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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Rumania

SUBJECT Life in Bucharest: Food Situation/Monetary Reform/Gain
Enthusiasm of Masses/Anti-Communist Leaflets/ Danube-
Black Sea Canal/New National Anthem

REPORT

DATE DISTR. 27 Oct 1953

NO. OF PAGES 5 50X1-HUM

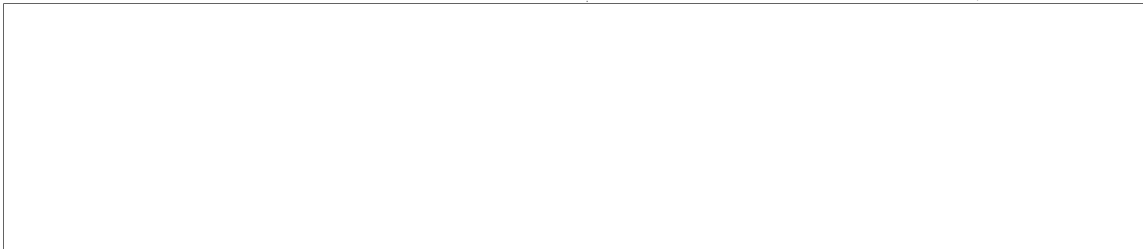
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1. "The following observations date from March through 2 September 1953.
2. "The great event of Stalin's death (on which occasion, there was no reaction at all from citizens) naturally gave rise to a great sense of encouragement. Everybody, (and these are the rumors of the common man of the street), expected something to happen. Subsequent events, Malenkov's coming to power, the liberation of the Soviet Jewish physicians accused of poisoning high Soviet Communist officials, as well as the amnesty, whereby many political prisoners were freed, created among Rumanians a state of confusion. Simultaneously, Rumanian Communist authorities took certain steps (obviously following orders received from Moscow) made for the purpose of 1) improving the food situation; 2) bringing to an end the rumors already spread about a new monetary reform; and 3) gaining the enthusiasm of the masses. Each problem will be analyzed below.

Food Situation

3. "The food situation was extremely disastrous. People were lining up for bread and milk and were fighting in the market for half a kilo of potatoes. During the middle of July 1953, there was a terrible shortage of tomatoes. The reason for this shortage of vital food commodities is that Rumania has undertaken certain obligations to supply the USSR, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic with food commodities (especially corn) in exchange for various kinds of machinery. To this should be added Rumania's war reparations to the USSR. In order to ease the food shortage, former private owners of food commodity stores were called to the CENTEROCOP (the Rumanian organ which controls and supervises food supplies for all of Rumania, including the Armed Forces and Soviet troops. It is located in the former Savoy Hotel at Sarindar Street and the corner of Calea Victoriei Street in Bucharest)

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and 'offered' 10,000 Lei and a small 'parcela' (small area for opening a store) in one of Bucharest's markets. (It must be pointed out that the CENTROCOP owns and supervises all of Bucharest's markets.) This action was taken immediately after Stalin's death. There have even been cases of former owners of private food commodity shops being freed from working on the Danube-Black Sea Canal and from concentration camps for prisoners and being brought back to Bucharest, where they were offered 10,000 Lei (as initial capital) and an area in the market for opening a shop of their own.

4. "There is the case of (fnu) Nitescu, former owner of a private vegetable store in the Obor market. Nitescu [redacted] was called to the CENTROCOP [exact date not specified, but Nitescu was not a prisoner at the time of summons and was residing in the Obor sector of Bucharest], given 10,000 Lei and a 'parcela' and told to open a private vegetable store. This Nitescu did, opening his store in the Obor market, as did many of the former private owners of food commodity stores. These new private owners were even authorized to purchase fruits, vegetables, etc., directly from farmers throughout the Bucharest region. We have no other details as to taxes and percentage [commissions?]. It is known only that the 10,000 Lei, received as a 'loan' from the State, has to be paid back in small installments within the next two years. As expressed by Nitescu, the main objection to this new private deal organized by the Communist authorities is the fear on the part of the new private owners that once they have become rich again, a new nationalization will be put into effect or a new monetary reform will destroy all their savings or even that mass arrests of these owners will take place. At any rate, many of these 'liberated' private food store owners in the Obor market are at least happy to be free, to be earning some money and helping their families (who had been living in the most terrible poverty and misery). They now await better times and hope for eventual liberation. However, they are aware of the fact that this new scheme of livelihood for them may be only a temporary move or step, similar to the step taken many years ago in the USSR, made only to regain the faith of the masses and of naive persons.
5. "Another step undertaken by the authorities to improve the food situation was the unofficial permission granted to farmers to come to Bucharest and sell their goods on the market. The famous street sellers (ambulants) have reappeared and no Government control is exercised over them. This is also part of the campaign to gain the sympathy and support of the people.

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New Monetary Reform

6. "During April-May 1953, there were daily rumors in Bucharest of a new monetary reform. People became panicky, and stores were invaded as consumers rushed to invest their money in anything they could buy. We knew a farmer (who was bringing his family butter and milk every week) who even bought two fans and some auto-lights. There is the possibility that these rumors were spread by Communist agents in order to force the population to purchase goods and spend all their savings.
7. "After the riots in the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia, the Communist authorities in Rumania undoubtedly realized that they were gradually losing control of the masses and, consequently, decided to find another scapegoat for the economic disasters. Strong emphasis was given in the local papers of Bucharest to the 'fact' that enemies of the people (paid naturally by the imperialists) had been spreading rumors of a new monetary reform. The papers went on to say that this rumor was not true.

Steps Taken to Gain Enthusiasm of Masses

8. "A diversion devised by the authorities was that of engaging the entire population of Bucharest in huge works and preparations for the Youth Festival [August 1953]. The work done on the '23 August' Stadium (so much boasted of by the Communists) was done by forced labor on the part of the Bucharest population and was not free and voluntary (as mentioned by their papers). This stadium was constructed in a large hole, a so-called maidan at the Bariera Vergului, commonly known as 'Groyile

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Oatului'. The hole was quite deep, about 25 meters, and very wide, and to emphasize that the stadium was constructed in a few months was very foolish. It is true that excavations were made to level the hole, but had not millions of tons of earth already been removed long before March 1953 (when the work was ostensibly inaugurated), it would have been humanly impossible to complete the stadium in the months remaining before the Festival. The Communist authorities needed to boast to the participants of the Youth Festival that the work had been completed in record time and that it was a feat that could not have been performed in capitalistic countries. A safe estimate is that 70% of Bucharest's population gave their forced labor to complete the stadium. Members of all State enterprises were forced to work on it and private citizens were stopped on the street and requested to give their 'voluntary' contribution to the project. There were special brigades who organized groups of citizens (who were not within the Government's field of labor) and took them to work on the stadium. Even working an hour was considered a 'great contribution'. This work was definitely unpaid, but members of State enterprises who had worked on the stadium were promised free entrance tickets to the various events held during the Festival. There was a special registry where the name and address of each worker was recorded along with the number of hours each person had worked.

9. "To further deceive the participants in the Youth Festival, the Communist authorities tried to draw a veil down over the real food situation and the distribution of food items immediately became regular. Until a few days before the opening of the Festival, the food situation had still been bad and vital items were missing. Then all State Stores became filled with the best items. There were still long queues of people but these queues were made up mostly of people who wanted to obtain the clothing and shoes manufactured specially for the Festival. Delegates were issued special identification cards by the Presidium of Rumania; these cards entitled them to special reductions everywhere. All restaurants had tables reserved for the delegate, and prices for them were at least ten times lower than for the common citizens of Bucharest.
10. "The following incident which took place during the first ten days of August 1953 is an illustration of the special treatment given to foreign participants in the Youth Festival. We actually were in a State Restaurant (a 1st Category restaurant) situated on 6 Martie Boulevard (formerly Elisabeta) and almost next to the Victoria movie theatre, drinking a batterie of wine (one liter of wine, one liter of soda water and ice) when a stranger was seated at the next table. It was about 9:30 PM in the evening and this stranger was having a wonderful supper. He began with hors d'oeuvres and this was followed by soup, fish, chicken, fried potatoes, cake, ice-cream. He also had wine and a liqueur. When in very bad Rumanian (but good enough to make himself understood and to understand replies) he asked the waiter (tovaras ospatar) for his check, he was presented with a bill amounting to 119.00 Lei. The stranger, upon seeing the check, retorted that during that same day for precisely the same dinner, he had paid only 12.00 Lei in the restaurant of the Ambassador Hotel. [redacted] The waiter then called the man in charge (called the Responsible by sources), who found out from examining the man's special identification card that he was a participant in the Festival. Thereupon, he apologized to the stranger and pointed out that he could have had a special table reserved for such participants and that because he was not seated at such a table, the mistake had been made. His use of the Rumanian language had further added to the confusion. It was pointed out that the meal he had consumed was worth 119.00 Lei but that because he was a Festival participant, the amount would be reduced to 19.00 Lei. He paid the 19.00 Lei and left the restaurant. This scene was noticed by many people in the room.

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11. "Although many Communists were deceived by the Festival and 'huge Socialist achievements', even some fanatic Communists noticed the deception of the special reductions for the participants and were angry at the granting of these privileges. Editors Note: [redacted] Rumanian Communists in this instance.

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Dropping of Anti-Communist Leaflets

12. "Another incident taking place during the Youth Festival was the dropping of anti-Communist leaflets by a plane of unknown nationality. This took place on 15 August 1953, exactly at 11:10 PM in the evening. The plane flew almost level with the tops of houses as it dropped leaflets while flying towards the Danube. It was going at a rapid pace and it did not circle around Bucharest, flying over the city only once. Each leaflet was approximately 25 x 15 cm in size, white, and with writing on only one side. The writing said:

'Tineri si tinere cari participati la Festival!-Impartasiti slibovul vostru strainilor care participa la Festival dela Bucuresti, spuneti-le cum a fost luata bucatu de paine dela gura muncitorilor si a copilului vostru pentru a arata strainilor bunstatea Comunista. Dati-l afara, spuneti-le sa se duca acasa!'

[Translation [redacted] Youngsters who participate in the Festival! Tell your pains to the strangers who participate in the Youth Festival; tell them the way Communists took bread away from the workers and from your children in order to show the strangers Communist achievements. Send them away; tell them to go home.

The writing on the leaflets continued:

'Va veni si ziua eliberarii tarii voastre de sub jugul mascal-Incredintati aceste afise celor ce sunt mai apropiati de voi si cameni de incredere. Dumnezeu va fii cu noi!-Traiasca Romania libera si independenta!'

[Translation [redacted] The day of the liberation of your country from Soviet domination will come. Hand this leaflet to a trustworthy person. God will be with us. Long live Free and Independent Romania.

"Between the last two sentences on the leaflet there was a humorous design or sketch. The subject was 'August 23, 1944: The Liberation by the glorious Soviet Army'. The sketch represented a Rumanian farmer's house. The door and windows of this house were broken. In front of the house was the poor farmer and his wife sitting and crying with her baby while other farmers looked in astonishment at a Soviet soldier carrying the famous PT3 automatic rifle. Ivan, the Soviet soldier, was pictured as a robber having a pig in his right hand and the farmer's *cozoc* (typical winter coat of Rumanian farmers). He was also clutching other household goods and his arm was covered with wrist watches.

[redacted] about half an hour later [presumably after the dropping], militia agents rushed into houses in the centers of Bucharest where leaflets had been dropped and searched every nook and cranny with great zeal, including gardens, courtyards and roofs. Their heavy shoes caused some roofs and tiles to break. They continued the search all night long and believed that by collecting all the leaflets, no one would know about the incident; hoping especially to hide the fact from the delegates to the Youth Festival. However, on the following day, and for many days afterwards, the leaflets were the subject of many secret talks and whispering sessions, and a source of great encouragement to many citizens of Bucharest.

Closing of the Danube-Black Sea Canal Project

13. "The shutting down of the Danube-Black Sea Canal Project and the liberation of some of the inmates working on this project was another event which marked the beginning of the Youth Festival. Many of the free workers and brigadiers of the canal project returned to Bucharest, and we have heard from inmates friends that even inmates were set free on this occasion. However, it is a public fact known by everyone in Bucharest that the project has been completely abandoned, not as an act of clemency and not as a result of the provisions adopted by the Communist authorities to set free certain categories of political prisoners but only because of a final realization that this huge work cannot be accomplished. A friend of ours had seen the canal works in May 1952 and said that the canal is 72 km long, 40 m wide and 30 m deep. However, only 15 of the 72 km have been excavated and by the time the Five Year Plan expired, it would be humanly impossible to have pierced through stone mountains and hills (as was envisioned by the Communists). A large error was made in the calculations as the canal could never have been 72 km long; a length of 45 km being the only obtainable goal. The Communist authorities, realizing that the project could never be successfully completed, seized upon any excuse to shut down the works.

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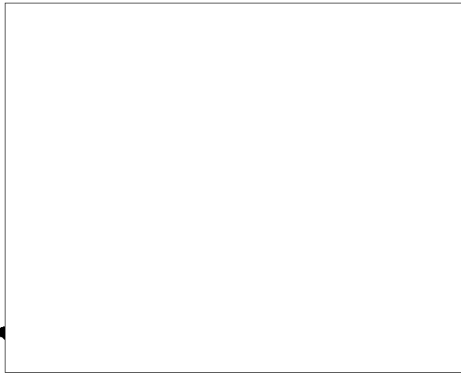


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New Rumanian National Anthem

14. "The Festival was marked also by the appearance of a new Rumanian national anthem, which actually is a hymn of praise to the USSR and to the glorious Soviet troops who liberated Rumania."

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