

Romania's Integration in COMECON. The Analysis of a Failure

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The present paper is part of a wider research on Romania's integration in the economy of Europe in the 19th – 20th centuries. It is based on an ample Romanian and foreign literature, but also on a significant number of quite new documents that have become available as a result of the opening, in the summer of 2006, of the Central National Archives of Romania on Comecon issues. The purpose of the paper is to underline the aspects connected to the evolution of the idea and practices of integration. In the well known circumstances of the end of the Second World War Romania belonged to the Soviet sphere of influence and, for almost half a century, it has been part of the socialist system.

1. *Romania, Founding Member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance*
The setting up moment of the Council for Mutual Assistance¹ is quite uncertain in history. Some documentary sources mention the date of 8 January 1950², some 18 January 1950³ and others 25 January 1950¹.

¹ The organization had different names and, consequently different logos, due to the various interpretation/translations of its institutional meanings: CMEA, CEMA, Comecon;

² The document named *Despre colaborarea economică strânsă între URSS și țările de democrație populară* (*On the economic cooperation between USSR and the countries with popular democracy*) is dated 8 January 1949 and it was given to the East-European leaders with only one day before a meeting held in Moscow, where they were invited to discuss about setting up of a common organization. See Central Historian National Archives, Governmental Commission for Comecon issues - – Protocols of Comecon's sessions, File nr.5/1949, f.30-33. As it follows we will use the abbreviation, CHNA.

³ Teulon, Fr., *Chronologie de l'économie mondiale*, Edition du Seuil, Paris, 1996

One thing is certain that in the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party², 10 January 1950, Gheorghe Gheorghiu –Dej informed the Political Bureau that not long ago he had been twice in Moscow, but discretion had to be maintained and that was why knowledge of the issue was limited to few comrades. He emphasized that there had been a project with two forms. The first form was short and served as a ground for discussions, however covering all the aspects of the long version of the project which was presented at the meeting where all the representatives from all the countries with people's democracies had been present. At this second meeting, continued Gh. Gheorghiu –Dej, the Soviet Union had three representatives, Bulgaria two, Poland two etc, and the majority of the representatives didn't know precisely about what was going to be discussed. Therefore, only some of the representatives present expressed the opinions of their political bureaux. The last improved document had been presented by comrade Vyaceslav Molotov to comrade I.V. Stalin, who asserted that "it should make us look 10-15 years forward" and that "is not about any assistance council, but about an open council for mutual economic assistance, with the possibility to receive other members which will accept the objective settled by the founders of the Council. The workers from France, Italy and from all the countries under the influence sphere of the Marshall Plan must know that it is not through the Marshall Plan that they are going to get food and what they need for their industries, but through the other sphere of influence and they will see that Europe can support herself." Referring to Stalin's statement, Gheorghiu- Dej concludes that it was a brilliant idea and it had been drawn up during the meeting

¹ Carol, A., Garrigues, J., Ivernel, M., *Dictionnaire d'histoire du XX-e siècle*, Hatier, Paris, 1993, p.118. A possible explanation of these different dates can be that only on 25 January 1949, *Izvestia* newspaper, through an official statement announces the setting up of the first international economic organization of the socialist countries. See Caillot, J., *Le CAEM. Aspects juridiques et formes de coopération économique entre les pays socialistes*, Librairie générale de droit et de jurisprudence R.Pichon et R.Durand-Auzias, Paris, 1971, p.2

² From now on we will use the abbreviation PB of CC of RWP.

by comrade Stalin personally¹. The description of the party leader from Bucharest offers clarifications on other organizational details of the structure to be set up: each member country will have two representatives; the council will meet every three months, each time in another capital city and it will establish its Permanent Bureau in Moscow. Until 25 January of the same year Romania was going to send to Moscow one representative and five technical staff; on the internal level Gheorghiu-Dej considered that workers must come with answers and precise commitments during the meetings and rallies in order to produce enthusiasm for one of the most important events of our times. This importance had to be underlined within the State Apparatus, mass organizations – of women, youth, in the peasant field etc².

As it is well known, the founding members of Comecon were: Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania and USSR, among them the Soviet Union had the economic leading role, the others having the function of satellite countries. Subsequently other states joined having the status of full member, associate member, unsocialist country cooperation status or as an observer. The cooperation relations among the members were different in time, according to Moscow's, as a centre of power, internal unrests and to the internal evolution from each member state; and this is the reason that from chronological point of view various different stages can be distinguished. Talking about the relations between Moscow and the countries turned into socialist ones, Alexandru Bârlădeanu, one of the important political figures in Bucharest in that time, asserted in his memories that, at the end of the fifth decade, in the satellite countries the Soviet coordination was made on two levels: on a political level Through Cominform, and on an eco-

¹ *Stenograma ședinței Biroului Politic al CC al PMR referitoare la organizarea Consiliului de Asistență Economică Mutuală (CAEM)(Shorthand minutes of the Political Bureau of CC of RWP on the organization of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA))* and Law project for the establishment of the people's councils on 10 January 1949, in CHNA, CC of RWP, Chancellery, File 2/1949, f.5-6

² *Ibidem*, p.10 and 14

conomic level through Comecon¹. According to the document² adopted in January 1950, the relations between USSR and the countries with people's democracies are a new type of relations which are different from the relations among capitalist countries as they are based on a profound community of interests and mutual solidarity. These relations evolve while the USA through the Marshall Plan influences Western Europe's economic policy pointing it against the interests of the Soviet Union and of the people's democratic countries.

The objectives of Comecon are clearly formulated: the drawing up of the economic relations plan among the Council member states, as well as the necessary coordination to their economic plans on the ground of production specialization and cooperation; the coordination of the import and export plans regarding those merchandises that have a great importance for economic relations among the Council member states; the coordination of the developing plans of transport and transit transports, related to the development of the economic relations among the Council member states; the drawing up of the aid measures in case of natural disasters as well as in the case of the discriminations applied by the capitalist countries against the Council member states; drawing up of the multilateral clearing and the currencies exchange rates; the setting up of cooperation measures in the technical and scientific field in the view of technical experience exchange on the most favorable grounds; the control of the plans' fulfillment and the designed measures of economic cooperation.

We consider that it is important to note that point number four of the above-mentioned document specified that the decisions were to be

¹ Betea, L., *Alexandru Bârlădeanu despre Dej, Ceaușescu și Iliescu (Alexandru Barladeanu about Dej, Ceausescu and Iliescu)*, Evenimentul Românesc Publishing house, București, 1997, p.143

² *Despre colaborarea economică strânsă între URSS și țările de democrație populară (About the close economic cooperation between USSR and the countries of popular democracy)*, in loc.cit.

taken only when there was the consent of the interested country and each country had the right to declare if it was interested in any topic analyzed by the Council¹.

Regarding this stage of Comecon establishment we consider that some comments are necessary. A first aspect is that the document does not mention the term of integration, neither explicitly nor implicitly, the Council aiming at three main simultaneous objectives: plans coordination, economic cooperation and, connected to that, cooperation in the field of transports and mutual aid. The application of these objectives was going to be done in the terms of some strong national specificity of all the member states. This is to be noticed in Romania, Bulgaria and the USSR where the economic coordination was exclusively done through plans and the investments, production and prices were determined and controlled in order to ensure their best fulfillment. Then in Poland the agricultural co-operative field had a symbolic presence and in the German Democratic Republic, where most of the industrial factories were organized and managed in a unique way different from all the other socialist countries, in limited partnership. Czechoslovakia and Hungary are, at their turn, exceptions as the plan has only an informative part, a fact which determined the necessity of some a posteriori interventions such as corrections of prices, loans' interest rates, taxation system etc., elements that belong to a true conjunctural policy where the plan and the market can coexist together in a mixed, composite system. To all these realities a peculiar fact can be added: the personality of I.V. Stalin, commanding, inconsistent, unpredictable, and not trusting his assistants, and in his last years obsessed with the idea of plots against his life.

Comecon's role in a first stage, until 1953 when I.V. Stalin died, consisted only in concluding of some economic and financial agreements. The common consent on the activity of Comecon in these first years

¹ Ibidem

is that it had only a formal existence. Thus some authors assert that it represented “an OECD substitute offered by the Soviets to the Eastern countries”¹, others consider “that for 7 years it functioned only as a framework institutional organization, that took little part in the existing economic relations between the member states”² and according to some other authors “in the first years it merely existed. At the beginning it seemed to have a rather formal role”³.

Its restrained activity can be explained through the fact that the Soviets controlled the economy of the Eastern countries in an obvious manner, through the military presence as well as through the presence of its counselors in the decision-making structures, in all the fields of activity, especially in the economic institutions.

Regarding Romania, on 8 May 1945 the document *Agreement concerning mutual deliveries of merchandises between Romania and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics*⁴ was signed in Moscow ratified on 7 June 1945 and bilingually published on 15 June of the same year. On the occasion other documents had been also signed. In the *Protocol to the Agreement of Economic Cooperation between the Kingdom of Romania and USSR*⁵ the content and organizational forms of the cooperation among the two countries are detailed in some fields of Romania’s economy. Among these an important part was hold by the system of the joint companies, commonly known as SOVROM⁶, which exerted a true monopoly in the majority of Romanian economic branches. They were led by a general director appointed by the Soviet part with increased powers of decision, and by a deputy general director appointed by the Romanians. Through the setting up conventions they were excepted from any

¹ Bideleux, R., Taylor, R., *European Integration and Disintegration*, Routledge, New York, 1996, p.176

² Caillot, J., *op.cit.*, p.14

³ Betea, L., *Alexandru Bârlădeanu despre...*, p.143

⁴ MO, Part I, Nr.133, from 15 June 1945, p.5028-5030

⁵ CHNA, CC of RWP, Economic department, File 18/1945, f.2-7

⁶ In Romania, during 1946-1960, 16 companies functioned.

kind of taxations and their profits were guaranteed by the Romanian state, which according to the case, had to cover them from its own budget. These companies were able to impose the trend of the national economic plans, having the right of extra-territoriality.

The first Comecon session was held in Moscow, 26-28 April 1949. From Albania three representatives attended, from Bulgaria – three, Hungary – three, Poland – four, Romania – three (Gh. Gheorghiu – Dej, Al. Bârlădeanu, Gh. Rădulescu), USSR – four and from Czechoslovakia - three. V. Molotov chaired and the secretary was A. I. Losciachov. The Protocol¹ concluded on the occasion, stated that V. Molotov in the name of the Soviet delegation, proposed the meeting agenda, the date of the next meeting (27 April 1949, at 3 pm) but also *the mention that the protocols should include the decisions taken, without, however, the shorthanded speeches or contributions on the floor.* On the agenda, at the Soviet representative's proposal, it was agreed to discuss upon: the working plan of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance; the relations with Yugoslavia, the appointment of the secretary of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance, the expenses estimation for maintaining the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance personnel for the year 1949; the date and the agenda of the next meeting of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance. All the points were approved by the present representatives and A.I.Losciachov was accepted as general secretary at the proposal of V. Molotov.

At the meeting from 27 April 1949², a list was set up with the main problems which should be prepared by the Council Bureau to be ana-

¹ CHNA, Comisia guvernamentală pentru CAER. Protocoale, *Protocol 1/1 Al Sesiunii Consiliului de Ajutor Economic Reciproc din 26 aprilie 1949. Moscova. ședința de seară, (Protocol 1/1 of Comecon session from 26 April 1949. Moscow. Evening meeting).*, File 1/1949, f.1-3

² Idem, *Protocol 2/1 Al Sesiunii Consiliului de Ajutor Economic Reciproc din 27 aprilie 1949. Moscova. ședința de zi (Protocol 2/1 of Comecon session from 27 April 1949. Moscow. Day meeting).*, File 1/1949, f.4-8

lyzed in the Comecon's meetings during the year 1949, structured on four segments.

I. Regarding the foreign trade it was decided to discuss: the widening of the goods exchange between Comecon countries during 1949-1950; the foreign trade of the Council member states with the capitalist countries and about the merchandises prices; the pursuit of the plans fulfillment and the foreseen economic cooperation measures; prices and multilateral clearing during 1949-1950.

II. Regarding economic plans coordination it was decided to discuss: the coordination of the production plans for 1949-1950, with precise specification on the ferrous metal products and the raw materials economy branches; delivering assistance for planning improving and reports design in the countries with people's democracy, including the problem of the methods of calculation of the national income.

III. Regarding the drawing up of the different issues concerning the economic constructions it was decided to discuss: the building of a metallurgic combine in Hungary; power stations building on the upper course of the Tisa River; the construction of a ball bearing plant in Poland; the construction of the bridge above the Danube in the Ghighen region (Bulgaria); the widening of two metallurgic plants in Ostrava (Czechoslovakia) and according to the wish expressed by the Albanese delegation, the Council Bureau was assigned to prepare a proposal for the development of Albania's national economy, and mainly of the raw materials economic branches and the transports problems.

IV. Regarding the technical assistance it was decided to discuss: proposal preparation for the technical cooperation and the exchange of experience among the Council member states; standardization organization in the countries with people's democracies. Regarding the sensitive case of the relations with Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, through the voice of V. Molotov, proposed the setting up of a common position and a commission was established to this purpose. The commis-

sion, which also included Al. Bârlădeanu, had to present until the next day its own proposals.

Finally, the third meeting, held on 28 April 1949¹, had as a core the Commission's proposal concerning the relations with Yugoslavia which, according to the original document, had a hostile policy towards the countries with people's democracies and USSR. The proposals were expressed distinctly: all the member states had to immediately reconsider all the agreements concluded with Yugoslavia and to cease granting any loans to Yugoslavia; the cessation of any merchandise delivery, the purchase only of strategic raw materials; significant decrease of industrial equipments sales as well as of strategic important goods; weapon sales and technical assistance were also forbidden. Each country had to draw up a report to show how it fulfilled these recommendations.

Among the decisions taken with the occasion of the third meeting are: the agreement on the expenses for maintaining Comecon apparatus on 1949², the Structure for counselors³, the Structure for additional staff⁴ and the Structure for the staff for house 9 – C⁵.

Following the first Comecon session, each delegation received a briefcase which contained the Regulations of the Standardization Commission that was going to function from September 1949, and an impressive number of questionnaires, many of them having the mention *classified*, regarding extremely detailed statistical data on the national economy, with precise indications about how they had to be filled in. This proves Moscow's clear intention of knowing in details, and implicitly

¹ Idem, *Protocol 3/1 Al Sesiunii Consiliului de Ajutor Economic Reciproc din 28 aprilie 1949. Moscova. ședința de zi Protocol 3/1 of Comecon session from 28 April 1949. Moscow. Day meeting*, File 1/1949, f.9-12

² Ibidem, f.13

³ Ibidem, f.14

⁴ Ibidem, f.15

⁵ Ibidem, f.16

being able to control, the economy of its satellite states. As an example, each country had to offer data on its intra and extra Comecon foreign trade, siderurgic and metallurgic plants, cotton industry, wool industry, agriculture, machine-tools factories etc.

The second Comecon session held on 25-27 August 1949¹ had on its agenda similar topics, with the only difference that the discussions were focused on the activity of foreign trade because, as mentioned in the documents of the meeting, the coordination of foreign trade was a manner of fighting against the discrimination applied by USA and the countries involved in the Marshall Plan against the USSR and the countries with people's democracies². Moreover, the increase of the volume of shipments among USSR and the Council member states was decided, with the recommendation to establish common commercial terms and standard contracts that would facilitate the trade transactions, as well as to conclude long term agreements for mutual deliveries of goods. Restrictions against capitalist countries were set up concerning the sales of strategic goods, especially for oil, rolled material, pipes, non-ferrous materials and heavy industrial equipment. In the case of loans from capitalist countries another recommendation was that the control of how the credit was going to be used had by no means to be accepted. For the achievement of the coordination of foreign trade the setting up of a Coordination Committee was recommended, formed by the representatives of the foreign affaires ministers who were to meet every three months. Prices and multilateral clearing was another topic discussed. The conditions were very clearly expressed: every participant country had to be equal with all the other countries, same prices for the same goods, taking into account the quality and the transport expenses. The settlement of accounts was going to be done in a single currency, ruble, at the official exchange rate

¹ CHNA, Comisia guvernamentală pentru CAER, *Raport asupra lucrărilor Biroului CAEM în vederea pregătirii sesiunii II din august 1949 a CAEM, (Report on Comecon's Bureau for the preparation of the second session August 1949)*, File 4/1949, f. 1-8

² *Ibidem*, f.3

of the USSR State Bank, the same bank through which the settlement of accounts was also going to be made.

Technical and scientific cooperation had to be strengthened and the following discussions were considered of major importance: hydroelectric power plants, railways and highways, irrigation systems and transport channels, maritime and fluvial harbors, huge factories etc. The ball bearings production had to be increased to totally cover, by 1953 at the latest, the internal demand and for that purpose the exact quantities for each country had been specified. The present representatives demanded USSR to grant assistance in designing, building and production for the new factories in Poland, Romania and Hungary, and to perform the systematic exchange of experience.

The third Comecon session held in Moscow on 24 November 1950 with the agenda agreed on at the previous meeting¹, focused its activity on six points: coordination of production plans of oil and oil equipment; coordination of production plans of raw materials for colored metals metallurgy (ores and concentrates of lead, zinc and copper) and also the coordination for the production plans for the equipments needed for the exploration and exploitation works of colored metals ores, for 1949-1950; coordination of production plans of man-made fibers for 1949-1950; coordination of production plans of raw materials for textile industry (cotton, flax, hemp) for 1950; coordination of production plans of automobiles and motorcycles; coordination of tractors production plans.

2. Romania Repositioning towards Comecon's practices

No other meetings of the Council for Mutual Economic Aid Assistance had been held until 1954, but the years 1953-1956 were full of political unrests at the top levels of USSR power. The radical change

¹ Ibidem, f.9

of the moment with tremendous long term implications was the disappearance of the quasi-divine authority that was granted to I.V.Stalin. The internal fights that took place during his lifetime were aimed to gain the favors of the great dictator. After his death the internal fights were targeted to secure the power by the three candidates P.Beria, Gh.Malencov and N.S.Hrușcirov.

The same period witnessed the first open dissents in some of Moscow's satellite countries: Pilsen in May 1953 and Berlin in July of the same year¹. Against this background of unrest, in January 1954 the Soviet Union launched an initiative to reorganize the Council for Mutual Economic Aid Assistance and circulated a document among the Council members² on this issue. As a result on 26 and 27 March 1954 the fourth session is held.

The presentation of the chief of the Soviet delegation³ underlined the pace of economic development and illustrated with statistic exemplifications the successes scored by the socialist countries within Comecon which was considered as proof of the gained experience in the planning activity. The presentation criticized the overlaps in the industrial development from the Council member states and the low interest shown to agriculture and to the production of mass consumption goods. The **enormous growth rates** of the machine building industries were mentioned, as well as the *percentage of the national income distributed for investments in the last 4 years*: GDR 12%; Bulgaria, 14%; CSR, 19%; Hungary, 20%; Poland, 23%; Albania, 28%; Romania 31% which pointed to important problems to which the Romanian com-

¹ Brus, W., *op.cit.*, p.70-71

² *Despre reorganizarea și activitatea de viitor a Consiliului de Ajutor Reciproc Economic. Propunerile URSS (About reorganization and future activity of Comecon. USSR proposals)*, in CHNA, Governmental Commission for Comecon, file 12/1954, f.1-4. The document is dated 18 January 1954

³ *Note din discursul tovarășului Micoian (Notes from the speech of Micoian comrade)*., 26.III.154 (document holograph and unsigned t – n. M.M.), in CHNA, Governmental Commission for Comecon. Comecon's protocols, File 13/1954, f.18-24

rades were trying to find solutions. And it was concluded that behind the presented successes there were difficulties and needs. In 1949 the establishment of Comecon was needed and it had a positive impact on foreign trade issues. However, the same positive impact on the coordination of production and investment was not observed. It was clear, nonetheless, that from that moment on it was impossible to move any further without the coordination of planning. The inevitable reorganization of Comecon followed clearly. The chief of the Soviet delegation concluded that “the socialist countries were lagging behind Western Europe’s countries and that the new requirement for Comecon was *planning coordination*, which would be *the main lever of cooperation* in the future”¹(author’s italics). The Romanian delegation agreed upon the proposals regarding the discussed reorganization considering that they were a fair representation of Romania’s duties and they came at the appropriate moment in time².

The main objective of the Council session from March 1954 was that of approving the unanimously accepted decision³ regarding the future framework of activity which replaced the *decision taken on 8 January 1949*. The document mentioned that during 1949-1954 Comecon did not manage to achieve the proper coordination of the economic plans of the member states and to take into account their existing needs. It decided, among other issues, the necessity of coordinating the economic plans for the development of the countries with people’s democracies with those of the USSR, having in view country specialization and possible production cooperation and specialization.

¹ Ibidem, p.20

² *Proiect de expunere al delegației Guvernului RPR la sesiunea CARE cu privire la reorganizarea activității* (*Speech project of the PRR Government at Comecon meeting regarding reorganization*), in CHNA, Governmental commission for Comecon, Comecon’s Protocols, file13/1954, f.7

³ *Anexa I la Protocolul nr.1/4, Cu privire la reorganizarea și activitatea viitoare a Consiliului de Ajutor Economic Reciproc (Annex I to the protocol no 1/4, Regarding the reorganization and the future activity of Comecon)*, in CHNA, Governmental commission for Comecon, Comecon’s Protocols, File14/1954, f.5-8

March 1954 is an essential moment for the activity of Comecon member states as it marks a new sense for the intracommunity relations in which, for almost a decade, coordination planning will be the main theme of Council activity. From June on the coordination of plans started to be effective, as can be seen in the document of the session from 24-25 June 1954¹ which had to be applied in the the sixth five year plan of USSR, 1956-1960. The meeting was chaired by I.Cabanov and on the agenda the main issue was: the coordination of the investment plans of the Council member states. The next points on the agenda were the foreign trade among the member and the capitalist states and the aid requested by GDR as a result of its difficulties mainly regarding population food supply. In the field of planning coordination a separate document² had been approved. The document presented the future directions in details starting from the observation that the development of the manufacturing industry, especially the heavy one had been done with disregard of the raw material resources. In order to correct that drawback it was decided that planning coordination would be appropriate for the main branches of the national economy and for some products such as fuels, energetics, siderurgy, non-ferrous metallurgy, chemistry and mechanical engineering. In capital building priority was given to the following: stimulate the faster development of the raw materials industrial branches, provide such a development of the metallurgy and mechanical engineering industries as to make possible the specialization and the cooperation among the member states, and improve the use of the already existing ones, through updating the technologies and avoiding building new ones.

¹ *Protocol Nr.1/5 Al Sesiunii Consiliului de Ajutor Economic Reciproc din 24 și 25 iunie 1954. Moscova, (Protocol 1/5 of Comecon session from 24-25 June 1954. Moscow. In CHNA, Fond Governmental commission for Comecon, Comecon's Protocols File 15/1954, f.2-3*

² *Anexa Nr.1 la Protocolul 1/5. Cu privire la măsurile pentru coordonarea planurilor în domeniul construcțiilor capitale ale țărilor membre ale Consiliului (Annex no.1 to Protocol 1-5. Regarding the measure for plan coordination concerning capital constructions in the member states), in CHNA, Governmental commission for Coemcon, Comecon's Protocols, File 15/1954, f. 6-10*

A year later, Bucharest officials had already produced a report on Romania's position to implement Moscow's recommendations¹ with the main issues and/or inconformities which under technical and operational aspects produced gaps in the Romanian national plan and had to be solved in a friendly manner.

The coordination of plans, the harmonization of the points of view of the member states delegations, the national prides and/or claims were a constant reason of dissensions as can be seen from the statements of the official representatives, from the not laws written down interventions of the Romanian officials' during the meetings of the Political Bureau of the Romanian Workers' Party (PB of RWP), and also from the memoirs of Romanian officials who held important positions in the Comecon structures. Talking about Comecon meetings Al. Bârlădeanu noted with bitter humour that Romania was generally supported by nobody. Usually GDR was interested to support the Soviet position as it meant a faster development of the German industry. Czechoslovakia was focusing only on its own interests. Bulgaria, whether or not silently agreeing with the Romanian position, would never speak up in Romania's favour out of political obedience towards the Russians. Poland was unreliable: sometimes on the Romanian side; sometimes against it².

During 1956-1958, the socialist world is marked by various unrests³. The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), February 1956, the events from Poland and Hungary (sum-

¹ *Principalele probleme de coordonare a planurilor cu URSS și cu țările de democrație populară pe perioada 1956-1960 privind RPR (Main problems of plans coordination with USSR and popular democracy countries for the period 1956- 1960)*(on the document it is mentioned: „Given to la Gosplan at 15 X 1955” – n.M.M.), in CHNA, Governmental commission for Coemcon, Comecon's Protocols File 17/1955, f. 47-52

² Betea, L., *Alexandru Bârlădeanu about...*, p.149

³ For details see Calvocoressi, P. *Europa de la Bismarck la Gorbaciov (Europe from Bismarck to Gorbaciov)*, p.82-97; Soulet, J-F., *op.cit.*, p.113-122 ș.a.

mer and winter of 1956), Moscow's reconciliation with I.B. Tito, legitimated by Tito's voyage to Moscow (June 1956), the 8th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (September 1956), etc. forced the party leaders in Moscow to reappraise the cooperation/subordination forms and methods with/of the satellite countries.

The differences between the way Comecon functioned under Stalin and then, under his successors, is considered in some writings to be a real "paradox": under Stalin's rule the USSR had the power but not the desire to impose a certain degree of economic unity, other than that of a simple annexation, while when Hrușcirov had that desire the USSR no longer had the power¹. *Romania also displayed hidden tendencies of detachments from Moscow*. After the dissolving of 14 of the 16 existing SOVROMs, Bucharest officials launched the idea of the retreat of the military troops from Romania², which actually took place two years after, although as a member state of the Warsaw Treaty Romania still had its obligations.

The adoption of Comencon³ status in 1959 in Sofia, and its coming into force in 1960, generally changed the relations among member states and the course of the events. Article 1 of the document defined the Council's main objective⁴, as to *contribute, through unifying and coordi-*

¹ Wiles, P.J.D., *Communist International Economics*, Oxford, London, p.311

² For details see Betea, L., *Maurer și lumea de ieri (Maurer and the yesterdays' world)* p.143-171; Betea, L., *Alexandru Bârlădeanu about...*, p.127-135; Scurtu, I. (coord.), *România. Retragerea trupelor sovietice. 1958 (Romania. The retreat of the soviet troops)*, Didactică și Pedagogică Publishing house, București, 1996; Tismaneanu, V., *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2003; Retegan., M., Duțu, Al., *Război politic în blocul comunist. Relații româno-sovietice. Document, (Political War in the communist bloc. Soviet-Romanian Relations. Document) Vol.II*, Publishing house Tritonic, București, 2004 etc

³ *Decree for the ratification of the Comecon' Statute concerning its juridical capacity, immunities privileges of Comecon, Annex nr.4*, in BO, nr.7, 7 may 1960, p. 33-40

⁴ Regarding the objective of Comecon as it is define in 1959 Statute, it is similar to OCDE one, the only difference is that the socialist countries don't see Comecon as a political integration instrument as the Common Market. See Caillot, J., *op.cit.*, p.20 și Stoica, A.C., *Privire com-*

nating the structure of the Council's member countries, to the planned development of the national economy of each member, to accelerate the technical and the economic progress in these countries. A remarkable fact of that moment is that, due to Romania's strong opposition, the final document approved in Sofia includes the following: "the recommendations and the decisions are not compulsory for those counties that proclaim a lack of interest in a certain issue", in other words Moscow's decisions cannot be imposed to Comecon member states.

The beginning of the 60s of the last century marked a new stage in the tensions between Bucharest and Moscow. The debates of the communist working parties in Moscow in February 1960, represented one of the moment in which the Romanian opposition is clear and unhidden. The official topic of the discussions, the exchange of experience in the agricultural development of the socialist countries, represented the starting point of the conflict with multiplying effects. In May 1961 during the Moscow negotiations between Romania and USSR concerning the long term economic development plan (until 1980) new tensions accumulated. The Romanian delegation, at the price of great diplomatic efforts, succeeded to alleviate some of the bitter criticisms of the Soviets.

The summer of 1962 was to be hot for the activity of Comecon and some authors refer to it as a true Polish coup. The debates held in Moscow from 6-7 June 1962 by the communist working parties of the Comecon's member states took place at the initiative¹ of the Central Committee of the Polish Unity Working Party and of the Polish government. The Poles disseminated the document called *Present Problems of the Economic Cooperation Development among the Comecon's Member States*

parativă CAER – Piața Comună (Comparative view Comecon-Common Market), in Dosarele Istoriei, An XI, Nr.9(121), 2006, p.24-29

¹ The Polish "initiative" is questionable, various specialists and politicians consider that no doubt it represented a hidden way of the Soviets influence towards its satellite countries – our note.

to the other central committees and governments. The document criticized Comecon's activity and the cooperation among member states and stated that the necessity to transform the Council in a new international organization was obvious. The authors of this critical opinion asserted that the solution to those problems could be achieved only through long term (maximum 20 years) common planning of the economic development. In order to achieve those objectives the setting up of a Political and Economic Council were suggested and the change of Comecon's Status. The Political and Economic Council would act as a supreme governing body of Comecon.

The Polish proposals raised strong tensions in the PB of RWP and were definitely rejected by the Romanian delegation as they were against national sovereignty. In his statement Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej highlighted the idea of the responsibility of each party for the evolution of the national economy of their own country and asserted that he was not totally rejecting the possibilities of deeper cooperation within Comecon, but only when the level of economic development of the member countries would be similar. The result of those oppositions was give up the Polish proposals and to preserve the old cooperation forms within Comecon as representing the fundamental way to carry out the international socialist division of labour.

The meeting from Moscow 6-7 June 1962 was only the beginning of the Soviet offensive on integration. Then there followed the visits of the Moscow party leaders' delegations, top level discussions and negotiations.

In January 1964, during a meeting of PB of RWP, Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej irrevocably shaped Romania's economic development and highlighted the necessity to develop those branches of the national economy that could benefit from the internal raw materials and whose products could be exported. He appraised that the international circumstances were favorable to obtain loans and new equipments from the Western

Countries¹. *Romania, through its party leaders, abandoned the idea of supporting CMEA for its industrial development.* The economic orientation that Moscow wanted for Romania's economy was extremely clear – an agrarian country.

At the beginning of the '60s two conclusions emerged from the Romanian – Soviet disagreements on planning and integration: the national sovereignty could not be questioned and the participation in Comecon's integration processes could only be done with the approval of the interested countries. From the Soviet's point of view on the foreseen integration this was almost a defeat, but from the point of view of the Romanian officials in Bucharest this was a step forward in becoming more independent from Moscow.

“The April 1964 Declaration of the Central Committee”² was one moment of great tension in the Romanian – Soviet relations. That was one of the most important moments of the evolution of Romania's position as a part of CMEA, moment of maximum intensity of the Romanian opposition towards various attempts of the Kremlin's officials to strengthen the control over the economies of the satellite countries.

The Declaration was determined by a mix of issues and, together with the Chinese-Soviet disagreement, the Yugoslav problem and the issues concerning the cooperation inside the Warsaw Treaty, represented only one facet of the document. Moreover, we can assert that one of the main reasons for the issue of the Declaration was the attention given to the thesis of economic integration within Comecon. *The core of Mos-*

¹ Idem, file 55/1964, f.1-23the idea is confirmed in Corneliu Mănescu's memoirs. See *Convorbiri neterminate. Corneliu Mănescu în dialog cu Lavinia Betea (Unfinished conversations. Corneliu MAnescu in dialog with Lavinia Betea)*, Polirom Publishing house, Iași, 2001, p.286-287

² Oșca, A., Popa, V., *România – o fereastră în cortina de fier. Declarația de independență din aprilie 1964 (Romania –a window in the iron curtain. The Declaration of Independence from April 1964)*, Focșani, 1997

cow's proposals concerning integration aimed at creating a system of relations and mechanisms which were withdrawing the economic activity and the decision-making right from under the national authority. Moreover, those proposals rose above the economic field and were aiming at culture, education, mass-media etc. Some projects had as objectives the setting up of an only publishing house at socialist system level for all the school textbooks, one press agency, one broadcasting corporation and one film studio and even a body for monitoring all the science academies from all the member states. In fact the Declaration represented the political message that rejected all the above mentioned projects.

This declaration opened a new chapter in the relations between Moscow and its satellite countries. Until that moment the Soviet Union used to be considered “the guiding light of all the communist organizations in the entire world”, but the April Declaration marked the separation from Moscow Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej relying on principle of sovereign equality among all the communist parties. The Declaration was the evidence of the long way of Romania's driving away from the Sovietis, on which the first decisions had been taken long before 1960. Romania's opposition determined the change in Comecon's declarations. Therefore, after 1964 the discussions were about the coordination of economic plans and not about integration, the international branch unions were organized only by the interested countries, but outside Comecon, and the same was true for the joint companies. Romania's opposition, combined with the more passive resistance of some of the other members, proved successful in preventing supranational planning and reinforcing the interested-party provisions of the Charter. The institutional compromise was the creation of the Bureau for Integrated Planning, which was attached to the Executive Committee and was limited to an advisory role on coordinating the members' development plans.

The replacement of N.S.Hrusciov from the leadership of CPSU (1964), the death of Gheorghiu-Dej (March 1965) and the coming to

power of Nicolae Ceaușescu in Bucharest and of Leonid Brejnev in Moscow represented a moment of calm and of reevaluation of positions inside Comecon.

Gh.Gheorghiu-Dej's successor was not an easy partner for Moscow in general and for Comecon in particular. The 9th Congress, 19-24 July 1965, organized by Nicolae Ceaușescu after he took over the leadership of the party, reinforced the principles already stated in April 1964, with the express specification that the objectives and the political program of each party within the socialist world cannot represent a reason for debate and conflict in the relations with other parties and states¹. For the period 1966-1971 the Congress laid out ambitious objectives such as the continuous development of the industrial production at an annual medium growth rate of 0.5%². That meant that significant imports of raw materials, plans and equipments were going to be needed. The exchanges were going to be made with the socialist countries as well as with other countries, according to the principle of mutual advantage.

Another aspect that should be mentioned here was that against the background of the increased demands for raw materials for the expanding industry, the debates concerning the integration and cooperation within Comecon became more subdued. In fact, in the second half of sixth decade of the past century the debates regarding economic integration underwent various changes, moving to a second plan. The main problem was represented at that moment by the military integration, in other words the reorganizations of the structures of the Warsaw Treaty. The most dramatic moment was Romania's refusal

¹ *Raportul Comitetului Central al PCR cu privire la activitatea partidului în perioada dintre Congresul al VIII-lea și Congresul al IX-lea al PCR, în Congresul al IX-lea al Partidului Comunist Român 19-24 iulie 1965 (the Report of the CC of RWP regarding party's activity in the period between the VIII and the IX Congress)*, Politică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1965, p.84-85 and 101

² *Directivile Congresului al IX-lea al PCR cu privire la dezvoltarea economiei naționale în perioada 1966-1970 (IX Congress Instructions concerning the national economy development in the period 1966-1970)*, in op.cit., p.757

to join the new process of integration: the moment of Prague in August 1968. The action of force initiated by USSR raised in those years some issues that are worth discussing. First, it raised the issue of the national sovereignty within the socialist system. Secondly, it strengthened Moscow's position in the area. Even if on the international stage the cold war was in its stage of détente, that didn't mean that inside the Soviet sphere of influence the control was not strict. Finally, in the third place it raised a significantly serious problem, a paradox. The Warsaw Treaty had been created against the West, but it was being used against one of its own members. Contradictory realities became noticeable within the socialist world and those contradictions had as causes nationalism and conflicts of interests.

The works of the 22nd session of Comecon took place a year later, in a quite tensioned atmosphere (after August 1968) in Berlin, 21 – 23 August 1969. On that occasion the achievements of the program for the coordination of the development plans of the member countries during 1971-1975 had been evaluated and a report regarding Comecon's activity during its two decades of existence was presented.

There is documentary proof of the solid preparation of the Romanian delegation for that meeting through intense and complex analyses materialized in the documents that were going to be discussed or adopted¹. It is worth noticing the definition and meanings of the collocation *economic cooperation* as used among the socialist countries. Defined as a complex of forms and actions, capable to ensure reasonable ties among terms mutually offered by each country and also the efficient coordination of the requirements regarding both production and commercial exchanges, economic cooperation was considered to be: realistic requirement and general program to guide the future im-

¹ *Tematica orientativă a materialului „Probleme ale perfecționării relațiilor economice dintre țările membre CAER și dintre țările socialiste în general” (the General subjects of the paper “Problems of perfecting the economic relations among Comecon’s member states and socialist countries in general) , in CHNA, Fond Session of CAER, File 47/1968-1969, f.1-20*

provement of the relations among the countries; catalyst to intensifying the participation of the Comecon socialist countries in the international labour division; core element to ensure the specific interests of each country for the development of its material production¹.

The coordination of planning was defined as successive analyses of the alternatives of economic collaboration and cooperation gradually defined by countries and aiming at finding solutions for the mutual benefit for the development of the economic relations among them, and as an action with objective character, but within the national economic plan representing a unique prerequisite for the correct and realistic determination for the countries of their international relations from interests the point of view of the development of each national complex². The conclusion of the planning coordination activities within Comecon was that coordination would represent only recommendations towards the member countries³.

The preliminary documents presented by each member state of Comecon, are in their turn, subjected to a close analysis⁴ and for each issue a separate document is drawn up with a brief history, the implications and consequences of the proposal's approval and the Romanian delegation's attitude concerning the respective issue. On the issues of planning and coordination of plans Romania's attitude is firm: *the economic plan is an expression of its own economic policy, representing the act of will of the nation and an essential symbol of its sovereignty, being first and foremost a primordial and independent reality prevailing on the international coordination of plans*; with the clarification that all situations that would lead to the subordination of national planning had to be avoided. On the con-

¹ Ibidem, f.3

² Ibidem, f.4

³ Ibidem, f.6

⁴ *Punctaj privind materialele celorlalte țări membre CAER referitoare la integrarea economică. Aprilie 1969*, (Sketch regarding the papers of the other Comecon's member states concerning economic integration) in CHNA, Fond Session Executive Committee Comecon , File 55/1969, f.1-123

trary, the content and objectives of planning had to be determined by the objectives and options of the national plans¹.

The preliminary meeting held in Moscow, 5-7 March 1969, between the Soviet delegation and the Romanian one² had highlighted that the Soviets considered plans coordination as the main way for the development of collaboration, specifying that, as long as the countries were ready and interested, coordination for more than 5 years periods was to be preferred; the coordination of investments had to be understood as a part of the planning coordination and referred only to those objectives proposed by the countries themselves and which represented a mutual interest; the ownership of the industrial units built through cooperation had to belong to the state on which territory they had been built, while regarding the setting up of international organization the Romanian point of view concerning the respect of the prerogatives of the participant states was preserved³. The discussions between the two delegations clearly proved contradictory opinions on the issue of integration.

Disagreements concerning supranational planning led to a compromise named the *Complex Program of Further Deepening and Improving Cooperation and the Development of Economic integration of the Comecon's member states*, program approved during the 25th session of Comecon, July 1971, held in Bucharest. This program, further named the Complex Program, established the parameters of Comecon's activities until 1990 and had specific elements of both market and centrally planned economies. From the market economy point of view the program tried to strengthen the function of money, of prices and of the ex-

¹ Ibidem, f.4

² *Notă privind schimbul de păreri dintre delegația română și sovietică cu privire la perfecționarea colaborării economice și tehnico-științifice dintre țările membre CAER (Note regarding the opinions exchange between Romanian delegation and the soviet one as to perfecting of the economic, technical and scientific cooperation among the Comecon's member countries)*, in CHNA, Fond Executive Committee Comecon File 61/1969, f.3

³ Ibidem, f.4 and 6

change rates within Comecon countries and to encourage the direct contact between the companies of member states. From the centrally planned economy point of view the program brought into discussion and surveillance the joint planning of specific sectors through common structures that had to coordinate the activities of the member states in that field. Last, but not least, the Complex Program emphasized the necessity of developing regional resources, energetics and raw materials. This type of programs should have been implemented through mutual planning, financing and joint execution.

3. The failure: Economic Integration without a Future

The Complex Program adopted in 1971 launched a new concept: *economic socialist integration*. The phrase meant that this type of integration represented a superior level of the process of socialist international labour division through the national economies of the member state would converge. The process should have been carried out in full awareness, planning and controlled by the communist parties and the governments of the member states.

Some of the projects proposed after the approval of the Complex Program had been enclosed in a document signed during the 29th session of the Council, in 1975. The document called *Comprehensive Program for Socialist Economic Integration* was considered the first general plan of the economies of the Comecon countries and, through its stipulations, covered the five year plan for 1976-1980.

A second main initiative regarding the implementation of the Complex Program was launched in 1976 on the occasion of the 30th session of the Council. This referred to the setting up of a long-term Cooperation Program which was targeted at the main branches and sub-branches of the economy.

In 1978 the 32nd session of the Council took place and, on this occasion, the cooperation programs for the period 1978-1990 had been adopted while in 1979, at the 33rd session of the Council all the 30 years¹ of activity were remembered and the future directions were drawn up. On that occasion it was appreciated that the member states of Comecon, led by the communist and working parties, had gained remarkable successes in the building of socialism and communism. The development of the Comecon member states' community was characterized through the deepening of socialist economic integration, the convergence of the economies of the member states, bringing to the same level the development rates of the brotherly countries, strengthening their unity, increasing the influence of socialism over the world development².

The document stated that it ensured the equal participation of the socialist countries, independent of their size and their level of development, and that “the *further deepening and improving of the cooperation and the development of economic integration of the Comecon member states* are made without constraints, *are not followed by the creation of supranational structures and do not affect the issues of national planning*, of financial activities and economic management of the organizations”³. The community of Comecon's member state proved a high dynamism of economic development, as could be seen from the reduction of the economic gaps among the member states and from the entrance of most of the socialist countries in the stage of the developed socialist society⁴.

¹ *Raportul Comitetului Executiv privind 30 de ani de activitate a Consiliului de Ajutor Economic Reciproc și sarcinile dezvoltării și adâncirii în continuare a colaborării multilaterale a țărilor membre ale CAER (the Raport of the Executive Committee regarding 30 years of CMEA's activity and the tasks of future development and deepener of the multilateral cooperation of the CMEA's member states)*, in CHNA, Fond Session ale CAER. Session 33rd, vol.3, File 111/1979, f.1-23

² *Ibidem*, f.2-3

³ *Ibidem*, f.4

⁴ *Ibidem*, f.6 and 7

The importance of the 23rd special session of the Council (1969) is to be underlined. Through the approved documents that session laid the objectives and the directions of the social economic integration, as they had been defined by the Complex Program from 1971. For the accomplishment of those objectives over 200 multilateral conventions were concluded mainly for the achievement of projects in order to provide fuels and raw materials¹. In the wide field of production specialization and cooperation over 1 000 convention had been drawn up: only for mechanical engineering (1971-1978) 80 conventions had been concluded, containing more than 10,000 products names². But despite all the positive results the specialization and the cooperation in production were still considered to have a low rhythm. For the future the new Plan agreed for the period 1981-1985 is prepared and for the unfolding of its multiple activities the organizational structure was completed with the creation of 25 international interstate and economic organizations called on to contribute to the deepening of specialization and cooperation to achieve the Complex Plan³.

As a conclusion it was mentioned that the 30 years of experience of Comecon in cooperation and the development of the economic integration of Comecon's member states, contributed to the strengthening and the boost of the economic power of the whole community of socialist countries⁴.

At the beginning of the '80s the social-economic degradation of USSR together with the resistance of the satellite countries towards integration, with pressures from the civil society, with the impossibility of self-reform of the communist regimes, followed by the death of the Kremlin leader Leonid Brejnev, and shortly after by the death of his successors Iuri Andropov and Konstantin Cernenko, in 1984 and re-

¹ Ibidem, f.8

² Ibidem, f.9

³ Ibidem, f.11 and 15

⁴ Ibidem, f.23

spectively 1985, and by the apparition in Kremlin of Mihail S. Gorbaciov in 1985, led to the “acceleration of history”¹.

The process of reforms initiated in the Soviet Union in March 1985 through the election of Mihail Gorbaciov was aimed not only at internal politics, economic and social issues, but also to foreign policy and the relations with the other countries. After taking the power and starting to be aware of the crisis of the relations among the socialist countries, the new general secretary of CC of CPSU abandoned the policy of dictate and of Moscow’s interference in the internal affairs of its allies. In October 1985 on the occasion of the Sofia Conference of the Warsaw member states, the leaders of the socialist countries voiced their concerns on various problems including the economic cooperation among them and unanimously agreed that activity of Comecon is inefficient².

The Soviet leader admitted on that occasion that he didn’t have a system of means needed to correct the situation, but faithful to the idea that something had to be done he brought, a year later, in front of the PB of CC of CPSU a note entitled “*On Some Present Problems of the Cooperation with the Socialist Countries*”, which was analyzed in the summer of 1986, during a special meeting of the Political Bureau. Among the issues raised in the above mentioned document those concerning Comecon were that: no one can claim a special situation within the community; nothing should be done without taking into account the specific interests of each party and the general interests of the community, without an attitude of respect towards friends and allies; in the economic relations the principles of mutual advantage and assistance had to be promoted; to pass from simple commercial relations to a cooperation of mass production; to accomplish the radical restructuring of

¹ Soulet, J-F., *op.cit.*, p.287 and Clavocoressi, P., *Europa de la Bismarck...*, p.93-94

² Buga, V., *CAER – Tentative de reformare în anii „perestroikăi”* (CMEA – Reformation Attempts in the “perestroika” years), in *Dosarele Istoriei* An XI, Nr.9(121), 2006, p.62

the economic cooperation mechanism; Comecon's activity had to be focused on designing (and agreeing upon) the economic policies and conceiving the financial, currency related, organizational and juridical conditions in order to ensure the wide development of direct relations between companies, scientific and research institutes, as well as the setting up of joint companies; to really consider the essence, not the form of the opinions and the interests of friends, etc¹.

At the 47th extraordinary session of Comecon, held in Moscow (13-14 October 1987) important decisions were taken concerning the reorganization of the integration mechanism² and the change of the Council's structure³. We could even say that the wind of change, of reform, at least hypothetically, starts to be accepted at the level of intra-community relations of the socialist countries.

As to the reorganization of the integration mechanism we consider that former ideas are revived, reshaped, and are aimed at, in the language of the epoch, at eliminating regional disparities and the gradual creation of the single market. Actually, the proposed reorganization proved the lack of efficiency of Comecon's activities and was foretelling the system crisis that would soon be obvious. The discussions in Moscow (13-14 October 1987), on the occasion of the 43rd extraordinary session of Comecon didn't gather the full consent of all the participants⁴. The improvement of the coordination of the economic

¹ Ibidem, p.63

² *Hotărârea Sesiunii CAER (ședința a 43-a). Cu privire la reorganizarea mecanismului integrării economice socialiste și a activității Consiliului de Ajutor Economic Reciproc (the Decision of the Comecon's session (43rd). Regarding reorganization of the mechanism of the socialist economic integrations and the reorganization of the Comecon's activity)*, in CHNA, Fond Executive Committee Comecon. Sesiunea 43, dosar 167/ 1987, 45-53

³ *Structura Consiliului de Ajutor Economic Reciproc (the Structure of the council of Mutual Aid Assistance)*, in loc. cit., f.63-64

⁴ *Punctaj cu privire la poziția celorlalte țări membre ale CAER față de principalele propuneri ale părții sovietice în problema reorganizării activității CAER (Sketch regarding the position of the other Comecon's member states towards the main soviet proposals concerning Comecon's activity reorganization)* , in loc. cit., f.309-311

plans raised the most disagreements. Ever since the preliminary discussions the Romanian delegation made observations, proposals and objections which worsened the already tense relations.

At the beginning of the '90s in the circumstances of the collapses of the communist regimes from Eastern and Central Europe, the Executive Committee of Comecon carries on the activity reform. Taking into account the implementation of the decisions of the 45th Comecon session, Sofia 10 January 1990, the Executive Committee decided that by the end of January 1990 it was to define proposals to specify the activity plans of the representative structures of the Council for the period "until the approval of the proposals regarding the radical changes of the whole system of economic cooperation will be drawn up and presented to the special commission founded by the previous sessions of the Council"¹.

The last Comecon session, the 46th one, held in Budapest 29 June 1991, decided its own dissolution. At the time the decision and the protocol regarding Comecon's dissolution were adopted, as well as the regulations of the liquidation commission. And so four decades of Comecon activity came to an end.

4. Conclusions

Obviously the history of Comecon and its problems involve various other aspects that were not discussed in this paper. The purpose of the present paper was to emphasize only those aspects connected to the evolution of the idea and practices of integration. We consider that there were at least five aspects:

- Comecon was founded as a reaction to the Marshall Plan, but it had mainly political activities;

¹ *Sovet Economicescoi Vzaimopomoşci. Iсполnitelnîi Komitet. Protocol 133 Zasedania, Sofia, ianvari 1990 g, in CHNA, Fond Comecon. Protocols, File 136/1990, f.4*

- its activity and mainly its positions on integration, were strongly influenced by the tensions of Moscow, seen as a centre of power;
- it reflected one of the main aspects of the subordination of the countries in Eastern and Central Europe by expressing the versatility and the obedience of the party leaders from the member states;
- the results of the cooperation within Comecon were incomplete and had mainly a commercial aspect
- the aspirations of sovereignty of the member states came against Comecon's attempts of integration.

Future research needs to contribute to the re-examination and in-depth study of the historical truth.

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