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SUMMARY

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ROMANIAN DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE
INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

(1940-1945)

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KEY WORDS

- **World War II**
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- **Romania**
- **The Nazi Germany**
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- **The Legionary National State**
- **Marshal Antonescu**
- **23rd August 1944**

FOREWORD

Starting from the present-day stage of cognition and interpretation of Romania's history during the epoch of World War II, and taking into consideration the existing controversies as well as the viewpoints formulated independently from historical reality and in contradiction with it, it is our intention to lay out here – based upon a fairly large volume of documents from Romanian archives and a bibliographical survey tending to be as comprehensive as possible – data and examinations Romania's role and place within the conjuncture of growing aggression danger in Central and South-Eastern Europe by hitlerite Germany and the U.S.S.R. on the eve and during WWII.

Primary sources referring to Romania's diplomatic activity during the mentioned period have been investigated in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Romanian National Archives, and the Romanian Military Archives. I have benefitted from the documents (mostly as xerographies) gathered together in the personal archives of the reputed historian **Gh. Buzatu**, I have also consulted and made reference – with his permission – to the deeds edited by him particularly in his trilogy **Hitler – Stalin – Antonescu** (Ploiești - R. Vâlcea - Iași, 2005 - 2008).

The outstandingly valuable documentary material – memoirs, letters, manuscript notes by Armand Călinescu, Constantin Argetoianu, Ioan Mocsny Stârcea a.o., as well as memoir volumes published after the war by Grigorie Gafencu, Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, Alexandru Cretzianu – have made us acquainted with the way these political figures understood and assessed contemporary reality.

The accounts made by foreign diplomats, military commanders or statesmen who were witnesses or authors of events which had a direct impact on Romania constitute a valuable source of knowledge for the subject of international relations from 1940 to 1944.

Lord Halifax, Georges Bonnet, Joachim von Ribbentrop and Count Galeazzo Ciano, ministers of foreign affairs of the four Great Powers, as well as M. Horthy, Hungary's regent, President Beneš, Colonel J. Bek, chief of Polish diplomacy, Winston Churchill, leader of British opposition and then prime-minister, they have all left an impressive historical literature containing elements lending new contours to issues related to Romania's history.

The press of the epoch is a rich and varied source of information, granting an unexpected expansion of the research scope, by constantly mirroring the evolution of internal and external politics and the balance of forces on the international stage, by offering expression to public opinion and by filtering day to day reality through a perception of its own, as well as of various parties and political groups.

The studies and documents brought to the readers' attention by and largely concludes a long and difficult period of quest, when, stimulated by an ever growing curiosity, the effort to bring out historical truth out of the thicket of information, at many times contradictory and uncertain, creates itself the most exquisite satisfaction of work.

Out of the bulk of bibliographic works approaching in essence the general theme of WWII, of Romania during that epoch, owed to Romanian or foreign historians and covering all specific compartments – encyclopedias, chronologies, volumes and collections of documents, memoirs, general and special works, syntheses, monographs, biographies, studies on domains, specialized magazines, albums etc. – I had the opportunity to benefit, first and specially, from the contributions of Professors **Florin Constantiniu, Ioan Scurtu, Ioan Chiper, C. Bușe, Corneliu M. Lungu, Ion Calafeteanu, Viorica Moisuc, Marian Cojoc, Valentin Ciorbea, Gh. Buzatu** a.o.

Their works and studies, along with the remarkable contributions of the late German historian **Andreas Hillgruber**, contain essential and relevant data on the diplomacy of the years 1940 to 1944, drawing from numerous and various published or unpublished sources from Romanian and foreign archives and provide in their works interpretations, nuances and conclusions which are most interesting and close to historical truth in the issues under discussion.

WWII was a tragic page in the history of mankind. Approaching a theme circumscribed to international relations during the epoch is a difficult and complex demarche, as any assertion on this great conflict which shook the foundations of the earth stirs sensitivities and provokes reactions.

International circumstances made numerous states act so as to save their statehood, in the first place.

Romania's policies went along the same lines, forced to abandon its traditional French and British allies, in favor of Nazi Germany.

Romania was in an unpleasing position, as it was obliged to choose the Berlin camp, in 1940, although its foreign policy between the two World Wars was based upon the support provided by France and Great Britain, guarantors of borderlines established after WWI.

After the Battle of Stalingrad (Fall 1942 to Winter 1943), when, after the disaster of Romanian-German armies at the Don-Bend and Kalmuck Steppes, Germany's defeat had become obvious and, in order to save the country from Antonescu's insistence to continue the war together with the Axis, the opposition forces gathered together regardless of their ideology and, along with Government representatives benefitting from Marshal Ion Antonescu's endorsement, undertook diplomatic explorations in the Western countries, in order to disengage Romania from the Axis and join it to the United Nations, which was to be achieved by the coup d'etat on August 23, 1944¹.

I have chosen this segment of time for the reason that 1940-1944 is a crucial period both for Romanian and world history. At the same time, events taking place within these strict chronological limits have had an impact on the further evolution both of the Romanian state and at the world level.

Scientific novelty is determined by the targets and tasks of the study regarding „Romanian Developments within the International Context (1940-1945)”. The innovative feature of this investigation consists in its focus on the analysis of an issue which so far has not been comprehensively explored and, therefore, there is no upright image of the main aspects of Romanian politic, diplomatic and military relations in that period.

The original contribution of this study consists in its achieving a general synthesis of fundamental aspects of Romania's foreign policy, within the system of international diplomatic relations during that epoch.

At the same time, the work is introducing into the scientific circuit some documents not previously analyzed by specialized literature².

The significance and value as an instrument of the study on „Romanian Developments within the International Context (1940-1945)” derives from its very

¹ Ioan Scurtu (coord.), *Istoria Românilor*, vol. VIII, *România întregită (1918-1940)* [History of Romanians, vol. VIII, *Romania United (1918-1940)*], Academia Română. Secția de Științe Iсторice și Arheologice, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 2003, p. X.

² Duțu Alexandru, *România de la război la pace 1939-1945. Semnificații politico-militare* [Romania from War to Peace 1939-1945. Political and Military Significances], Editura „Vasile Cârlova”, Bucharest, 1997, p. 83.

results. The study may be used as a tool in the scientific research of that time and become useful to researchers concerned with Romania's diplomatic relations with the Axis powers and other states, during that time.

The data synthesized following the research may be a source of information also for the elaboration of text books for university education, as well as for synthesis studies in the field of history³.

CHAPTER I “INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE YEAR 1939”

In this first we will approach the issue of Romania's political isolation in the eve of WWII.

In order to better understand our country's political and military options in the period, we have to recall the fact that, due to politic developments, in 1938 the system of European relations built under the sign of the Peace of Versailles had collapsed, whereas the great powers of Germany, Italy, France and Great Britain, by taking upon themselves the solving of fundamental international problems, had actually replaced the old structures of the Council of the League of Nations. At the same time, France and Great Britain, founders and protectors of the League of Nations, had abdicated from the principle of intangibility of borderlines and allowed the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and the growth of German hegemony on the Continent⁴.

The rather rich historical retrospective regarding the analysis of international circumstances during the inter-war period has offered valuable conclusions referring to the internal and international context of the great „democratic” powers in the period of the „decease (of the Versailles system)”⁵ in 1938-1940, a period of escalade of the European and world war, with their particular evolutions and significations for Romania. The culmination points in the falling apart of the security system and peace keeping, against the background of the growth of Fascism and conciliatory concessions by the great „democratic” powers are considered, by almost all researchers, the following: Germany's re-militarization, the Anschluss; Munich; the dismemberment of

³ Ion Calafeteanu, *Români la Hitler [Romanians Visiting Hitler]*, Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, Bucharest, 1999, p. 119.

⁴ In: *România la sfârșitul celui De-al Doilea Război Mondial [Romania at the End of World War II]*, coordinator: Col.Dr. Carp, Editura Centrului Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, Bucharest, 2005. p. 197.

⁵ Florin Constantiniu, *Agression et securite les phase de la desagregation du systeme de Versailles*, in „Snage i putovi rata i mira”, Zagreb, 1978, p. 55-56.

Czechoslovakia and the attack on Poland – the moment actually considered the beginning of WWII⁶.

Referring to the position Romania should adopt within the European political and diplomatic context following the signature of the Munich Pact, Commander (retired) Jipa Rotaru distinguishes two ideas that should be considered as dissociated: a) concerning the great powers' wish to discuss among themselves issues that bear on them, with the aim of reaching pacific collaboration, Romania can only sincerely applaud such a decision and wish it would be successful; also, it sees in such collaboration the first guarantee of peace in Europe; b) concerning the right these great powers would choose to arrogate themselves the right to decide on the interests of other states or pay the discord among themselves with concessions on account of other states; Romania can only disapprove and oppose such an idea; the most elementary precaution instinct would recommend it such an attitude as well as the desire to profess a “policy of independence”⁷.

In virtue of his foreign policy, Gafencu has prevented that Romania should become object of negotiation among the Western powers, Turkey and the Soviet Union, in 1939 as a whole, and has countered the attempts made by the Britons to create an anti-German block in the region⁸.

In his meeting with Sir Reginald Hoare on 11 of April, Gafencu maintains that a unilateral British declaration would strengthen Romania's position without provoking Germany, which could then make a similar declaration to Romanians. Although Romania wished Great Britain and France to make their presence felt in the region, Germany should not be excluded. The Government, Gafencu concluded, wished that all Great Powers should be interested to maintain Romania's independence⁹.

CHAPTER II “INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS AND ACTS OF FOREIGN POLICY”

⁶ Ion Calafeteanu, *Diplomăria românească în sud-estul Europei 1938-1940 [Romanian Diplomacy in South-Eastern Europe 1938-1940]*, Editura Politică, Bucharest, 1980, p. 147.

⁷ In: Col.Dr. Cornel Carp (coord.), *România în contextul internațional [Romania within the International Context]*, Editura Centrului Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, Bucharest, 2005, p.198.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p.288-293

⁹ MAE, 71/Romania, vol. 503, pp. 92-93, Notes on the talk between Gafencu and Sir Reginald Hoare, on 11 April, 1939, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to the British version on the talk, Gafencu maintained that Western guarantees for Poland and Romania should be separately observed, as a beneficial move in trying, with the agreement of Great Britain and France, to obtain (Germany's) guarantee, for the endorsement and completion of the Anglo-French declaration (PRO, FO, 371/C5105/3356/18, Sir Reginald Hoare, Bucharest, Tel. Nr. 109, 11 April, 1939).

In her work entitles *Romania's Policy versus Germany, 1936 to 1940*, the historian Rebecca Haynes says that the Russian threat versus Romania, following the conclusion of the treaty between England and Turkey, was emphasized by the minister of the United States in Bucharest. The minister argued that “while the provisions of the French-British-Turkish pact may be considered a defeat of German diplomacy and raise a definitive barrier against its aggression... at the same time they leave wide open the gates of aggression by the Soviet Union. There is no echo of joy following this pact. The Soviet Union represents a much bigger danger than Germany in this part of the world.” The minister continued by emphasizing that neither England, nor France or Turkey would fight for Romania against the Soviet Union. The conclusion was that, unless “the Balkan-Danubian block is not promptly created... Russian aggression is only a question of time.”¹⁰

As minister Gafencu writes in his *Journal*, taking into consideration Italy’s refusal to lead the block of neutral countries and the British interpretation to the Anglo-French guarantee, at the end of the Fall it was quite obvious that Germany was the only capable to support Romania in its problems with Russia. In Fall, 1939, the Romanian Government was fearing more and more a Soviet attack aiming at the annexation of Bessarabia. The resuming of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Budapest, in September 1939, and the Russian proposal of a pact of mutual assistance with Bulgaria, in October, also suggested that Russia supported Hungarian and Bulgarian revisionism against Romania. Gafencu noted in his *Journal* on November 12, 1939, that the Soviet Union’s advance in the Baltic area and in Poland foretells a new phase of expansion. He wonders whether Germany would be ready to help Romania and, if so, under what circumstances.¹¹ Grigore Gafencu’s *Journal* narrates in detail that, following Belgium’s capitulation, Carol and his Government distanced itself from the neutrality policy among the Great Powers and preferred to seek an approach and politically collaborate with the Reich. In the evening of May 27, 1940, Foreign Minister Gafencu talked with Prime Minister Tătărescu and Court Minister Urdăreanu, presided over by the King. Tătărescu

¹⁰ Rebecca Haynes, *Politica României față de Germania între 1936 și 1940 [Romania's Policy versus Germany, 1936 to 1940]*, Translated by Cristina Aboboae, Editura Polirom, 2003, p. 129.

¹¹ Grigore Gafencu, *Jurnal, 1939 [Journal, 1939]*, Editura Humanitas, Bucharest, 1991, edited by Stelian Neagoie, p.342.

and Urdăreanu were of the opinion that Romania's policy should "be adapted to reality". They thereby hoped to convince Gafencu that Romania should draw out an official request for Berlin's support in case of an aggression of the Soviet Union. Tătărescu and Urdăreanu were supported by Carol against Gafencu's position of neutrality. Later that night, Tătărescu informed Fabricius about his Government's wish to maintain "stronger political connections with the Axis".¹²

At the end of June, Romania had already lost Bessarabia and Bucovina to the Soviet Union; France had been defeated and Great Britain's situation was not sure. As a result, Carol tried to hasten the process of establishing official relations to the Reich. He was of the opinion that only Germany could now save Romania from a new attack of the Soviets. Carol's decision was reflected by the creation of a pro-German Government led by Ion Gigurtu, on July 4, 1940. The following weeks witnessed several of Carol's attempts to establish closer collaboration and even an alliance with the Reich.¹³

The Romanian Government hoped this close association would protect Romania from the Soviet Union, but also from the revisionist tendencies of both Hungary and Bulgaria. The price of German friendship proved too high, Hitler was asking the Romanian Government to negotiate directly with its revisionist neighbors. Minister Fabricius regarded the appointment of pro-German Constantin Argetoianu as a Minister of Foreign Affairs on June 28, 1940, as opening a new era of Romanian-German relations.¹⁴

CHAPTER III "ROMANIA'S INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL SITUATION, 1939-1940"

Based upon extensive documentation, mostly Soviet, which has recently become available to researchers, Academician Florin Constantiniu published *1941. Hitler, Stalin*

¹² Grigore Gafencu, *Jurnal Iunie 1940-Julie 1942 [Journal June 1940-July 1942]*, Editura Globus, Bucharest, reviewed by Ion Ardelean, edited by Vasile Arimia, pp. 18-19.

¹³ MAE, fund. 71/Germany, vol. 79, pp. 74-75. Minister Argetoianu and Fabricius, the German minister in Bucharest, at the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 28 1940.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 76-77. Argetoianu was rather well known in Germany, due to his connections to Dresdner Bank. He had studied in Germany and could speak the language well. Argetoianu had filled different Government positions between 1920 and 1930 and had been a Royal Counselor starting March 1938. He had also been president of the Bucharest Office of the Romanian Bank and president of the oil companies Romanian Star and Petrolbloc (in which the Germans were shareholders). He had been a member on boards of different industrial companies, among which Reșița Steel Works, which had German connections.

și România, a volume that sheds light on the importance of Romanian issues in the deterioration of German-Soviet relationships, after the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, on August 23, 1939.

The conclusion of this Pact had made worse Romania's geopolitical situation, which found itself caught between the two great powers, Germany and the Soviet Union, both hostile to it, especially the Soviet Union.

Under the circumstances, the Crown Council on September 6, 1939 decided to proclaim Romania's neutrality. Meanwhile, the Romanian Government tried to secure the borders and to as much as possible avoid military confrontation through activation of the "Balkan Block of Neutrals", of the Balkan Agreement of 1934 and through the attempt to conclude a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union through Turkey's mediation.¹⁵

In the months preceding the conclusion of the Soviet-German Pact on August 23, 1939, Ambassador Gheorghe Tătărescu concentrated on the unfolding of tripartite Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations in Moscow, and had a number of talks, especially with Georges Bonnet, in order for Romania's national interests not to be ignored¹⁶.

Within such a tense and volatile international context, the announcement regarding the visit to Moscow of the chief of German diplomacy Joachim von Ribbentrop and the conclusion of the Soviet-German nonaggression pact no longer took by surprise the Romanian Ambassador in Paris. On August 22, 1939, Gheorghe Tătărescu met Georges Bonnet and both saw in the soon to happen signing of the pact a "new element of aggravation of international situation"¹⁷.

It is hence obvious that this unexpected mentioning of the Bessarabian issue was a signal for Romania as well. In April-June 1940, Romanian-Soviet relations were increasingly tensioned, although the Soviet Union was prudent, since the operations on the Western front were in full progress, and refrained to start its action. When German victory seemed certain, Stalin decided to occupy the Baltic States and to forward to

¹⁵ The entire dialogue appears in: Florin Constantiniu, *1941 – Hitler, Stalin și România*, Bucharest, Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, 2002, p. 94-98 and Vitalie Vărătec, *Șase zile din istoria Bucovinei (28 iunie – 3 iulie 1940). Invazia și anexarea nordului Bucovinei de către URSS [Six Days in Bucovina's History (June 28 – July 3, 1940). Invasion and Annexation of Northern Bucovina by the USSR]*, Rădăuți – Bucovina, Bucharest, Editura Institutului Bucovina – Basarabia, p. 12 – 26.

¹⁶ Archives of the M.F.A., Romania, fund 71, U.S.S.R., volume 86/1939, f. 242, (Information note: April 21, 1939, from Paris, Gheorghe Tătărescu to Foreign Ministry)

¹⁷ Ibidem, f. 518-520 (telegram no. 499 from Paris, to Foreign Ministry, August 22, 1939, signed by Tătărescu).

Romania its claims. The Soviet's preparations for war started soon, on June 9, 1940, when massive forces were brought along Romania's Northern and Eastern borders.¹⁸

Minister of Foreign Affairs Grigore Gafencu makes reference to the same tragic moment of the occupation of Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina in his *Journal 1940-1942*.

Following the German victory, the Romanian Government decided to more intensively approach Germany, considered the only force capable to oppose the Soviets, on May 28, 1940.¹⁹

This reorientation of foreign policy was accompanied by a growing collaboration of royal dictatorship with the Iron Guard, which was assisted by Germany.²⁰

The annexation of Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina and the Herța region by the Soviet Union had significant consequences on Romania's internal and international situation. At the external level, Romania strengthened its relations to Nazi Germany. On July 1, 1940, the Romanian Government gave up the Anglo-French guarantees of April 13, 1939, and on the following day Carol II requested a German military mission in Romania. At the internal level, a new Government was created on July 4, 1940, led by Ion Gigurtu, who had economic and politic ties in Berlin. Three ministers represented the Iron Guard (the Legion) in the new Government: Horia Sima, Minister of Religious Affairs and Arts (he was to resign on July 8), Vasile Noveanu, Minister of the Inventory of Public Wealth, and Augustin Bideanu, Sub-Secretary of State of Finances.

The structure of the new Government clearly shows Romania's orientation towards the Axis powers. The aim of these changes was not resuming of an old tradition, as the Government was claiming, but a desperate attempt of the Carlist regime to avoid new territorial losses and to keep its governing position. In his memoir book entitled *White Days, Black Days*, Nichifor Crainic describes and criticizes the causes leading to

¹⁸ Details in: *Pactul Ribbentrop-Molotov și consecințele lui pentru Basarabia. Culegere de documente [The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and Its Consequences on Bessarabia. Document Collection]* (Vitalie Văratec and Ioan Șișcaru), Editura Universitatea Chișinău, 1991, p. 14-41.

¹⁹ Grigore Gafencu – details on the seizure of Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina, in *Journal 1940-1942*, Bucharest, Editura Globus, 1991, p. 18-19.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

the revision of Romania's foreign policy, in the international context of the '40, and the change of direction to the Axis powers.²¹

CHAPTER IV “CONSEQUENCES OF THE GERMAN-SOVIET PACT ON AUGUST 23, 1939 ON ROMANIA’S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY JUNE-AUGUST 1940”

The Liberal Party leader Constantin Argetoianu emphasizes in the 4th volume of his journal *Daily Notes* the causes that determined Romania to revise its political and military position after the signing of the German-Soviet pact on August 23, 1939.

The non-aggression German-Soviet pact, accompanied by the secret protocol that defines the spheres of influence, concluded and sealed in Moscow, in August 1939, has radically changed Romania's political and military position, at was, in essence, the decisive element in all events which have brought about the subsequent changes in Eastern Europe. Grasping Romania's dramatic position after the conclusion of the Soviet-German pact, Hitler was writing to Mussolini on the day after: “There is no more possibility of Romania intervening against the Reich! Under these circumstances, even Turkey has no other choice but to revise its former position, but I repeat once again Romania is no longer in the position to take part in a conflict against the Axis”²².

The signing on August 23, 1939, of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact has radically changed Romania's political and military position, from that very moment leaving it alone in front of Germany and the Soviet Union²³.

Against the background of political and military developments in Europe after September 1, 1939 and the accentuation of diplomatic isolation of the Romanian state, the Crown Council on September 6, 1939 approved the decision of the Romanian Government regarding the declaration of Romania's neutrality. On this occasion, Nicolae Iorga noted: “... we are carrying out today politics different from the ones in our heart. We can carry out no other today. Dignified and honest neutrality... the world want neither

²¹ Arhivele Militare Române, fund 948, Section 3 - operations, file no. 1891, ff. 28-131; Nichifor Crainic, *Zile albe, Zile negre [White Days, Black Days]*, Bucharest, Ed. Nedic Lemnaru, 1991, p. 315.

²² Constantin Argetoianu, *Însemnări zilnice [Daily Notes]*, vol. VII, 1 iulie-22 noiembrie 1939, edited by Stelian Neagoie, Bucharest, Editura Machiavelli, 2003, p. 106.

²³ In: coord. Col. Dr. Cornel Carp, *România în contextul internațional la sfârșitul celui De-al Doilea Război Mondial [Romania in the International Context at the End of World War II]*, Editura Centrului Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, Bucharest, 2005, p.198.

a war, nor Germany's victory. We wish the terror regime in Europe to come to an end. To have a clear position as regards Germany. Neutrality – the one also known in the past”²⁴.

The occupation of Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina, Herța and a few islands on the Chilia arm, although carried out with the Führer's agreement, has nevertheless caused concern in Berlin, as “the Red Army forces have too much approached region, from Adolf Hitler's viewpoint”; Ploiești was Romania's main oil industry area²⁵.

The fact should be stressed that, although the U.S.S.R. had committed an act of force against Romania (to the profound resentment of all Romanians) and although the Gigurtu-Manoilescu Government had performed a change in the orientation of Romanian foreign policy towards the Axis forces, Bucharest authorities also took steps in order to ease tensions and establish good-neighborhood with the U.S.S.R. “Reason of state – as Mihail Manoilescu wrote – was prompting for a sensible and wise versus the U.S.S.R. And it is exactly this policy that we have been carrying out”²⁶.

But the most significant fact and the best proof for the policy of reconciliation regarding the Soviet Union was the appointment as a plenipotentiary minister in Moscow of Grigore Gafencu, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and, undoubtedly, an outstanding personality, on August 12, 1940.

By undertaking this appointment, Manoilescu intended to “give the Russians a concrete pledge of the conciliation intentions of our Government and to make forgotten the suspicion that we are mere tools of Berlin”²⁷.

CHAPTER V “ROMANIA'S FOREIGN POLICY (SEPTEMBER 1940 - JANUARY 1941)”

The famous journalist and memoir author Mihail Sturdza published in 1966, as an exile, *Romania and the End of Europe. Memoirs from the Lost Country*, one of the most

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ Ioan Scurtu, Gheorghe Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în sec XX (1918-1948) [History of Romanians in the 20th Century (1918-1948)]*, Bucharest, Editura Paideia, 1999, p. 376-377.

²⁶ Mihail Manoilescu, *Memorii iulie-august 1940 [Memoirs July-August, 1940]*, manuscript, Editura Carpatica, Bucharest, 1996, p. 306.

²⁷ Gregoire Gafencu, *Preliminaires de la guerre à l'est. De l'accord de Moscou (23 août 1939) aux hostilités en Russie (22 juin 1941)*, Tribourg, 1944, p.348.

serious books dedicated to the evolution of Romanian diplomacy between the two world wars and in 1940-1941.

On November 30, 1937 the “Captain” of the Legionary Movement made a famous declaration clearly stating the directions of foreign Romanian policy, in the eventuality the legionaries were to win political power in Romania: “I am against the Great Democracies of the Western World, I am against the Little Entente, I am against the Balkan Understanding and I have no sort of attachment to the League of Nations, in which I do not believe. I am in favor of Romania’s foreign policy along Rome and Berlin, along the States of National revolutions, against Bolshevism. Within 48 hours after the victory of Legionary Movement, Romania will have an alliance with Rome and Berlin, thus becoming true to the lines of its historic mission in the world: Defense of the Cross and of Christian civilization”.²⁸

Stelian Neagoie is the one who undertook a survey of the extreme right wing movement the Iron Guard and of the way in which legionary leaders have gotten themselves involved in the political life of Romanian law-making bodies. These aspects are included in his volume *The Iron Guard in Romania’s Parliament*.

It is worth emphasizing that this declaration, along with the one made by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu in Parliament²⁹, in 1931, as well as the memoir sent to King Carol II, on November 5, 1936, the telegrams sent to Hitler and Mussolini in the year 1937, as well as the telegram sent on March 12, 1938 on the occasion of the Anschluss, form the theoretical basis of the vision of foreign policy of the Legionary Movement.

Florin Müller’s study on the *Foreign Policy of the Legionary Movement: Ideology and Strategy* is of great significance, as it points out to the fundamental principles of foreign principles promoted by the Legionary Movement at the time.³⁰

These concepts have only been put to practice in part, and only indirectly, because, as is known, the Legionary Movement never set up a government on its own, to

²⁸ Mihail Sturdza, *România și sfârșitul Europei. Amintiri din țara pierdută* [Romania and the End of Europe. Recollections from the Lost Country], Bucharest, Ed. Criterion Publishing, 1994, p. 130.

²⁹ On December 3, 1931, during the session of the Deputies Assembly, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu declared that, if he were to choose between the two extremes to which European public opinion of that time was drawn, he believed that the sun does not rise in Moscow, but in Rome. Stelian Neagoie, “The Iron Guard in Romania’s Parliament”, in *Împotriva fascismului* [Against Fascism], Bucharest, 1971, pp. 53-68.

³⁰ Florin Müller, “Foreign Policy of the Legionary Movement: Ideology and Strategies”, in *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, I, nr. 1, 1993, p. 33.

implement its principles of foreign policy, even though Mihail Sturdza³¹ was the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Government formed on September 14, 1940.

The leader of the Iron Guard, Horia Sima, acknowledges that, as long as he was in office, along General Ion Antonescu, the legionaries never could exert decisive influence in foreign policy, and the major decisions were solely taken by the latter.

As is known, foreign policy was largely instrumented by General Ion Antonescu, the Chief of State (Conducător), and legionaries never had much influence. This assertion is easy to demonstrate, as long as all important agreements with Berlin were directly negotiated by Antonescu, while the Minister of Foreign Affairs was never informed of their content, and never participated in the talks.³²

Professor Gheorghe Buzatu also emphasizes in his study on the *History of Romanian Oil*, along other contemporary historians, that foreign policy as promoted during the Legionary National State was exclusivist, belonging only to Ion Antonescu.

It is also worth mentioning that the negotiations with a view of Romania's joining the Tripartite Pact were carried out by the Chief of State, without an involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and without its Minister being kept informed³³.

CHAPTER VI “ROMANIA AND GERMANY ON THE EASTERN FRONT. AGGRAVATION OF ROMANIAN-GERMAN RELATIONS AFTER STALINGRAD”

The aggravation of relations between Romania and Germany is one of the main consequences of the Stalingrad battle, manifested in all respects, and especially in the military and economic areas; tensions reached an alarming level in 1943³⁴.

In the second half of 1943, the misunderstandings between Germany and its allies/satellites have constantly grown in number and seriousness. The defeats suffered by Wehrmacht on different scenes of military operations, corroborated with Italy stepping out of the war, have determined both Romania and Hungary to accelerate their policy of

³¹ Mihail Sturdza (1886-1980), doctor in international law, diplomat, plenipotentiary minister in Riga from Copenhagen, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania in September-December 1940, as well as in the legionary government in exile (Vienna, December 1944-Mai 1945). See Mihail Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

³² Horia Sima, *Mișcarea Legionară și Monarhia [The Legionary Movement and the Monarchy]*, Iași, Ed. Agora, 1997, p. 61.

³³ Gh. Buzatu, *O istorie a petrolierului românesc [A History of Romanian Oil]*, 2nd edition, revised and completed, Casa Editorială Demiurg, Iași, 2009, p. 338-340.

³⁴ See: Marshal Antonescu's Letter to Field Marshal Manstein, on December 9, 1943.

taking a distance from their alliance with the 3rd Reich, materialized in the denial of sending more troops to Russia, the gradual withdrawal of units still on the Eastern front, as well as stepping up the contacts – through various channels of communication – with the Western Allies, in order to disengage from the war³⁵.

Under these circumstances, the Marshal could have been expected to come to the foreground with a new orientation towards the German ally and, against the background of the catastrophic situation of the country, as depicted by Mihai Antonescu, to possibly make an approach to the Allied Powers. Unfortunately, at least in that moment, Antonescu reaffirms his decision to continue the collaboration with the Axis until the end of the war “We either win along with Germany, or lose along with it” was the slogan of the Conducător.

The positive side was that, understanding the seriousness of continuing the war in the East, Antonescu took the decision to act in parallel along the lines of diplomatic negotiations, trying to avert Romania’s collapse together with the crushing of the Nazi war machinery. All documents investigated by us evince the undeniable truth that Romania’s disengagement from the Axis was the result of close cooperation between the state power and the opposition, especially the democratic one³⁶.

As regards democratic opposition, it was granted much attention by the Government, and its leaders contacted and consulted on many occasions. As Iuliu Maniu told to some intimate friends, that was the case on March 26, 1943, during his two talks with Mihai Antonescu, during which he was asked to “prepare the documentary material in support of the territorial claims”. Maniu’s conclusion after meeting the Vice-president of the Council of Ministers was that not even the Government any longer believed in the Axis victory and “we are on the verge of total mobilization, because Berlin does not give up on Romanian oil and the other reserves³⁷.

The exploratory demarches for Romania’s stepping out of the war started in 1943. The first steps were taken at the end of 1942, when Iuliu Maniu sent to memoirs to London. There followed: confidential talks between Mihai Antonescu and Suphi

³⁵ In: coord. Col. Dr. Cornel Carp, *România în contextul internațional la sfârșitul celui De-al Doilea Război Mondial* [Romania in the International Context at the End of World War II], Editura Centrului Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, Bucharest, p. 223.

³⁶ See: AMAE; fund E9, *Al doilea război mondial* [World War II], vol. 99, f. 82.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 83.

Tanriover, Turkey's Ambassador in Bucharest (January 1943); contacts made by Nicolae Dumitrescu, Romania's minister in Madrid, to representatives of the Vatican, Argentina, France, Portugal, Finland and Turkey (March 1943); contacts of Romania's minister in Bern, Nicolae Emanoil Lahovari, to the Swiss Government and the Pope's nuncio (end of March); Simionescu's exploratory mission in Madrid and Lisbon (March); other contacts of plenipotentiary minister Nicolae Dumitrescu in Madrid, mainly with Argentina's envoy (March-April); a message of Iuliu Maniu's (March 13) to the British and American governments.

Obviously, all these demarches had eventually become known in Berlin³⁸.

CHAPTER VII “ROMANIAN-GERMAN TENSIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS (1943-1944)”

Upon Hitler's insistence, who wanted to discuss with the Romanian leaders highly important issues related to military preparations for the summer of 1943, Marshal Ion Antonescu saw himself compelled to accept the visit to Germany.

He came to the Führer's Headquarters close to Rastenburg accompanied by Mihai Antonescu, on January 8, 1943³⁹.

The talks lasted three days (January 10 to 12, 1943), and concentrated mainly on the German-Romanian economic relations and the reconstruction of the Romanian army after the catastrophe at Stalingrad and the Don-Bend⁴⁰.

The Romanian Government's discontents and claims were included in a “Memoir” which depicted in gloomy colors Romania's situation at the beginning of 1943: “The army [was] much weakened, following the losses suffered on the Eastern front, both in personnel, and, even more so, in armament; the disequilibrium, following these losses, between the Romanians' military force and that of their neighbors and the dangers threatening the Romanian state.” The memoir then refers to Romania's economic situation, pointing to the difficulties brought about by the Reich's monopoly on our

³⁸ Dinu C. Giurescu, *România în al doilea război mondial (1939-1945) [Romania in World War II]*, Bucharest, Editura All Educational, Bucharest, 1999, p. 198.

³⁹ A. Simion, *Preliminari politico-diplomatice ale insurecției române din August 1944 [Political and Diplomatic Preliminaries of the Romanian Insurrection in August 1944]*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1979, p. 238.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

country's foreign trade and the special type of relations established between Romania and Germany⁴¹. "Romania's foreign trade is today almost entirely allotted to the Axis forces, and especially to the German Reich", the text of the memoir underlined.

Romania exposed itself not only to the risk of exhausting its oil reserves and of inflation – due to financing the exports to Germany –, but also suffered losses amounting to 35 billion lei, due to supplying oil products at pre-war prices. Following a series of insistent requests, Romania had to cover the costs for the German troops present in the country, amounting to another 35 billion lei. And, finally, it has to be said that Romania fulfilled its export obligations up to the limits, while the German-Romanian clearing was showing, in that respect, a credit balance of over 500 million German marks in favor of Romania (over 30 billion lei). The approaching inflation, caused by financing the German needs, threatens to unbalance the entire state machinery and the people's social regime.

Mihai Antonescu's intervention therefore started with a reproach to Berlin, due to the fact it had not fulfilled its obligations to equip the Romanian troops with adequate armament, bringing about the disaster⁴².

The Reich's Minister of Foreign Affairs listened in silence to Mihai Antonescu's reproaches to the fact the Reich had not fulfilled its obligations to provide Romania military equipment, and especially anti-tank armament; made a several-pages long report on the defeat of Romanian divisions at Stalingrad and at the Don-Bend and on the consequences of the fact on the strategic military situation along the entire front. "Due to what happened on the Eastern front to Romanians and Italians, our position as a whole is difficult – declared von Ribbentrop. It is a well-known fact in Germany that the Romanians fought bravely; their blood sacrifice demonstrates this. But the main burden of war is carried by Germany and it is crucial for the enemy to be defeated. Therefore, the politic, military and economic commitment has to be such as for Romania and Germany to build an iron front together"⁴³.

⁴¹ ANR, fund 10, file no. 219, vol. V. Ff. 43-44 (photocopy).

⁴² See: Note on the talk between the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Reich and the Romanian Vice-president Mihai Antonescu, at the Führer's Headquarters, on January 10, 1943, hour, 11.20, in ANR, fund no. 13, file no. 1263, ff. 84-85.

⁴³ *Ibidem*. ff. 87-88.

CHAPTER VIII “SECRET ARMISTICE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ALLIES”

The negotiations carried out by emissaries of the Antonescu’s and of the “national opposition” with representatives of the coalition of United Nations, from Spring to Summer, 1944, failed. Marshal Ion Antonescu, especially, could not be unfeeling to the fate of provinces in Eastern and Northern Romania, whose future was uncertain. There was not even the certitude the status of these historical provinces was to be established at the future forum of peace⁴⁴.

While up to the Spring of 1944 the relationship between power and opposition had reached significant levels and they were ready to approach from a common basis the major theme of saving the country in face of the serious dangers threatening it after the defeats of German and Romanian troops on the Eastern front and the approach of the Red Army to the national borders, once this reached the Pruth line and the talks with the Western Allies failed, from that point on almost all channels of connection between opposition and power were closed⁴⁵.

On the other hand, there became active and came into play a multitude of new relations among the opposition forces, regardless of their political color; monarchy itself, a major segment of power up to these events, was contacted and won over to the camp of the opposition⁴⁶.

Ever larger categories give up their party or class vainglory and direct themselves, alone or together, to defending the major national interests of the moment: national-liberal, communists, social-democrats, Tătărăscu-adepts, members of the Front, trade-unionists, workers, peasants, youth, intellectuals etc.⁴⁷

As regards Ion Antonescu’s relation to the opposition, a few of the SSI notes from January 1944 say a lot about this aspect⁴⁸.

According to the historian Ioan Chiper, towards the end of 1943 one may observe an enhancement of contacts among representatives of the Allies and Romanians, even a

⁴⁴ Gheorghe Buzatu, *România și războiul mondial din 1939-1945 [Romania and the World War 1939-1945]*, Iași, Centrul de Istorie și Civilizație Europeană, 1995, p. 52.

⁴⁵ See AMAE, fund Second World War-E 9, vol. 98, ff. 228-234.

⁴⁶ See ANR, fund, PCM Military Cabinet, file 267/1944, ff. 6-8.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, ff. 42-46.

⁴⁸ Gh. Buzatu, *Hitler, Stalin, Antonescu*, Ploiești, Ed. Societății culturale Ploiești- mileniul III, 2005, p. 296.

revived interest for Romania especially of Great Britain and U.S.S.R. On November 18, 1943, Soviet diplomacy – changing its position merely three weeks before, during the conference of the ministers of foreign affairs in Moscow – decided to participate in negotiations with Iuliu Maniu's emissaries⁴⁹.

There were a great number of diplomatic contacts between representatives of the anti-hitlerite coalition and Romanian diplomats in the capitals of neutral states. Among others, Ion Pangart Cadere in Lisbon, Scarlat Grigoriu in Madrid, Grigorie Gafencu in Bern, Richard Franasovici, Vespasian Pella, Nicolae Lahovary in Rome and Raoul Bossy in the Vatican, George Duca in Stockholm took part in talks⁵⁰.

At the same time, an important part was played by the negotiations for a separate peace secretly engaged upon both by emissaries of democratic parties in the Romanian opposition, and by those of Antonescu's Government. Worth mentioning is the involvement of American information services as well; they engaged in numerous contacts with representatives of different Romanian groups, underlying the importance U.S.A. gave to Romania's „detachment” from the Axis Powers⁵¹.

As showed by the research of historians Gh. Buzatu and Dana Beldiman, Turkey's representative in Romania was summoned by Mihai Antonescu, Vice-president of the Cabinet and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, who, taking into consideration the “very difficult” situation on the Moldova front, decided, with the consent of the Marshal, of the King and of the chiefs of all opposition parties to propose armistice negotiations to the United Nations. An answer was expected, within the following 24 hours, from the London and Washington governments regarding this initiative. But in order to lend credibility to the statements above, it is preferable to take into account the entire text of the note sent to Ankara by the Turkish minister in Bucharest⁵².

⁴⁹ See, in more detail, Ioan Chiper, “Actul istoric de la 23 august 1944 în contextul politicii marilor puteri față de România (1)” [The Historic Act of August 23, 1944 in the Context of the Great Powers' Policy versus Romania (1)], in *Revista de istorie*, vol. 42, no. 9, September 1989, p. 936.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 341-346.

⁵¹ Gheorghe Buzatu, *România în ecuația războiului și pașii (1939-1947) - Aspekte și controverse [Romania in the Equation of War and Peace (1939-1947) - Aspects and Controversies]*, 2nd edition, Bucharest, Editura Mica Valahie, 2009, p.107.

⁵² Gheorghe Buzatu, Dana Beldiman, *23 August 1939-1944. România și Proba Bumerangului [August 23, 1939-1944. Romania and the Test of the Boomerang]*, Editura Mica Valahie, Bucharest, 2011, p.33-34.

CHAPTER IX “ON THE EVE OF AUGUST 23, 1944 ACT AND THE BREAKING OF THE ALLIANCE WITH GERMANY”

According to an information note to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs of August 24, 1944, on the evening of August 22, facing the military-political crisis, Marshal Ion Antonescu declared in presence of Mihai Antonescu and of the Minister of War, General C. Pantazi, to the German representative Karl Clodius, a genuine “plenipotentiary super-minister” of the 3rd Reich in Bucharest that, in spite of a totally undermined situation after the withdrawal of German divisions from the front, he was going to throw into battle the last reserves in order to stop the Soviets South of Iași and on the Bug⁵³.

The situation also brings forth an issue of politics: after declining, out of loyalty, Wilson’s conditions in Cairo, the Southern front was gradually weakened, in spite of the assumptions he was making. It is thus why he had to claim the regaining of his freedom of political action. Clodius expressed his view that “the Marshal wishes to have a free hand in order to make a desperate move of separation from the Axis only if a breakdown of the front occurs”⁵⁴.

Therefore, this document sets Ion Antonescu’s request to have freedom of action on the evening of August 22 and shows it as a direct consequence of the military catastrophe⁵⁵.

Hitler’s certitude as regards Ion Antonescu’s unconditioned loyalty had been shaken, since during their August 5 and 6 meeting, the essence of their conversation was Hitler’s question, expressed, according to Antonescu, “in an absolutely tempestuous and unaccustomed manner for the use of chiefs of state... whether Romania and, especially its head, Marshall Antonescu, he underlined, are determined to follow Germany up to the end”⁵⁶.

⁵³ Florin Constantiniu, “Aspecte ale crizei regimului antonescian în ajunul insurecției naționale armate antifasciste și antimeritale” [Aspects of the Crisis of Antonescu’s Regime on the Eve of National Armed Antifascist and Anti-imperialist Insurrection], in: *Revista de istorie*, Tom 32, nr. 7, p. 1305-1306.

⁵⁴ *Documente privind istoria militară a poporului român. 23-31 august 1944 [Documents on the Military History of the Romanian People. August 23-31, 1944]*, vol. I. Editura militară, Bucharest, 1977, p. 117-118.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ Vezi: Augustin Deac, “Antonescu despre ultima întrevadere cu Hitler” [Antonescu on His Last Interview with Hitler], in *Magazinul istoric*, II(1968), nr. 7-8, p. 46-49.

The decisions of the Moscow Conference and the resolution of Casablanca, regarding the acceptance of the principle of unconditioned surrender for the Reich's allies, have considerably reduced Romania's chances, involved ever since 1943 in genuine negotiations with the Allies in order to withdraw from the war, to act in accordance with its legitimate interests⁵⁷.

The Stockholm negotiations did not fail, but led to no result, due to Ion Antonescu's lack of confidence in the Russians, which Mihai Antonescu considered "quasi-pathological"⁵⁸.

During the Teheran Conference, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin established that future peace treaties would be the result of close collaboration among the three great powers. Referring to Romania, little was talked in Iran's capital. I.V. Stalin had declared, several times, that the occupation of Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina was final⁵⁹.

The coup d'etat on August 23, 1944, following which the Marshal was arrested, eliminated the plan of the "armistice battle", and Romania's exit from the Axis alliance was made on bases different from the ones initially conceived, and they affected Romania's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity⁶⁰.

CHAPTER X is dedicated to the theme **ROMANIAN EVOLUTIONS WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT AFTER AUGUST 23, 1944**. I have underlined the fact that the turning point on August 23, 1944 has changed the estimations regarding the Central and Eastern European area. The presence of Soviet armies and their rapid advance to the center of Europe, as well as the taking over of control over Bulgaria, were a menace for British interests in Greece. I have surveyed the manner in which international mass media, participants in the events and contemporary historians have commented on the importance of the act achieved by Romania on August 23, 1944, on the subsequent evolution of war. I have then pointed out the atrocities committed by the Soviet army on the Romanian territory, after Romania joining the Allies. The Armistice Convention was an important moment for Romania in the history of its participation in

⁵⁷ Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, Doru Tompea, *România la cele două Conferințe de pace de la Paris 1919-1920, 1946-1947 [Romania and the Two Paris Peace Conferences 1919-1920, 1946-1947]*, Iași, Edit. Tipo Moldova, 2010, p. 96.

⁵⁸ Gh. Buzatu, *Trecutul la judecata istoriei [The Past Is Judged by History]*, Bucharest, Editura Mica Valahie, 2006, p. 264.

⁵⁹ Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 123.

World War II. To this end, I have presented the tough talks before concluding the Convention – including here the Memorandum drawn up by the President of the Romanian Commission for the Enforcement of the Armistice to the Allied Control Commission of the Armistice Convention as well -, I have also shown the Convention and the way in which Romania fulfilled its obligations following the it.

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