

From Antonescu to Groza: Implicit Factors in American-Romanian Relations 1944–1946

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Throughout the Second World War American policy towards Romania was characterized by both a lack of attention and an incoherency stemming from impractical aspects of American idealism such as the persistent belief that war-time military considerations could be separated from post-war political ones. In consequence, practical measures such as American recognition of Soviet 'special interests' in Eastern Europe and a tacit US-USSR agreement on the extensive rights of the occupying power proved, predictably, irreconcilable with the American ideals as embodied in such documents as the Atlantic Charter and the Yalta Declaration on Liberated Europe. Given this ambiguity, it is somewhat ironic that President *Roosevelt* believed the Yalta Declaration to spell "the end of the system of unilateral action, exclusive alliances, spheres of influence, the balance of power and all other expedients which have been tried for centuries and have failed¹⁾".

According to US State Department Archives, it seems clear that at least by March 1944 US policy-makers were aware of the contradictions within American policy: "While we recognize the Soviet Union's primary interest in Rumania, both as regards the immediate military plane and the long-range political aspect and acknowledge that distance and lack of material considerations detach us somewhat from Rumanian affairs, we think that both the United States and Great Britain should maintain their interest in that country and should apply to Rumania the general principles underlying our conduct of the war, assuring as far as possible Rumania's continued existence as a state with such territories as would enable it to make its way as an independent country²⁾."

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¹⁾ G. Lundestad, *The American Non-Policy Towards Eastern Europe 1943–1947*. Tromsø 1978, p. 47.

²⁾ U.S. Department of State — *Foreign Relations of the United States 1944*. Volume IV. Washington, D.C. 1943—1972, p. 146—147.

Another factor detrimental to a coherent U.S. policy toward the region was that other goals; the defeat and disposition of Germany and Japan, building a strong foundation for a post-war United Nations organization, concluding the peace treaties and limiting Soviet influence in areas of primary interest (Western Europe, the Far East), held priority of place over East European problems. More specifically, within Eastern Europe, up until the Potsdam Conference, U.S. policy concentrated on Poland as the best test case of both how much independence Moscow would allow East European governments and the extent to which the U.S. would be able to cooperate with the Soviet Union on the international plane. After Potsdam, and the theoretical solving of the Polish problem, Romania became the new test case. By this time, however, U.S. focus was shifting away from Eastern Europe partially due to the de facto control already exercised over the region by the U.S.S.R. and partially because the disposition of a defeated Germany became the predominant concern of the Americans.

Given these impediments it is clear that the possibilities for decisive American intervention on Romania's behalf, especially vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, were in any case never without important complications. What is not often recognized is that several implicit factors were fundamental in influencing U.S. attitudes and predisposing U.S. policymakers to adopt certain policies or, more accurately, certain decisions within a general framework of 'non-policy' in 1944–1946³). These factors include; 1. The American perception of the nature of Romanian participation in the Second World War, 2. the 1942 Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Alliance from which, by 1944, the United States could not in practice distance itself despite numerous objections, 3. the divisive nature of Romanian domestic politics, and 4. shifting American attitudes with the advent of the *Radescu* Government. This essay will examine each of these factors in turn with the aim of further explaining not so much what happened in American-Romanian relations from the overthrow of Marshal *Antonescu* to the advent of the *Petru Groza* Government as why it happened in the manner which it did⁴).

³) Lundestad coined this evocative term.

⁴) For a detailed discussion of the events during this period see P. D. Quinlan, *Clash Over Romania: British and American Policies towards Romania 1938—1947*. Los Angeles 1977 and Lundestad, *The American Non-Policy*. For participants' accounts see for instance J. F. Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. New York 1947; General *Cortland V. R. Schuyler's* account in Th. T. Hammond, *Witnesses to the Origins of the Cold War*. Seattle 1982; and W. A. Harriman—E. Abel, *Special Envoy To Churchill and Stalin 1941—1946*. New York 1975.

The Romanian-German Alliance

The nature of Romania's participation in World War II remains controversial and requires some understanding of the events leading up to it. The question of Romania's political and military orientation after 1936 echoed somewhat the complicated problems faced by Romania immediately prior to and in the beginning of World War I. During that earlier period, Romania was economically and militarily bound to Germany and the Central Powers through its secret membership in the Triple Alliance⁵). However, due to the Tsarist Empire's alliance with France, with whom the Romanians had the closest political, cultural and emotional ties, Romania had the option of counter-balancing German and especially Austro-Hungarian pressures with those of its other Great Power neighbor.

Following the First World War the international situation had changed considerably and such an option no longer existed. Unlike Tsarist Russia, the new Soviet Empire was extremely hostile towards France and England, due primarily to ideological differences, and to Romania for irredentist reasons. Likewise, revisionist claims on the part of Hungary and Bulgaria set them at cross-daggers with Romania. Thus Romania was virtually surrounded by hostile neighbors while its political and military security lay with distant France and the sacrosanct Paris Treaties. This situation provided Romania with the necessary security only during the first post-war decade. Beginning with the Depression, Romania's economy once again became oriented towards Germany as the result of both the active German *Drang nach Osten* and the passive economic abandonment of Romania by France and Great Britain. Already in March 1935, with the restitution of obligatory military service in Germany, the Paris Treaties, and along with them Romanian security, had been compromised. Even more portentous was the German march into the Rhineland on 7 March 1936. This significantly increased the vulnerability of French access to their allies in the East and suddenly the dangers presented to Romania by Soviet Russia, Hungary and Bulgaria took on a new immediacy. As a natural consequence, Germany's regional influence increased at the expense of France.

The French and British policy of appeasement indicated to those Romanians whose concern was national security that if they did not wish to be put in the position of sacrificial lamb to the Hungarians, Bulgarians and especially to the Soviets, they had better find a more effective counterweight to those powers than politically enfeebled France and Great Britain. Despite their affinities for France, which hardly wavered, by 1938 geo-strategic realities (the principal one being the Soviet threat to Romania's continued independent existence), left the Romanians with a single viable alternative; an alliance, even

⁵) See H. Granfelt, *Der Dreibund nach dem Sturze Bismarcks*. I, Lund 1962, Chapter 7.

if only temporary, with Germany. For a number of reasons, however, this policy was not consistently followed by King *Carol II*. Partially as a result of *Carol's* vacillation, the Soviets were able to forcibly annex, at the end of June 1940, Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina and the Hertza, ostensibly as part of the Secret Protocol of the 23 August 1939 *Hitler-Stalin* Pact. This touched off a series of vociferous territorial demands on the part of Hungary and Bulgaria and, in August 1940, in response to a feared joint attack by Hungary and the Soviet Union which could destabilize Romania and endanger its oil and food supplies to Germany, *Hitler* authorized the Second Vienna Arbitration⁶). By September 1940, despite the German guarantee of Romania's borders issued at the August Arbitration which had greatly upset Soviet plans for further territorial aggrandizement at the expense of Romania, Soviet belligerency had markedly increased and Moscow was making every effort to have Germany renounce its territorial guarantee. In order to counter the increasing number of Soviet incursions across the still-undefined Soviet-Romanian border, neutralize the Soviet threat, re-establish domestic order and eventually regain lost Romanian territory, the Romanian leadership concluded a de facto military alliance with the only great power capable and willing to assist it: *Hitler's* Germany.

Aside from the more sophisticated understanding of on-the-spot American representatives, the popular American perception of the reason for Romania's de facto military alliance with Germany against the Soviet Union was its affinity for Nazi ideology and a desire to see the Allies defeated. The Romanian view of their situation and options were clearly expressed by Marshal *Antonescu* in a 27 February 1941 letter to National Peasant leader *Iuliu Maniu*:

“A serious foreign policy for a state the size and power of Romania must take into account its own means and goals and those of the outside forces which could support them. In our case it is not just a question of promoting our aspirations, but also, in the first place, of guaranteeing our very existence. Could we remain with our old orientation when the great democratic powers cannot even assure their own existence? The military destruction of France lost to the coalition of democratic countries the most valorous military pylon. The continuation of the policy alongside England would expose us to total collapse. It is an illusion for us to believe that through our position alongside England we could realize anything other than our own suicide. In the political-geographic situation in which we find ourselves, the only genuine forces at present remain therefore, Germany and Russia⁷).”

⁶) For documentation of the German decision to arbitrate see G. Lee, “The Truncation of Romania: Historical Echoes”, *Romanian Situation Report* 27, Radio Free Europe Research, 8 May 1984.

⁷) A. Simion, *Preliminarii politico-diplomatice ale insurectiei romane din august 1944*. Cluj-Napoca 1979, p. 205—208. A copy of the 147 page letter which Simion quotes is in the authors possession.

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Antonescu concluded that a “political alignment with Russia is a factual and moral impossibility . . . Given that, I have adopted from the beginning, without hesitation, a foreign policy orientation which I intend to follow with loyalty and total sincerity.” Later, this orientation was further clarified when *Antonescu* instructed his Ministry of Propaganda that “in the war between Germany and Russia I am for the Germans; in the war between Great Britain and Germany I am neutral; in the war between Japan and the United States I am for the Americans⁸).”

The oversimplified American perceptions were not, however, seriously reconsidered for a number of reasons among which were a general ignorance of European Politics nourished by the intense isolationism of inter-war America, the peripheral strategic importance of the Balkans for the U.S. and the almost universally negative reputation of Balkan politics – the so-called “Balkan complex”. As a result, the standard assumption of Romanian culpability for their part in the war as a German ally and presumed Nazi sympathizer became both an explicit element of Allied war-time propaganda and an implicit element of post-war American policy⁹).

The Anglo-Soviet Treaty

As soon as the German-Soviet Alliance had been abrogated by the opening of the Eastern Campaign, the British sought to conclude their own treaty of alliance with Moscow with the double aim of gaining Soviet support against Germany and precluding the conclusion of a new *Hitler-Stalin* pact, something feared by both Great Britain and the United States throughout the war. *Stalin* immediately stipulated that as a prerequisite to such an agreement Great Britain must recognize “Soviet frontiers as they had existed just before the German attack in June of 1941¹⁰)”. Thus, *Stalin* wanted all of the territo-

⁸) See for instance L. L. Watts, *In Serviciul Maresalului*. Vol. I. Munich 1985, p. 146 and Gh. Barbul, *Memorial Antonesco, le III-e homme de l'axe*. Paris 1950.

⁹) This was similar to the treatment of the Finno-German alliance with the important difference that whereas the Finns militarily defended themselves when the Soviet Union demanded territorial concessions and invaded in 1939, the Romanians acquiesced without a fight in 1940. The immediate military response of the small Finnish nation gained it a much more sympathetic international response, despite official Allied propaganda, while the year lag from the June 1940 Soviet annexation of Bessarabia and northern Bucovina to the opening of the Eastern Campaign seems to have delegitimized the Romanian military efforts to regain its former territories and stop further Soviet encroachments.

¹⁰) Harriman—Abel, *Special Envoy*, p. 121—122.

ries gained by the U.S.S.R. during its alliance with Germany, which included the Baltic states, a part of Finland, Eastern Poland and the Romanian territories of Bessarabia, northern Bucovina and the Hertza, considered as payment-in-advance for its entering into the Anglo-Soviet Alliance. *Churchill* and the British, with the strong support of American opinion as expressed by *Cordell Hull*, first rejected these demands but military considerations eventually convinced *Churchill* to accept *Stalin's* conditions despite American objections. At the end of March 1942, the British Ambassador in Washington, Lord *Halifax*, contacted the American Undersecretary of State, *Sumner Wells* to notify him that Britain was going to go ahead with the treaty, in spite of American objections. "Stalin states to Great Britain that his views governing British recognition of Russia's pre-1940 boundaries must be met before intimate relations can be established between the Soviet Union and Great Britain." *Halifax* reported. "Mr. Eden cannot incur the danger of antagonizing Stalin, and the British War Cabinet have consequently determined that they would agree to negotiate a treaty with Stalin which will recognize the 1940 frontiers of the Soviet Union, except for the portion which constituted the Polish-Russian frontier." The United States would not be asked to subscribe to the treaty, *Halifax* added. All Britain asked of President *Roosevelt* was that he should try to understand the reasons for the treaty and not openly condemn it¹¹).

Despite *Cordell Hull's* continued objections, President *Roosevelt*, also citing the priority of military considerations, finally gave his approval.

Although that treaty was not binding on the U.S., the basic requirement of alliance solidarity meant that the U.S. implicitly accepted the Soviet gains obtained under the *Hitler-Stalin* pact as legitimate Soviet territories. Such recognition proved catastrophic for Romania because it "defined-away" the defensive nature of Romania's (as well as Finland's) war against the Soviet Union. This is the primary reason why it was so important to Romanian leader Marshal *Antonescu* and, later, to National Peasant leader *Maniu* during the war-time armistice negotiations that the status of Bessarabia and northern Bucovina be left to a plebiscite at the Peace Conference after the war. Although *Antonescu* realized that any plebiscite held while the Red Army occupied these provinces would be at best pro forma, any retroactive determination of Bessarabia's status as a Soviet territory to 1940 would open Romania to the charge of unjust aggression rather than, as the Romanians perceived it, defensive retaliation. In fact, the principle "crime against humanity" which determined culpability during the 1946 Romanian war crime trials, as well as the chief Soviet justification for its hegemony over Romania in 1944—1946, was "aggression against the Soviet Union¹²". Thus, the very nature of the Allied alliance both greatly prejudiced American opinion against, and options

¹¹) Ibidem, p. 135.

¹²) Procesul Marii Tradari Nationale. Bucuresti 1946, p. 283.

in, Romania and seriously undermined Romania's position in both the armistice negotiations and the post-war settlement.

Divisive Domestic Politics

While American misperceptions and the entangling nature of the Alliance were external factors affecting the U.S. attitude towards Romania, the third factor was very much a domestic Romanian product. Although closely tied to its alliance with Germany against the Soviet Union, Romania retained a remarkable degree of political autonomy and, aside from the markedly less autonomous Bulgaria, was the only East European state to retain its independence throughout the war. Unfortunately, the divisive nature of their internal politics exacerbated the already formidable political disadvantages Romanians faced and precluded them from taking advantage of what little political leverage they could muster. In particular, the traditional jockeying for political position, voluntary relinquishment of authority to the great powers and scape-goating others for practices which, although entirely defensible from the perspective of national interest were now labelled as 'fascistic' and 'aggressive' first by the Soviets and then by both fearful and opportunistic Romanian politicians, atomized the Romanian leadership and undermined the country's international credibility. As one of the results, the Soviet Union was able to discredit almost whichever Romanian politician it chose, whenever it chose, with the willing assistance of one or more of his colleagues.

Voluntary relinquishment of responsibility had been fairly evident in the 23 August coup de' palais. The perpetrators naively assumed that as a result they would receive a favorable armistice, Anglo-American guarantees for Romanian independence vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, and certain specific conditions such as a large unoccupied zone around Bucharest where the Romanian political leadership would be free of Soviet influence. These assumptions were made despite the inability of both *Antonescu* and *Maniu* to achieve the same goals in a year of negotiations and persisted after the Romanian negotiating position had already been completely undermined as a result of the 23 August change of alliance declaration.

It was not long before the realization (if not the admission) of their error became clear to the Romanian leaders who were involved in the August coup. Three days after the Soviet entry into Bucharest, *Grigore Niculescu-Buzesti* the new Minister of Foreign Affairs and a prime mover behind the coup wrote frantically to the Romanian representative in Ankara: "I beg of you to see the Ambassador of the United States and the Ambassador of Great Britain and to point out to them the inextricable situation which has been created in Romania by the delay in signing the armistice ... the Soviet Army in Rumania continues its advance with the probable intention of occupying the greatest part, if not all of our territory, under the pretext that the armistice has not yet been

signed. However, this advance of the Soviet troops in Rumania is not justified in view of the fact that the Rumanian Government had already liquidated entirely through its own means all centers of German resistance¹³.”

One week later, despite the strong indications of Anglo-American unwillingness to become embroiled in Romanian-Soviet problems which he had received throughout his negotiations with the Allies, an embittered *Iuliu Maniu* said “if he had known the Soviets were to be given a free hand in application of armistice terms he would not have advised the King to sign the armistice. He argued that this pressure and the Romanian action which resulted from it had actually advanced the Focsani-Galatz line, which might have been held a long time, to the very gates of Budapest¹⁴”.

It could be noted that this behavior, characteristic of many small powers, was fairly common in Eastern Europe at that time and many East European statesmen, Czechoslovak President *Edvard Beneš* for instance, found themselves unable to fulfill the need for strong allies and good relations with the great powers without compromising their own legitimate national interests.

The disunity and weakness which characterized the moral and political morass into which Romanian politics had fallen were not confined to the openly duplicitous roles played by such figures as *Gheorghe Tatarescu* and *Petru Groza*. They also affected the best and brightest in the Romanian political firmament. U.S. Military Intelligence considered Foreign Minister *Niculescu-Buzesti* an “unfortunate choice” because he vacillated between advocating the “pro-British” line “and then adopting the role of a drawing-room Communist¹⁵”. “Likewise, one of the chief engineers of the coup d’état, [Baron Ion

¹³) Ankara (*Steinhardt*) to Secretary of State, 3 September 1944, report no. 1637, 740.00119 European War (EW)/9-344, United States National Archives (USNA), Washington, D.C. *Niculescu-Buzesti* also insisted that “among the conditions of the armistice in respect of which the Soviet Government declared itself to be in accord, there is the stipulation that there shall be created a zone in which Soviet troops may not enter”. This assertion was false for two reasons and illustrates the degree of self-delusion which affected the new Romanian leaders. First, there was no armistice before 12 September 1944, only negotiations and second, the Soviets never agreed to an ‘unoccupied zone’ but rather a ‘free zone’ which, when pushed by the British after the coup, *Molotov* defined as an area occupied by the Red Army under the civil administration of the Romanians. The Soviets considered the period from 23 August to 12 September as part of the war operations thereby legitimizing their capture of Romanian soldiers which did not resist as well as the entire Romanian fleet and just about anything else they desired. See also Ankara to Secretary of State, 1 September 1944, report no. 1620, 740.00119 EW/9-144, USNA.

¹⁴) *Burton Berry* to Secretary of State, 9 December 1944, telegram no. 52, roll M39, USNA.

¹⁵) Military Intelligence Division (MID), Istanbul, Military Attache report no. R-785, 7 February 1945, document 115986, Record Group (RG) 226 [Records of the Office of Strategic Services], USNA.

de Mocsony] Stircea Jr., Chamberlain of the Court and King's favorite, who was first a supporter of the pro-British and pro-American policy, suddenly changed camps and divulged to the Russians information which he had received as an officer of the Court. He was dismissed and replaced by Nagel, who is being violently attacked by the Communists¹⁶).

Most Romanian politicians seemed not to realize that in seeking their own *modus vivendi* with the Soviets by scapegoating and political toadying they were compromising their government's position, helping to perpetrate American and international misperceptions of their role in the war and ultimately sabotaging their own rather meager chances for political survival. Typical of this phenomenon were the remarks of *Dr. Savel Radulescu* of the Foreign Affairs Ministry to the American representative in Bucharest, "1. The whole political set up is irritating. ... Maniu is without adequate programs and is indecisive. Such good men as Gafencu, Visoianu and Valimerescu, for example, are kept in the background while Maniu keeps former collaborators in the government because they flatter him. 2. The public is uneasy because the government has taken no action against former collaborators. Unless a strong government established active and sincere collaboration with Russia, the public and the Russians will cause trouble. ... 3. ... the members of the Government are demagogues and pre-war politicians who spend time in minor controversies and idle talk. They are inexcusably slow in taking action against the former collaborationists, and the corrupt officials are playing into the Russians' hands. 4. Trust may be placed in Litvinoff, who Radulescu knows personally. ... 5. Radulescu places his hope in 'complete loyalty to the Russians in an all-out application of the Armistice and not in Anglo-American aid¹⁷).

U.S. representatives experienced and reported this same factional and personal scape-goating phenomenon at various diplomatic posts abroad. For instance, in September and October 1944, *Alexandre Cretzianu*, the Romanian Minister to Turkey who represented the cream of the Romanian diplomatic corps and later became a leading voice in condemning Soviet behavior in Romania to the West, was described as "seeking to jump on the Russian bandwagon while there is time and that to do this he is sacrificing personnel regarded as favoring the Western Allies in an effort to prove to the Russians he is 'clearing house'. Some twenty-two (22) persons, who, as the Minister puts it, 'worked for the Antonescu regime' have been ordered to return to Rumania. ... The Rumanian Military Attache, Colonel Traian Teodorescu, is one of those who received orders to return to Bucharest. ... Colonel Traian Teodorescu has been used by Minister Cretzianu and the Government of Marshal Antonescu to contact British Representatives with a view to getting Rumania out of the German entanglement. The Minister accuses Colonel Teodo-

¹⁶) Ibidem.

¹⁷) 20 September 1944, document 94806, RG 226, USNA.

rescu of having followed an independent policy of having favored the Western Allies at the expense of the Russians. . . . The Minister . . . appears to have done everything concerning which he accuses Colonel Teodorescu. He carried letters between Bucharest and Allied representatives; however, he now claims that had he known what the letters contained, he would have immediately approached the Russians. This is somewhat difficult to swallow and it seems likely that after having played a slippery game . . . he is now ordering out of Turkey all of his assistants who could contradict his version. It is probable that he is trying to save his own skin at the expense of others and that many of his statements are incorrect¹⁸⁾”.

At the same time, voluntary relinquishment of their own authority (in hopes, it appears, of relinquishing accountability), became a hallmark of the new Romanian government. At the beginning of October 1944, *Niculescu-Buzesti* related to an American O.S.S. agent that, “in accordance with the law inspired by the Russian Command, all firearms should be turned in to the government, but the Communists have declared they will resist with force any effort to relieve them of their arms. General [Paul] Teodorescu, Rumanian Commandant of the City of Bucharest, has called upon the Russian Command to inquire whether it is true, as the Communists have said, that the Russian Command approves of this. He was told orally that ‘the Rumanians need not feel obligated to take away the Communist arms’¹⁹⁾”.

This political behavior, and the frequency with which it was encountered, created much frustration, disillusionment and eventual alienation among the American, and British, representatives and was in turn communicated back to Washington and London. According to *John Le Rougetel*, the British representative in Bucharest, this behavior was “typical of the approach of the present government to all major problems, that is, they are too timid or incapable to take strong, positive action, which is called for at the moment. Instead they are asking for the ‘green light’ on all such points before doing anything themselves. Le Rougetel stated that he has told various members of the Government that this is his view of them, and that they should do something on their own account rather than ask for prior approval by the Russians, by the Communists, or by others, including himself²⁰⁾”.

The Americans held an almost identical view as illustrated in this post mortem of the *Sanatescu* Governments by U.S. Military Intelligence: “The secret

¹⁸⁾ Brigadier General *Richard G. Tindall* and Lt. *Norman Armour, Jr.* to Military Intelligence Division, report no. 11071, 10 October 1944, document 100161, RG 226, USNA. See also MID report no. 11222, 6 November 1944, document 104092, RG 226, USNA.

¹⁹⁾ Enclosure from dispatch no. 802, 6 October 1944, M39, USNA.

²⁰⁾ Lt. Commander *Frank G. Wisner* [OSS] to *R. P. Jager* and Major *Harold Chapin*, 25 October 1944, American Military Unit in Bucharest, report no. 36, enclosure no. 110 to dispatch no. 865, M39, USNA.

of Communist success in Romania, discounting the backing of the Soviet authorities, may lie in the complete impotence of the democratic parties and in the tragic incapacity of the Rumanian Government. . . . When Rumania collapsed, the democratic parties held all the cards but were incapable of exploiting them. They failed to take a stand against the encroachment of the Communists and blundered at every turn, to the advantage of the Communists. They were probably paralysed by fear of Russia but it is difficult to excuse Romanian leadership on that score. The political debut of General Sanatescu was a national calamity. Appointed by the King, his Premiership was acceptable to the democratic parties. As Prime Minister of a coalition government he had a special role to play. As the arbiter of conflicting interests within the Cabinet, he could and should have been the deciding factor in safeguarding the country's own interests. He failed. As the King's nominee to safeguard democracy in Rumania, he chose, through cowardice, to pander to the Soviets. In so doing he neglected to take advantage of Russia's proclaimed desire to leave Rumanian politics alone and to use his authority, as he could, at least to delay Russia's secret efforts to bolster the country's communists. Sanatescu's attitude encouraged the Soviets to take a more active line. He never opposed the demands of the Soviet authorities, even when those demands clearly contradicted the armistice conditions. More than that Sanatescu often consulted the Soviets on his own initiative about matters of purely domestic interest. Thus it is only natural that General Vinogradov, the vice-President of the Allied Armistice Commission, became the factual supra-premier of Rumania even earlier than they may have intended²¹).

Such short-sighted political behavior lost Romania many opportunities and fostered an image of Romanian politicians which made it difficult for U.S. policy-makers to risk too close an association with them. It is important to note that there were indeed opportunities such as the possible unification of the non-communists, and non-Moscow directed communists, against Soviet manipulation. This was evident as early as September 1944 when Communist leader *Lucretiu Patrascanu*, along with Prince *Barbu Stirbey*, approached the U.S. representative in Moscow, *Averell Harriman*, to protest the Soviet delay in concluding the armistice²²). Later, other Romanian Communists complained to American representatives that the Soviet Union's leftist program was "incorrect and ill-advised²³". By the end of February 1945, *Patrascanu*, the Social Democrat leader *Camil Titel-Petrescu* and the leader of the Ploughman's Front and future Premier, *Petru Groza* had all expressed their dissatisfaction with the Moscow-directed National Democratic Front (FND) program

²¹) MID, Istanbul, Military Attache report no. R-785, 7 February 1945, loc. cit.

²²) *Harriman* to Secretary of State, 3 September 1944, telegram no. 3281, 740.00119 EW/9-344, USNA.

²³) Report no. GR-204, 24 February 1945, document L 53421, RG 226, USNA.

as well as their willingness to support a coalition government along with the traditional parties in opposition to 'Moscow-Communist' pressures²⁴). In the end, however, no agreement could be reached and all of the Romanian leftist leaders turned to Soviet-approved political alliances.

American priorities elsewhere, misperceptions, alliance entanglements and the decidedly negative image of Romanian politics and politicians in the U.S. all combined to produce a marked hesitancy of American policymakers to take up Romanian arguments against the Soviet Union. This was very clear during the conclusion of the Armistice when "it was evident that the Russians entered upon the negotiations with the determination that the field should largely be theirs and that we should give them pretty much of a free hand in arranging the armistice terms and the subsequent treatment of the Rumanians. . . . The United States attitude throughout the negotiations tended to bear them out in the feeling described above and was appreciated by them accordingly²⁵)".

An O.S.S. analysis in December 1944 predicted that problems would arise in pursuing American interests in Romania: "... it seems inescapable that the role of the American representatives on the Allied Control Commission for Rumania will be severely limited. Both the Italian precedent and the Russians' own sense of their natural sphere of influence and the prerogatives of a victor apparently ensure it. Representations from the Americans if they pertain to a topic recognizably connected with direct and tangible American interests, may be received equably. But it must be expected that even some of these will be neglected. Specific interest of Americans may conceivably suffer in this process . . .²⁶)".

Throughout the period of the *Sanatescu* Governments (24 August 1944 — 2 December 1944), aside from the relatively minor incidents concerning objections of the U.S. representatives in the ACC to the Soviet confiscation of American-owned oil equipment and the deportation of Romanians to the Soviet Union, American policy respected Soviet desires and programs in Romania. This was due primarily to America's firm desire to solidify American-Soviet cooperation, but it was also due to Romania's inability to make force-

²⁴) See for instance, *Caserta* to Secretary of State, 5 November 1944, telegram no. 1164, M39; Report no. GR-290, 3 March 1945, document L53656, RG 226; U.S. Military Representative, ACC for Rumania, 15 August 1945, report no. 396, document XL15034, RG 226; OSS report no. GR-266, 22 February 1945, document L53341, RG 226.

²⁵) *Harriman* to Secretary of State, 15 September 1944, telegram no. 3522, 740.00119 EW/9-1544.

²⁶) HQ, 2677th Regiment OSS (Prov.): Lt. (jg) *Henry L. Roberts*, Lt. (jg) *Beverly M. Bowie*, and Mr. *Robert L. Wolff* to Dr. *William Langer*, Chief, Research and Analysis, Washington, D.C., 16 December 1944, Report no. 2, document XL2958, RG 226, USNA.

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ful, convincing representations on its own behalf. While the *Sanatescu* governments were obviously disastrous, they were largely Romanian generated disasters rather than Soviet-imposed ones.

The Radescu Government

At the beginning of 1945 a renewed concern for developments in Romania signalled a change in U.S. policy. Underlying this shift was an increasing disillusionment with the U.S.S.R. whose ideological radicalism caused it to approach political agreements with ideological adversaries in what American policy-makers were bound to perceive as fundamental bad faith. American military, diplomatic and O.S.S. documents suggest that this renewed concern, which was accompanied by a positive shift in American attitudes toward Romania, pre-dates the Potsdam Conference, the installation of the *Groza* Regime and even the Yalta Conference, and appears to most directly result from the advent of the *Nicolae Radescu* Government.

General *Radescu* was a strong-willed and forthright officer who left active service after protesting the crossing of the Nistru [Dneistr], the historic northern border of Bessarabia, by the Romanian army in 1941. Later, after issuing a further protest against the behavior of the German Minister to Bucharest, *Manfred von Killinger*, *Radescu* was held in detention by Marshal *Antonescu*. As a result of his background of opposition against both *Antonescu* and the Germans, *Radescu's* appointment was initially well-received by Soviet Ambassador *Vishinsky* and the Communist-controlled FND. The Soviets apparently believed that *Radescu* would prove as malleable as other Romanian officers who had opposed (or claimed they had opposed) Marshal *Antonescu*. In this, however, the Soviets were soon disappointed as it became manifest that *Radescu* was very much his own man. In a manner characteristic of military officers placed in positions of political leadership, *Radescu* first attempted to form a coalition government with the twin goals of promoting political unity and of denaturing the extreme aspects of the radical parties. However, "after receiving a refusal from the parties of the Left to participate, [Radescu] had organized a cabinet of technicians. It was then that the Communist representatives, headed by *Patrascanu*, came to the General and reported that they would be willing to accept his terms²⁷⁾".

As military governors usually do, *Radescu* over-ruled the normal political bargaining process in cases which he perceived as vital to national security. One such instance concerned the appointment of a new Minister of the Interior under whose control would fall the jendarmes, the regular police and the political police. This post, formerly held by National Peasant *Nicolae Penescu*, was under much contention by the Communists and the traditional parties

²⁷⁾ OSS report no. GR-24, document 110753, RG 226, USNA.

and had been a significant factor in the Communist opposition to the *Sanatescu* Government. *Radescu* assumed this post himself, initially drawing more objections from *Iuliu Maniu* and the National Peasants (who now lost a Ministry) than from the Communists. When *Maniu* protested „that he would have to convoke his party and consult with them before any such steps were taken”, General *Radescu*, true to character, reportedly answered: “All right. Go ahead and convoke it. Here is an automobile to bring them together and I will give you ten minutes in which to do so²⁸.”

Unlike *Sanatescu* before him, *Radescu* refused to allow Communist Party members who were also members of the government (usually in undersecretary positions but wielding much more power because of their association with the Soviets) to use their positions to work against his government with impunity. One of the most obvious cases of this was *Teohari Georgescu*, a close associate of *Ana Pauker* who, as Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of the Interior, actively promoted strikes, demonstrations and general disorder to weaken the government. During one of these demonstrations *Radescu* took “Mr. Teohari [Georgescu], Undersecretary of State, in an automobile and went to the location of the manifestation, and said that if this demonstration were not terminated that day, he [Teohari Georgescu] would have to be removed²⁹”.

The Soviets were incensed by this independent behavior and reacted by provoking more destabilizing domestic unrest with the aim of creating a crisis situation in which the Red Army could openly intervene. According to the American military representative to the ACC in Bucharest, General *Cortland V.R. Schuyler*, the FND “openly criticized and sabotaged many of *Radescu*’s efforts to control disorder in the country, and they encouraged workers in industry to demand higher wages, improved working conditions, and a larger voice in management decisions. By mid-January it had become clear to [American political representative] *Burton Berry* and me that the Soviets were secretly, though perhaps only indirectly, supporting the Romanian Communists. At leftist political rallies, more and more Soviet-type firearms were turning up in the hands of party members. . . . Greater pressure was exerted on the Romanian Government for the disarming or disbandment of army units . . . [particularly those] charged with maintaining order in and around Bucharest. [British military representative, Air Vice Marshal] *Stevenson* and I both raised these questions at ACC meetings, but *Vinogradov* denied any Soviet aid to political parties. . . . and he claimed that Romanian forces in Bucharest were far stonger than necessary to maintain order³⁰”.

From the beginning it was evident to the Americans that the problems encountered by *Radescu*, unlike those of the *Sanatescu* Government, were due

²⁸) Ibidem.

²⁹) Ibidem.

³⁰) Hammond, Witnesses, p. 132—133.

more to Soviet and Soviet inspired pressures and action than to inherent political feebleness (although with Communist undersecretaries working at cross-purposes to it, the *Radescu* Government could hardly be classified as united). In consequence, and although Poland still remained the American priority in Eastern Europe, U.S. policy-makers became more attentive to Romanian developments and more sympathetic to Romania's and *Radescu's*, plight. Finally, the Yalta Conference and the Declaration on Liberated Europe in February 1945 cleared the way for a more active U.S. policy towards Romania. In this declaration the U.S., Great Britain, and the U.S.S.R. jointly pledged to "concert during the temporary period of instability in liberated Europe the policies of their three governments in assisting the peoples liberated from the domination of Nazi Germany and the peoples of the former Axis Satellite States of Europe to solve by democratic means their pressing political and economic problems . . . [and] to form interim governmental authorities broadly representative of all democratic elements in the population and pledged to the earliest possible establishment, through free elections governments responsive to the will of the people³¹⁾".

One immediate result of Yalta was that the U.S. felt free and obliged to join Great Britain in sending a series of protest notes to Moscow concerning Soviet practices in Romania which were clearly in violation of the agreements just reached at Yalta.

Soviet policy towards Romania, which appears to have been designed to establish firm political control before the end of the war and thus enable the Romanian Communist Party to avoid sharing or, at worst (from the Soviet point of view), losing power to the American and British supported traditional parties, was suddenly faced with a double threat. On the one hand, U.S. and British representatives in Moscow and on the ACC in Bucharest were issuing statements in support of the *Radescu* Government against the Communist-provoked unrest, including such specific demands as the disarming of the local communists along with the rest of the civilian population and, more significantly, were militating for a reform of the ACC to more equitably distribute authority in Romania. On the other hand, *Radescu*, despite his limited means and the overbearing presence of the Red Army, was proving remarkably successful in gaining mastery of the domestic situation. Since unanimity was required to move demands based on the Yalta agreement to action, and since Moscow could counter attempts to reform the ACC in Romania with demands that their power in Italy (and later Japan) be increased – something unacceptable to both the U.S. and Great Britain – the Soviet response was directed towards removing *Radescu* and forcing the pace of Communist consolidation in Romania. As General *Schuyler* described it, "by mid-February 1945, the political situation in all of Romania had become critical. In many cities and towns Communists took over control of local governments by force. Riots and

³¹⁾ Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, p. 49.

bloodshed were daily occurrences. Radescu used what forces he had to stem the tide, but these were insufficient. In one instance, Radescu made plans to fly to Craiova to direct his troops in stemming a riot, but was told by the ACC that he must give at least two days' notice before his plane could be cleared for such a trip. Soviet troops and police appeared with greater frequency on city streets and rumors were rife of an impending Communist coup³²⁾".

The first step in removing *Radescu*, aside from manipulating events to show that the General could not maintain order or fulfill armistice terms, was to brand him a 'fascist', thereby discouraging actual and possible supporters and initiating a 'popular' slander campaign. To this end, a group of those opportunistic and/or fearful Romanian military officers who had 'gone over' to the communists and had proven useful in communist propagandizing within the army were instructed to denounce *Radescu* as a 'fascist' in the communist run newspaper. On 20 February 1945, the Soviet political representative to the ACC told General *Schuylar* "that Russia regarded Radescu, the Romanian army, and both the National Peasant and Liberal parties as 'Fascist', and that the only political group truly representative of the Romanian people was the National Democratic Front³³⁾". At the same time, on 24 February, barely two weeks after the Yalta Declaration, the U.S. and British representatives to the ACC in Bucharest and in Moscow attempted to intercede on *Radescu's* behalf. While General *Vinogradov* refused to hold a meeting of the ACC in Bucharest, Ambassador *Harriman* in Moscow proposed that if "an orderly development of the Romanian situation under the Allied Control Council" could not be achieved, consultations regarding Romania should be held "on a higher level³⁴⁾".

The Soviets, whose policy in Romania was already endangered by the new Anglo-American interest and the remarkably effective activities of the *Radescu* Government, seemed to have panicked at the suggestion that authority over developments in Romania should be removed from the ACC where Soviet authority was near-absolute to a body in which Moscow would have to share decision-making authority with the Americans and British. Immediately *Vishinsky* was dispatched to Bucharest to demand the dismissal of the *Radescu* Government. To make matters worse from the Soviet perspective, on the very day of *Vishinsky's* arrival, 27 February 1945, citing the provisions in the Romanian constitution which forbade partisan political activity by military officers, *Radescu* dismissed those officers which had denounced him as a fascist. This would have severely set back Soviet penetration of the Romanian armed forces and raised the possibility that *Radescu* would rally the military in support of his policies. That evening, *Vishinsky*, echoing *Molotov's* arguments to *Harriman* in Moscow, charged that "General Radescu was incapa-

³²⁾ Hammond, *Witnesses*, p. 133.

³³⁾ *Ibidem*, p. 133—134.

³⁴⁾ Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, p. 51.

ble of maintaining order, that the Soviet Government was unwilling to interfere in Rumania's internal affairs but had the responsibility of seeing that order was maintained behind the front and, therefore, asked that the Radescu government be dismissed immediately and replaced by a government based on 'the truly democratic forces of the country'³⁵⁾". The following evening, when *Vishinsky* delivered his famous ultimatum demanding the formation of a *Groza* Government, he specified that "Radescu was protecting Fascists and by retiring ten officers the previous day under a royal decree had performed an unfriendly act toward the Soviet Union. That decree, he said, must be annulled immediately³⁶⁾".

Along with the *Vishinsky*-provoked governmental crisis, the Red Army moved to prevent any attempt to counter Soviet military or armed Romanian communist pressure in Bucharest. According to an O.S.S. report "as of the evening of 1 March, the Allied Control Commission has forbidden any publication relating to the crisis. Also, the newspaper representatives were informed that the ACC would exercise control over the press. . . . On the evening of 1 March, Soviet troops made a complete search of the Ministry of the Interior, General Headquarters of the secret police and the prefecture of police for arms and ammunition. According to an unconfirmed report they will occupy these institutions as of 2 March. They also searched the Ministry of War, the General Staff Headquarters, and other state institutions where Russian control authorities were established. . . . The partial demobilization of the police was completed on 1 March. All automatic arms of the soldiers and the police were taken and some Rumanian troops were sent to the front. According to one story the palace guards were given the choice of being disarmed or joining their units at the front. They chose the latter³⁷⁾".

The *Radescu* Government in February 1945 represented the best opportunity to moderate the almost impossible situation which existed from 1944 to 1947. The Romanian government was led by a strong-willed officer, independent of Moscow, who commanded the respect of the armed forces and followed relatively coherent policies concerning the maintenance of domestic order and the fulfillment of the increasingly impossible armistice conditions. Despite Poland's primacy in American policy considerations, and in spite of the pronounced determination of the U.S. not to endanger current and future American-Soviet relations over Romania, *Radescu's* forceful and considered efforts against formidable odds elicited sympathy in Washington and resulted in a more active U.S. policy towards Romania while hastening the already spreading disillusionment concerning post-war Soviet-American cooperation. Unlike the situation under the *Sanatescu* Governments, the Soviets were unable to manipulate *Radescu* and exploit the divisions between Ro-

³⁵⁾ Ibidem.

³⁶⁾ Ibidem.

³⁷⁾ OSS report no. GR-290, 3 March 1945, document L53656, RG 226, USNA.

manian politicians to accomplish their ends. Therefore, it became essential to Moscow to remove *Radescu* and to replace him with someone more amenable to Soviet wishes.

Radescu, the Yalta Conference and the resulting modification of U.S. policy had temporarily endangered Soviet policy in Romania despite the presence of the Red Army. If the Americans and British had succeeded in reforming or superseding the ACC in Romania before the installation of the *Groza* Regime it is probable that Moscow would have been forced to modify the pace and possibly the substance of their policy in Romania. Even after *Groza's* installation the U.S. State Department remained optimistic that a "truly tripartite Allied Control Commission . . . in which representatives of the three Allied Nations have approximately equal power³⁸⁾" could be created. In a more explicit fashion, on 14 March, *Averell Harriman* "practically demanded that high level talks be held in Moscow, to be followed by the erection of a joint Allied Committee to apply the policies and procedures agreed upon in the Soviet capital³⁹⁾". Notwithstanding that the U.S. would attempt to be more explicit in at least its verbal support for the traditional Romanian leadership, the passing of the *Radescu* Government lost to both Washington and Bucharest a major advantage as it symbolized the last Romanian government initiated and controlled by non-communist domestic forces. After the *Groza* Regime was installed, the Romanian government itself could and would be used to denounce American intervention on Romania's behalf and to support without hesitancy any claims or demands made on Romania by Moscow.

Groza and the End of American Influence

Sporadic U.S. support, which reflected perceived American interests however ill-defined, was strong on principle but rather much weaker on particular actions and therefore served to strain relations somewhat between the young beleaguered King and Washington. This tension, coupled with the internal bickering which still characterized Romanian politics especially regarding the circle of advisors immediately around King *Michael* which continually clashed with the traditional party leaders, predisposed the King to take unilateral action when faced with the overwhelming pressures of *Vishinsky's* ultimatum and the coordinated action of the Red Army in Bucharest. At one point *Vishinsky* threatened, "that unless the King accepted the *Groza* Government by the afternoon of the following day, he would not be responsible for the continuance of Romania as an independent state. At the same time *Groza* announced that the Soviets had promised great improvement in relations between the Soviet Government and Rumania, mentioning the return to

³⁸⁾ Foreign Relations of the United States 1945, Volume IV (fn. 2), p. 543.

³⁹⁾ Quinlan, *Clash*, p. 129.

Rumania of control over its transportation system, the cession of Transylvania from Hungary (sic!) and a relaxing in the terms of the armistice⁴⁰⁾". Faced with those alternatives, King *Michael* felt compelled to reverse *Radescu's* dismissal of the communist co-opted military officers, dismiss *Radescu* and, following an abortive attempt to form a government with Prince *Stirbey*, to accept the *Petru Groza* Government.

By replacing *Radescu* with *Groza*, the King and his advisors had conferred a degree of legitimacy upon a basically foreign-controlled government and severely undermined any possibility of achieving effective unity against Soviet demands. After receiving the royal stamp of approval the *Groza* Government would gradually dismantle the traditional parties, ignoring their demands, curtailing their activities and finally dissolving them as a threat to the 'legitimate' government before turning its energies to the complete elimination of the Monarchy.

There was a lag between the passing of the *Radescu* Government and the U.S.' realization that its influence outside of the type of action and material support which America was unwilling to give, had been rendered ineffectual and U.S. protests appeared increasingly futile as they were rejected first by the Soviet Union and then by the quasi-legitimate Romanian government. Already in the week following *Groza's* debut, President *Roosevelt* resignedly wrote *Winston Churchill* that „the Russians have been in undisputed control from the beginning and with Rumania lying athwart the Russian lines of communications it is moreover difficult to contest the plea of military necessity and security which they are using to justify their action⁴¹⁾". Subsequent U.S. protests concerning Romania would serve primarily to worsen American-Soviet relations while gaining little or nothing for Romania and while having a marked negative impact on American allies within Romania. Moscow meanwhile, was able to continue to delay and deny through the Potsdam Conference, the 'August Crisis', the London Conference and the Moscow Conference until the attention of American policy-makers shifted elsewhere (e.g., the conclusion of the peace treaties and the disposition of a defeated Germany and Japan) and Romania ceased being a priority consideration in Washington, D.C.

Throughout 1944 and 1945 implicit agreements, perceptions and attitudes played an enormously important role in determining the direction and strength of U.S. policies toward Romania and, consequently, toward the Soviet Union. So long as they remained unchanged, the majority of those implicit factors would work against Romania's perceived national interests. Unfortunately, Romanian leaders consistently failed to recognize that U.S. policies were carried out in America's, not Romania's, perceived interests and whe-

⁴⁰⁾ Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, p. 52.

⁴¹⁾ *Foreign Relations of the United States 1945, Volume V (fn. 2)*, p. 509—510.

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never these appeared to conflict the Romanian, not the American, interests would be forfeit. Aside from the relatively coherent, directed policy of General *Nicolae Rădescu* and regardless of whether they were determined by traditional party leaders or by the monarchy, Romanian policies from 1944 until the advent of the *Groza* Regime were actually a series of loosely connected and often incoherent reactions to Soviet, American and British policies. In this sense, the American 'non-policy' towards Romania during and after the Second World War was echoed by a 'non-policy' within Romania itself. That this was a fairly common phenomenon among the small powers of Eastern Europe in no way lessened the catastrophic effects it would have for Romania.