

Document No. 149: Memorandum of Conversation between
Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Aboimov and the Romanian
Ambassador to the USSR, December 21, 1989

The violence that led to Nicolae Ceaușescu's overthrow in Romania was sparked initially by a protest on December 16 in the Transylvanian city of Timișoara after government officials tried to deport a local priest. That protest grew exponentially despite, and indeed in the wake of, bloody reprisals by the Securitate secret police. Ceaușescu's own reactions grew increasingly extreme as his security forces proved unable to stop the unrest from spreading to the capital. Typically, when Soviet bloc leaders faced significant domestic opposition, for instance in 1953, 1956, 1968 and 1980–81, they professed to see the causes in imaginary foreign conspiracies from the West. But here Ceaușescu actually blames Moscow and its allies for allegedly provoking the "events" in Timișoara. From the memorandum, excerpted here, as well as from other sources,³³ it seems clear Moscow had no connection with the turmoil in Romania, for which years of Ceaușescu's misrule was more than sufficient explanation.

[...]

I told the ambassador that during N. Ceaușescu's meeting with the Soviet chargé d'affaires in the SRR on December 20, [Ceaușescu] expressed surprise that Soviet representatives had issued declarations on the events in Timișoara. Besides, during the meeting [Ceaușescu] asserted that the Romanian side possessed information that the action in Timișoara had allegedly been prepared and organized with the consent of member-states of the Warsaw Treaty Organization. Moreover, the actions against Romania were allegedly plotted within the framework of the Warsaw Treaty Organization.

According to our information, officials in Bucharest in conversation with ambassadors from allied socialist states expressed an idea about some kind of interfering action in the internal affairs of the SRR that was allegedly under preparation in the Soviet Union.

I must declare on behalf of our side that such assertions can only puzzle us, that they have no foundation and do not correspond with reality.

[...]

[Source: *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, no. 21/22, November 1994, pp. 74–79. Translated by Vladislav Zubok.]

³³ See Thomas Blanton, "When Did the Cold War End?," *CWIHP Bulletin* 10, (1998) pp. 184–191.