

Letter of General Ion Gheorghe, Deputy Minister of Romanian Armed Forces, to Nicolae Ceausescu
By General Ion Gheorghe

To Comrade

NICOLAE CEAUSESCU

GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE ROMANIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

PRESIDENT OF THE STATE COUNCIL

In accordance with the approval of the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, on 9 September 1969, the delegation of the Ministry of Armed Forces – headed by the undersigned – discussed in Moscow, with Army General S.M. Stemenko, Chief of General Staff of the Unified Command, the approved issues and, mainly, the issue of the common tactical-operative exercise with troops scheduled to take place on the territory of the Socialist Republic Romania in October this year under the command of the Minister of Armed Forces of the Romanian Socialist Republic.

1. At the discussions we maintained that this year, for various reasons, it was no longer possible to organize any common exercise on the territory of our country, and proposed that in 1970 a map exercise under the command of the Minister of Armed Forces of the Socialist Republic Romania take place, in which commandments (operative groups) from the armed forces of the Socialist Republic Romania, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, and the Bulgarian People's Republic participate.

In his turn, Army General Stemenko pointed out that he would understand why the exercise with troops in this year had to be put off, but it was unconceivable that it be completely taken out of the plan and replaced with a map exercise, all the more so as there was no precedent of this nature. Further, he maintained that operations with troops took place on the territory of all the countries participating in the Warsaw Treaty, for example in the People's Republic of Bulgaria in 1967, in which troops from the Armed Forces of the Socialist Republic of Romania took part; in addition, missile shootings are carried out yearly in the shooting ranges in the USSR.

The non-execution of this operation, he said, would give rise – on the one side – to some commentaries and speculations that serious cracks existed within the framework of the Warsaw Treaty, and – on the other side – the other countries participating in the Warsaw Treaty would reproach the USSR that such operations are executed on their territories but not on the territory of the Socialist Republic Romania, as if the latter had a preferential régime.

It was clearly apparent from the whole argumentation of the Army General Stemenko that for the Unified Command it was a question of prestige in relation to both the other participants in the Warsaw Treaty and the countries outside the Treaty.

As no common point of view was reached, we left this discussion in the air and went on to discuss the other issues.

In the end, reverting to the exercise issue, we agreed not to carry out any exercise in the fall of 1969, and to replan for 1970 the exercise planned for 1969. This exercise is to be executed without troops under the form of a command and general staff exercise with communications equipment on the spot on the territory of our country headed by the Minister of Armed Forces of the Socialist Republic of Romania, in which the Socialist Republic Romania, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the Bulgarian People's Republic are to participate. Neither I nor Army General Stemenko made any reference to the participation of the Hungarian People's Republic, although he realized that this was not a casual oversight on my part.

Concurrently, we mentioned that – in accordance with the laws in our country – this activity presupposed the conclusion of conventions between the governments of the above-mentioned countries, which – in our case – needed to be approved by the Great National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Romania.

Army General Stemenko did not raise any objection as regards this observation, affirming that if such were the laws of our country, they had to be observed.

As far as the development period of the exercise was concerned, Army General Stemenko maintained that this should take place in the spring of 1970 (the months of March and April) and not later since this would appear as a postponement of the exercise in 1969. We agreed that this issue should be agreed upon before the draft common-activity plan for 1970 is finalized.

2. As to the other issues discussed, no special aspects appeared needing to be underlined in this report.

3. After finishing the discussion of issues with Army General Stemenko, our delegation was received by the Supreme Commander, Marshal Jakubovsky, who – after the usual exchange of protocol words – pointed out that he had been informed by Army General Stemenko and that, personally, he agreed that the exercise with troops planned for 1969 not be executed any more but instead be replanned for 1970 and take place without troops under the form of a commandment and general staff operation/exercise with communications equipment on the spot on the territory of our country headed by the Minister of Armed Forces of the Socialist Republic of Romania, in which the Socialist Republic Romania, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the Bulgarian People's Republic are to participate. He pointed out, however, that it was desirable for an agreement to be reached as to the period of development of this exercise before the draft common-activity plan for 1970 is finalized.

I propose that the exercise with troops planned for 1969 be replanned for 1970 and take place without troops under the form of a commandment and general staff exercise with communications equipment on the spot on the territory of our country headed by the Minister of Armed Forces of the Socialist Republic of Romania, in which the Socialist Republic Romania, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the Bulgarian People's Republic are to participate.

As far as the development period of this exercise is concerned, I ask you to approve that the Ministry of Armed Forces continue to insist that it take place in the fall, and if this is not possible to have execute the exercise in the spring in the months of March and April).

FIRST DEPUTY OF THE MINISTER OF ARMED FORCES
AND CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF

Colonel General Ion Gheorghe

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