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August 3, 1975

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION*

PARTICIPANTS: Nicolae Ceausescu, President of Romania
Manea Manescu, Prime Minister
George Macovescu, Foreign Minister
Sergiu Celac, Interpreter

President Gerald R. Ford
Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
Harry G. Barnes, Jr., Ambassador - Interpreter

DATE AND PLACE: August 3, 1975, 9:00 - 10:25 a.m., Bucharest-Sinaia Train

President Ceausescu began by saying that after the CSCE conference it was necessary to think about what problems needed to be tackled next. In his opinion, disarmament was such a problem. The President asked what opinion President Ceausescu had about the MBFR talks, President Ceausescu said "not much." The sorts of reductions being discussed, on the order of 20-30,000, were of a kind which could be achieved just as well through more efficient organization of any army. In addition, it wasn't really a question of numbers of soldiers, but rather of armaments, fire power, and in the first instance the US and the USSR. To take an abstract example, even with numbers, it wasn't right for reductions to be applied across the board, with Romania and Holland being subjected say to the same 10% reductions that would apply to the Soviets and Americans. The Secretary asked why this wasn't fair, and President Ceausescu replied that for the US this meant 200,000 troops and for the Soviets 300,000, but it still left their basic strength intact. The Secretary asked what 10% would mean for Romania, to which President Ceausescu replied in the order of 20,000. The element of fire power was what counted anyway. President Ford asked if what really bothered Romania wasn't 10% but what would happen when things got to 50% or 60%. This is exactly right, President Ceausescu said, and then went on to say that what counted, so far as troops were concerned, was not a transfer from say Czechoslovakia to Hungary of a couple thousand men but withdrawals. The Secretary said he wondered whether Romania really

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*Notes were not taken by the interpreters during this conversation.

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wanted US troop withdrawals given the fact that the continued presence of American troops in Europe was useful for preserving equilibrium on the continent from the standpoint of Romania and in particular Yugoslavia. President Ceausescu said he wasn't talking about US troop withdrawals but about real reductions which should be balanced and under adequate control. What was needed was a mechanism for ensuring both reductions and control. As a matter of fact, he noted, the Chinese have done more than anybody else to bring about troop reductions in Europe by obliging the Soviets to move substantial troops to the Chinese border. The Secretary recalled that there are about 44 Soviet divisions there now and that whenever he mentions their "northern" ally to the Chinese, they tremble, not from fear of course.

Returning to the subject of disarmament, President Ceausescu said that one error that some countries, including the United States, make at times is to ignore the role of small less developed states. So long as the major nuclear powers make no real steps toward nuclear disarmament, the danger exists and will increase that any number of smaller countries will try to acquire nuclear weapons - countries in the Middle East, Asia or even Latin America like Brazil. The Secretary noted that the Indians may be in that category though they are so very moral and pacifistic. They're not all that pacifistic, replied President Ceausescu. In any event, these same countries could also develop chemical or biological weapons which are cheaper and may well be more destructive.

President Ceausescu then brought the conversation back to Europe and remarked that he would be involved before long in what would in effect be a follow-up conference to CSCE - the conference of European communist parties. It could well turn out to be even more important than CSCE itself because at it would be decided whether a communist party in say Italy or France could have its own policies or would have to take orders from outside. The President asked what attitude President Ceausescu thought such parties would take. He replied that the Italian and Spanish parties, from all he knew of their leadership, would not accept outside dictation. With regard to the Portuguese party, President Ceausescu observed it was hard to say, but the military leaders he had met, including President Costa Gomes, were definitely committed to a policy of independence. In response to the Secretary's asking where and when the conference would take place, President Ceausescu said probably in November and probably in Berlin. (After the conversation broke up Ambassador Barnes asked President

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Ceausescu whether he really thought agreement could ever be reached on a document to be submitted to the conference. President Ceausescu replied that eventually there would be one on the same consensus basis as used at Geneva for CSCE. In any case, he was not looking forward with any great enthusiasm to this conference but Romania would definitely participate.)

Prior to that will be the CEMA (COMECON) summit conference called to discuss integration. When the Secretary asked what would be Romania's position, President Ceausescu said it was clear - they were against it. What about the other countries in COMECON, asked the Secretary. Some of them have reservations but they'll go along, said President Ceausescu. In fact the Poles are one of the strong supporters of the plan, as are the Bulgarians. The Secretary interposed "Then you'll be isolated." "It won't be for the first time," said President Ceausescu.

The Secretary then remarked how several of the Eastern European countries had talked to US representatives at the Helsinki conference about improving their relations with the United States, and asked what would be President Ceausescu's advice as to how the United States should treat them - in what order for example after Romania of course. President Ceausescu reflected for a while and then said he thought it was worthwhile trying to improve relations with them all. The President recalled that the Bulgarian representative at Helsinki had made a particular effort to be friendly, and President Ceausescu noted the existence of good Romanian-Bulgarian relations. After he mentioned that the US had already made a good start with Poland, the Secretary asked about East Germany in view of the fact that we had maintained a certain reserve with them. President Ceausescu said that in the recent past Romanian relations with East Germany had improved considerably. At the same time what the East Germans could do was obviously limited by the Potsdam treaty and they too would always go along with the Soviets. Ambassador Barnes mentioned that for that matter all the other European countries in COMECON had Soviet troops on their territory save Bulgaria and this could not help but limit their options. The Secretary said that knowing the Germans he could believe they might succeed in uniting in 15 years. They're romantics. They'll probably set themselves up as teachers of communism to the whole world. President Ceausescu responded that he agreed they would reunite though he wasn't so sure it would happen within 15 years. (At about this point the Secretary picked up the map of Romania which had been brought in at the President's request and a geography lesson ensued which concentrated on territories lost by Romania to the Soviets - President Ceausescu talking about the "restitution" to the Soviet Union of Bessarabia

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after World War II and the ceding of Northern Bukovina as "damages" for Romania's having held Bessarabia for 20 years. In fact, he noted, Romania in some ways fared better at Hitler's hands because Hitler turned down Molotov's November 1940 ultimatum to give the USSR a free hand in Romania and Bulgaria which would have meant the Soviets taking a still larger slice of northern Romania. In the context of talking about the differences of railway gauge between the USSR and other countries, President Ceausescu noted that the Bulgarians were urging Romania to build a wide gauge (Soviet type) line across Romania, but the Romanians were not interested.)

The Secretary then asked who President Ceausescu thought would succeed Brezhnev. President Ceausescu said it was just hard to say and the Secretary then asked what he thought about post-Brezhnev Soviet policies, would they be tougher or more flexible. President Ceausescu replied "They could hardly be tougher than they are now." "What about Shelepin?" asked President Ford. Saying "We've had fairly good experience with him," President Ceausescu proceeded to recount the story of the Romanian gold bullion and royal treasure sent to Moscow in 1916 for safekeeping but which has never been returned. Lenin apparently signed a decree in 1918 stating that all would be restored after the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government in Romania. In 1960 the Romanians inquired of the Soviets whether they were yet prepared to believe that such a government had been installed in Romania. The initial Soviet reaction was to deny any knowledge of the gold, but Shelepin subsequently was one of those who was in favor of at least taking a serious look at the Romanian request. The Secretary noted that for someone like Shelepin it's hard to make a comeback once you've lost your power base, and that the ranks of the Soviet leadership is no place for choir boys. President Ceausescu said the truth of the matter is that the whole present Soviet leadership is made up of people who got where they are thanks to Stalin, and only with a change to younger people will there be some real changes in policy.

The Secretary then asked whether Brezhnev had firm enough control to be able to make decisions stick. "On little, unimportant things" responded President Ceausescu, "like - MBFR." What did he think of Brezhnev's health? He said he was of course no doctor, but his own personal view was that Brezhnev would finish the same way Pompidou had. When the President wondered whether Brezhnev was aware of this, President Ceausescu said it was hard to say, citing Pompidou as having announced two days prior to his death that he was in good health.

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