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MEMORANDUM FOR: CPAS/IMC/CB

SUBJECT: Ways to Think About Winter in Romania

We share your concern about current and prospective developments in Romania. Attached is a "thinkpiece" [redacted] about possible near-term scenarios. I would be interested in any comments you may have [redacted]

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Chief
East European Division

Attachment:
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WAYS TO THINK ABOUT WINTER IN ROMANIA

Romania is heading into yet another in a decade-long series of winters with steadily decreasing food and energy availability, the situation this year compounded by widescale wage reductions and worker layoffs triggered by falling production. The potential for widespread unrest that could ultimately end President Ceausescu's 22-year rule is markedly higher. It's still anyone's guess, however, how close Romania is to the breaking point. Several possible scenarios for the upcoming winter are outlined below, ranging from the least serious to the most, with thoughts on their likelihood and consequences:

POTENTIAL SCENARIOS:

I. Nothing More of Significance Happens:

Apart from occasional disturbances, such as November's riot in Brasov and last February's student demonstration in Iasi, most Romanians survive yet another winter. Unusually warm weather, possibly accompanied by minor concessions on energy, food, and wage and employment policies, ameliorates some of the population's most pressing concerns. The security forces retain firm control, largely based on widespread fear of the consequences of opposing the regime.

Comment: Possible, but less likely than Scenarios II or III. While the population has remained relatively quiescent up to now, even relatively mild winters have seen scattered outbreaks of protest. A relatively poor harvest has already hindered the usual stockpiling by private citizens of supplies for the winter. Furthermore, the government is likely to believe that any let up in its draconian policies would be interpreted as a sign of weakness and lead to more demands. This latter belief may be correct.

II. A Replay of Last Winter:

Scattered, spontaneous protests break out throughout the winter, but lack coordination and do not last more than a few hours apiece. Although complaints of short rations, layoffs and wage cutbacks are general, individual protests are sparked by local circumstances. The tempo of the protests increases later in the winter, reaching a height during February and early March, when stored winter supplies begin to run out and before the first spring crops are available. Although security troops and regular militia (police) react slowly to each individual disturbance, they effectively isolate each incident and identify and punish local activists. Although discontent and grumbling about the Ceausescus grows within the lower and middle ranks of the Party, it remains unfocused, with no discernable leaders and great reluctance to act against a President who still commands the loyalty of the security apparatus.

Comment: This and the following scenario are the two most likely to occur. It would repeat the pattern of the past several winters, which results in part from the fact that Romania, unlike Poland, lacks any national organization independent of the government and has no national history of successful popular opposition to oppression. President Ceausescu and his security apparatus also benefit from regional and ethnic divisions in a

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society where loyalty to the nation as a whole is weaker than in other East European states. Finally, Romania's relative independence from Moscow's influence -- and the resultant fact that Ceausescu and his family are the only easily identifiable sources of national suffering -- deprives Romanian opposition of the nationalist, anti-Soviet emotional impetus that has been an important factor elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

III. A Long, Hot Winter:

Similar to Scenario II, except that the size, frequency and intensity of the demonstrations is greater than in previous years, with occasional casualties occurring in clashes between security forces and demonstrators. Several industries are hit by strikes, and some rudimentary organization among workers begins to appear. Student demonstrations also break out at major universities, but attract little popular support. Students seek contacts with workers and suffer sharp reprisals from security services fearful of intellectuals stirring up even more protest. Ceausescu tries to redirect some of the tension through a sharp escalation of nationalist rhetoric, including attacks directed against "outside agitation." Some disturbances also lead to small-scale, scattered violence between ethnic Hungarians and Romanians. Discontent continues to rise in the party hierarchy. Several would-be oppositionists begin discussing possible alternatives to Ceausescu among themselves, but remain too intimidated by the security services to act.

Comment: A distinct possibility, this scenario lays the groundwork for Ceausescu's eventual overthrow by opponents within the Party or a takeover of the leadership by more pragmatic leaders **outside the current ruling circle** should Ceausescu die or be incapacitated.

IV. Ceausescu Overthrown Without Outside Intervention:

As happened in Poland in 1980, a group of workers staging a prolonged strike at a major factory is able to organize itself and establish the kernel of a national organization which begins to coordinate protests on a nationwide scale. Pragmatic opponents of the Ceausescus in the leadership, possibly in conjunction with the Securitate or the military, push him out of office and successfully placate most workers through a quickly-announced package of moderate reforms and a lifting of some restrictions on food and energy availability. Moscow follows events closely and cautiously embraces the new leadership.

Comment: Possible, but less likely than the two preceding scenarios. Unlike Poland, Romania lacks even the rudiments of a national opposition. The social gulf between workers and intellectuals, who assisted each other in the formation of Polish Solidarity, is greater than elsewhere in Eastern Europe, and communication between workers or intellectuals in different cities or regions and with the outside world is minimal and well-controlled by the regime. Thus, it is far more difficult for local events to spread than would be the case in a more socially advanced society, and it is far easier for the security services to divide and isolate regime opponents. As noted above, there is also historic precedent for economically-motivated social unrest to dissipate some of its energy in ethnic violence, a fact of which the national leadership is well aware.

A key factor in the calculation of any disenchanted leaders contemplating a move against Ceausescu will be the position of the security forces, the last fully loyal leg of the Romanian President's support. These forces appear to be under the firm control of Interior Minister Postelnicu, himself a protege of the Ceausescus, but one whose personal political beliefs and degree of ultimate loyalty to his patrons are unknown. If he should decide that the Ceausescus have so completely isolated themselves from the rest of the Party that it is in his long-term interest to cut a deal with other leaders, the end of the current regime could come very quickly. Although less likely, in such an uncertain atmosphere, a move might also be made by a group of disenchanted party leaders with the support of the military and those elements of the security system prepared to act without Postelnicu's support. Romanian leaders contemplating a move against Ceausescu would be encouraged by the belief that Moscow, which has openly criticized his rule, would probably support a more pragmatic alternative if it could achieve power without further substantial breakdowns in public order.

V. Outside Intervention:

Outside intervention by the Soviet Union and one or more of its Warsaw Pact allies in Romania is triggered by the inability of a post-Ceausescu regime to consolidate its control over the country. Widespread strikes and violence, including ethnic rioting, continue without immediate prospect of relief. While some Bucharest pragmatists initially might welcome intervention in order to restore order, it is almost certain that some elements of the leadership, including even opponents of Ceausescu, would try to organize resistance. The poorly-trained and armed and largely demoralized Romanian armed forces are incapable of putting up an organized resistance, but guerilla warfare, particularly in the mountainous areas of the country, continues for at least several weeks.

Comment: The anticipated political and military costs of even a sporadically-opposed invasion of Romania are great enough to deter Moscow from such a course, unless it faced the prospect of a serious threat to Communist rule or a prolonged period of chaos in its neighboring ally. Relations between the Romanian army and its Soviet counterpart are the most distant in the Warsaw Pact, and the Romanian officer corps and rank-and-file are strongly nationalistic and mildly anti-Soviet. Romanian military doctrine is aimed primarily at raising the costs of a Soviet invasion for purposes of deterrence. Moscow's basic objective is probably to assure that Ceausescu is succeeded at some point (and, if possible, sooner rather than later) by a more pragmatic leader who would devote himself to rebuilding the Romanian economy and the morale and effectiveness of the Party, and who would be less gratuitously antagonistic on foreign policy issues. The Soviet Union would almost definitely try to exhaust all diplomatic and political means of bringing this about before it contemplated the use of military force.

VARIABLES:

The primary variables affecting the likelihood of each scenario include:

1. **Weather:** A more severe winter than usual, as that of 1984-85, would put unbearable strain on Romania's already weakened economic and social services

infrastructures. Energy shortages and transportation delays aggravated by severe weather would interrupt distribution of supplies and slow production still further, in turn triggering more wage cuts and layoffs and thus aggravating social tensions. A prolonged winter, delaying the arrival of spring foodstuffs in late March and April, would trigger food riots as stored supplies were exhausted.

2. Economic Troubles: Unlike the weather, the regime has some limited control over working conditions and living standards. It could increase food availability and modify energy restrictions, either locally or nationally, but it would be extremely unlikely to do so -- for political reasons -- unless seriously challenged. Strikes and riots are most likely to be touched off by severe pay cuts and layoffs, which would deprive workers of access even to severely restricted supplies, or by severe food shortages. Fears that laid-off workers might be sent to work in the fields or mines would also touch off serious protests. Energy shortages, transportation bottlenecks and daily hardships contribute to low public morale but are unlikely by themselves to touch off violent protest.

3. Worker and Student Organization: The degree to which conditions and protest behavior is being discussed by groups likely to protest, especially workers and students, will critically affect the types of demonstrations which occur. Spontaneous demonstrations could spill over and spread, but well-planned and coordinated behavior is far more likely to influence further developments. The place and geography of any dissident planning also could prove critical.

4. Degree of Soviet Meddling: Although Moscow has made its distaste for the Ceausescu regime public over the past year, and Soviet leader Gorbachev's reform ideas have found a sympathetic audience in the Romanian populace and among some Romanian leaders, active Soviet efforts, through the USSR Embassy and KGB Residence in Bucharest, to line up potential support among Romanian party moderates could be interpreted by some Romanian leaders, rightly or wrongly, as encouragement of coup plotting.

5. Loyalty and Effectiveness of the Security Forces: Although there has been some grumbling in the lower ranks of the security troops (numbering about 20,000) and Securitate (over 25,000 full-time members) over economic difficulties that have even begun to affect them, the security forces generally are well-indoctrinated and likely to support the regime in any confrontation with the populace. The leadership of the security forces, including Interior Minister Postelnicu, may conclude at some point, however, that its personal loyalty to President Ceausescu is too costly and seek to strike a deal with his opponents. In that case, the Ceausescu regime, deprived of its last remaining leg of support, would probably quickly collapse. A related question is that of the effectiveness of the security forces. Up to now, they have been effective because of the fear their pervasiveness and brutality have inspired in potential regime opponents. They are not noticeably efficient, however, and in several instances have been slow and uncertain in reacting to unexpected events, such as demonstrations. Simultaneous outbreaks of unrest over a wide area would seriously strain security resources.

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