

Rumanians nix Soviet arms push

The people of the small Eastern European nation of Rumania know how to deal with vampires. In the Middle Ages they put a stake through the heart of Count Dracula, who ruled the Rumanian province of Transylvania.

Today they are standing up to the modern day bloodsuckers who rule the Soviet Union. At a top level meeting of the Soviet-organized Warsaw Pact countries in mid-November, Rumanian President Ceausecu stirred up a crisis when he said no to Soviet demands that Warsaw Pact states:

(1) Increase their military spending by 3% annually;

(2) Allow the Soviets the right to assume command of Warsaw Pact armed forces in the event of a "crisis" situation and commit the other country's armed forces to battle.

On the first point Ceausecu said that Rumania's military spending is adequate for its self-defense, and that money was needed for domestic social spending and wage increases that had been promised.

Rumania is the poorest country of Eastern Europe and has serious economic problems, worsened by member-

ship in the Comecon (the Soviet-dominated economic "alliance" that drains valuable resources out of Eastern Europe). There is great pressure in Rumania to raise the standard of living of the workers. The most dramatic outburst demanding improvements was a 3-day strike by 3,500 miners last year.

On the second point - who will control the Rumanian armed forces - Ceausecu said:

"Our armed forces will never take orders from other than those from the party and the state. They will always obey the command of the Rumanian people alone."

Despite its membership in the Warsaw Pact, Rumania has always sought to maintain an independent foreign policy from Moscow's demands. Last August, despite strong Soviet objections, Rumania invited China's Hua Kuo Feng to the country for an official visit, strengthening ties between the two countries. Rumania vetoed a Soviet sponsored resolution denouncing China at the Warsaw Pact meeting.

Rumania also has good relations

with Yugoslavia, an Eastern European country which refused to bow to Soviet pressure and is not even in the Warsaw Pact.

As a roadblock to the war preparations of the Soviet Union and the United States, Rumania's Ceausecu recently proposed in an Independence Day speech a neutral buffer zone of nations between NATO and Warsaw Pact countries, which would presumably include Rumania.

"It might be useful," he said, "to establish a zone between the two blocks where no arms would be located and no maneuvers take place."

An independent stand like Rumania's isn't too popular with the Soviets, who are bent on building a military machine to dislodge the United States as top imperialist dog in the world. Moscow wants Western Europe for its rich industrial facilities, and wants Eastern European countries to help pay the price of preparing and fighting a war. This would free up more Soviet divisions to move east against China.

War preparations aren't cheap. The Soviet Union has been steadily increasing its military budget, spending more than half of its overall budget on the military, which is a larger percentage than even the United States now spends. Moscow desperately hopes that other Warsaw Pact countries, which can ill afford increased military expenditures, will not in the future decide to lean towards Rumania's independent course.