PARADE WHICH SUGGESTS THAT BY THAT TIME HE WAS COMMANDANT OF THE BUCHAREST GARRISON. IN THE COURSE OF 1966 HE WAS REFERRED TO BY SCINTEIA AND OTHER PAPERS AS COMMANDANT OF THE BUCHAREST GARRISON. IN NOVEMBER 1968 HE WAS ELECTED MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE BUREAU OF THE BUCHAREST MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF THE FRONT OF SOCIALIST UNITY. IN DECEMBER 1968 HE WAS ELECTED A MEMBER OF THE BUCHAREST MUNICIPAL PARTY COMMITTEE. IN MARCH 1969 HE WAS ELECTED AS A DEPUTY TO THE GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (GNA) AND IN THE SAME MONTH WAS APPOINTED SECRETARY OF THE GNA'S

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STANDING COMMISSION FOR MILITARY AFFAIRS. IN OCTOBER 1969 HE RECEIVED A DECORATION ON THE OCCASION OF THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUMANIAN PEOPLE'S ARMY. FROM THEN ON, WE HAVE NO FURTHER RECORD OF GENERAL SERB. IF HE HAD CEASED TO BE EITHER A MEMBER OF THE GNA OR SECRETARY OF ITS MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMISSION, THIS WOULD NORMALLY HAVE BEEN MENTIONED IN THE OFFICIAL BULLETIN, BUT WE CAN FIND NO SUCH MENTION. HOWEVER, ON 23 AUGUST 1969 GENERAL NICOLAE MILITARU WAS MENTIONED AS REVIEWING THE MILITARY PARADE WHICH SUGGESTS THAT HE, NOT SERB, WAS BY THEN COMMANDER OF THE BUCHAREST MILITARY GARRISON.

FROM THIS INFORMATION IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO MAKE MUCH OF A PROFILE OUT OF SERB. BUT SINCE HE WAS AT THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR WHEN DRAGHICI WAS IN CONTROL THERE, ONE MIGHT TENTATIVELY ASSUME HE WAS A "DRAGHICI MAN." (SHORTLY AFTER CEAUSESCU'S ACCESSION TO POWER IN 1965, DRAGHICI WAS TRANSFERRED FROM THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR AND WAS COMPREHENSIVELY PURGED IN APRIL 1968. HE HAD ALWAYS BEEN CEAUSESCU'S "NATURAL RIVAL" FOR POWER.) THE FACT THAT, AFTER 1969, SERB SEEMS TO HAVE DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT IS NOT EASILY EXPLAINABLE. IF OUR REFERENCE TO HIS AGE IS CORRECT, HE WAS STILL A YOUNG MAN. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HE EVENTUALLY HAD TO PAY FOR HIS ASSOCIATION WITH DRAGHICI AND/OR THAT HE DID NOT APPROVE OF CEAUSESCU'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SOVIET-LED INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. HE SEEMS TO HAVE DROPPED FROM ANY LIMELIGHT HE HAD BEFORE RUMANIAN RELATIONS WITH CHINA STARTED TO GET VERY CLOSE IN 1970 (JUNE 1970 BODNARAS TO CHINA; JULY 1970 IONITA TO CHINA).

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WHAT CAN BE PROBABLY SAID ABOUT SERB FROM 1970 ONWARDS IS THAT, STILL A YOUNG MAN, HE SAW NO FUTURE AHEAD OF HIM UNDER CEAUSESCU. ALSO, THOUGH HE WAS OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT, HE WAS STILL IN A POSITION TO KNOW MANY THINGS.

BACKGROUND TO THE PRESENT EPISODE

THERE WERE RUMORS OF AN ABORTIVE COUP OR A PLOT AGAINST CEAUSESCU IN JUNE-JULY 1971. THIS IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTED WHILE HE WAS IN CHINA OR WHEN IN FINLAND, WHICH HE VISITED ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS RETURN FROM CHINA. THESE RUMORS WERE VERY BADLY SOURCED. THE SALZBURGER NACHRICHTEN EVEN HAD THE COUP BEING LED BY A GENERAL -- MISCHA LEVIN -- WHO HAD DIED IN ISRAEL SOME YEARS BEFORE. IN NOVEMBER 1971, HOWEVER, RUMORS BEING TO CIRCULATE ABOUT GENERAL SERB HAVING BEEN INVOLVED IN A PRO-SOVIET ATTEMPT TO UNSEAT CEAUSESCU AND HAVING BEEN ARRESTED (OR ALREADY EXECUTED) FOR IT. (NOTE THAT THE RUMORED CHARGE AT THIS TIME WAS CONSPIRACY AND NOT ESPIONAGE.) THESE RUMORS, APPARENTLY BETTER FOUNDED THAN THE PREVIOUS ONE, WERE MAINLY CIRCULATING IN PARIS.

THE PRESENT REPORTS

THE CURRENT AP REPORT HAS SERB BEING EXECUTED FOR GIVING THE SOVIETS SECRETS ON RUMANIAN ROCKET OPERATIONS AND DEFENSE DEPLOYMENTS. THIS SEEMS HARDLY LIKELY SINCE, PRESUMABLY, THE SOVIETS, THROUGH THE WARSAW PACT ALLIANCE, WOULD HAVE ACCESS TO ALL THE INFORMATION THEY NEED ON THESE. WHAT THEY MIGHT BE INTERESTED

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IN FINDING OUT WOULD BE DETAILS ABOUT RUMANIAN MILITARY NEGOTIATIONS WITH CHINA WHICH HAVE BEEN QUITE BRISK SINCE JULY 1970. PERHAPS SERB WOULD STILL HAVE BEEN IN A POSITION TO GIVE THEM INFORMATION ABOUT THESE. IF ESPIONAGE IS REALLY THE ISSUE HERE, THIS WOULD SEEM THE MOST LIKELY AREA OF IT.

MORE PLAUSIBLE ON THE FACE OF IT, HOWEVER, WOULD BE THE CONSPIRACY THEORY. IF THERE HAD BEEN A CONSPIRACY AGAINST CEAUSESCU IN THE SUMMER THEN THIS COULD PERHAPS PARTLY EXPLAIN THE "SIEGE-LIKE" ATMOSPHERE WHICH WAS DRUMMED UP BY CEAUSESCU FROM JULY ONWARDS. IT MIGHT ALSO HELP EXPLAIN THE OUSTER OF PATILINET, THE MAN WHO COULD BE BLAMED FOR LACK OF VIGILANCE. AND, CERTAINLY, CEAUSESCU'S DEFIANCE OF THE SOVIET UNION AND FRIENDSHIP WITH CHINA COULD HAVE CAUSED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN AMONG MANY IN RUMANIA -- NOT LEAST AMONG THE OFFICER CORPS. IN ADDITION, MANY ASPECTS OF CEAUSESCU'S INTERNAL POLICY PLUS HIS PERSONAL ABRASIVENESS MUST HAVE ALIENATED MANY MORE. THUS IT IS POSSIBLE THAT MANY OTHERS BESIDE SERB WERE IMPLICATED BUT THAT SERB, PERHAPS AS THE RINGLEADER, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE SOVIET EMBASSY HAD TO BE MADE AN EXAMPLE OF.

THE AFTERMATH

PRESUMING THERE IS SOME TRUTH IN THE SERB STORY, WHAT IS STRIKING ARE THE ATTEMPTS BY BOTH THE RUMANIANS AND THE SOVIETS TO MAKE IT SEEM THAT NOTHING HAS HAPPENED. CEAUSESCU HAS ADOPTED A LOW PROFILE VIS-A-VIS THE SOVIETS FOR SEVERAL MONTHS NOW AND THE IMPRESSION HAS BEEN THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN BUCHAREST AND MOSCOW HAVE IMPROVED SOMEWHAT. JAKUBOWSKI AND SHTEMENKO VISITED BUCHAREST IN JANUARY, (PARTLY TO DISCUSS THE SERB CASE?) THEN CEAUSESCU WENT

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TO THE PRAGUE SUMMIT AND IONITA WENT TO THE WARSAW PACT DEFENSE MINISTERS MEETING IN EAST BERLIN. CLEARLY BOTH SIDES SEE IT IN THEIR INTEREST TO MAINTAIN AN OUTWARD FACADE OF CORRECTNESS.

IN VIEW OF WORLDWIDE INTEREST IN THE CASE, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE RUMANIAN GOVERNMENT WILL RESPOND. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THEY WILL SEEK TO EXPLAIN SERB'S DEATH THROUGH NORMAL CAUSES OR A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT, ETC.

BUT IF THERE IS A CORE OF TRUTH IN THE SERB CASE, THEN IT COULD WELL REPRESENT PERHAPS THE MOST SERIOUS SINGLE EPISODE IN RUMANIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS AND WOULD DRAMATICALLY CONFIRM SUSPICIONS THAT MOSCOW WAS SEEKING EVERY OPENING IN BUCHAREST TO EXPLOIT WEAKNESSES IN THE CEAUSESCU REGIME. IF SERB HAS INDEED BEEN EXECUTED, THIS WOULD SHOW CEAUSESCU'S DETERMINATION TO RESIST BUT IT WILL HARDLY STOP SOVIET EFFORTS IN THIS DIRECTION.

6. OTHER: NOTHING

END MSG