

ROMANIA ON THE DIPLOMATIC AND PLANNING AGENDA OF BRITAIN AND U.S.A. DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1940-1944)

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Rezumat: România pe agenda diplomatică și de planificare a Marii Britanii și SUA pe parcursul celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial (1940-1944)

Cel de-al Doilea Război Mondial a fost probabil cel mai important eveniment care a marcat lumea în secolul anterior. Fără îndoială el a condus la o schimbare a felului în care analizăm și interpretăm relațiile internaționale deoarece a adus în discuție un nou statut de forță la nivel global: superputerea. Încă din timpul războiului a devenit evident faptul că noua lume de la sfârșitul conflictului va fi dominată de către S.U.A și de către Uniunea Sovietică. În ceea ce privește subiectul de față – România și relațiile ei cu Vestul, apropierea geografică de Rusia a rămas un factor determinant. Modul în care Marea Britanie și partenerul ei evident mai puternic, S.U.A., vedeau România în perioada tulbură a războiului era puternic influențată de U.R.S.S. Acest adevăr a rămas neschimbat în ciuda existenței unor elemente care ar sugera contrariul. Britanicii, în mod special, au început să considere România ca un potențial câmp de luptă și nu au ignorat importanța ei strategică atunci când au declanșat procedurile de planificare postbelică. Această lucrare are ca scop analizarea locului ocupat de către România în calculele și planurile aliate, mai ales cele care includeau o imagine mai largă care să cuprindă și Uniunea Sovietică.

Abstract: *The Second World War was arguably the most important event that shaped the world in the last century. Without a doubt it marked a significant change in the way we see and interpret international relations because it brought into question a new word a status of strength: the superpowers. Even during the war it became apparent that the new world emerging from the conflict will be dominated by the U.S.A and the Soviet Union. For the subject at hand here – Romania and its relations with the West at the time, Russian vicinity is a very determining factor. The way Britain and its bigger partner, the U.S. viewed Romania during those troubled years was unquestionably altered by Russian influence. This fact remained unchanged, even though there were some elements that may suggest otherwise. Especially the British started to think of Romania as a future battlefield and didn't ignore its strategic importance when they started postwar planning procedures. This paper focuses on the place occupied by Romania in the Allied plans and predictions, especially in the bigger of picture, which included the Soviet Union.*

Résumé: La Roumanie sur la diplomatie agenda et planification de la Grande-Bretagne et les États-Unis pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1940-1944)

La Deuxième Guerre mondiale a été sans doute l'événement le plus important qui a façonné le monde dans le siècle dernier. Sans doute, il a marqué un changement important dans la façon dont nous voyons et interprétons les relations internationales, parce qu'il met en question un nouveau mot, un statut de force: les superpuissances. Même pendant la guerre, il est devenu évident que le nouveau monde en émergence de ce conflit sera dominée par les États-Unis et l'Union soviétique. Pour le sujet en question - la Roumanie et ses relations avec l'Occident, la proximité de Russie est un facteur très déterminant. La façon dont la Grande-Bretagne et les États-Unis vu la Roumanie, au cours de ces années troublées, a été incontestablement altéré par l'influence russe. Ce fait resté inchangé, bien qu'il y eût certains éléments qui peuvent suggérer le contraire. En particulier, le Royaume-Uni a commencé à penser de la Roumanie comme un futur champ de bataille. Et ne pas ignorer son importance stratégique quand ils ont commencé les procédures de planification de l'après-guerre. Ce document se concentre sur la place occupée par la Roumanie dans cette plans et les prévisions connexes, plans qui comprenaient l'Union soviétique aussi.

Keywords: *postwar, diplomacy, strategic, Romania, Great Britain, United States, influence.*

INTRODUCTION

After the unexpected fall of France in the summer of 1940, both London and Washington were forced to change their policies regarding Eastern Europe, which seemed likely to be the new sector where Germany will focus its attention. Indeed, the rapid surrender of France changed many plans including Stalin's. The Soviet dictator gambled on a prolonged conflict between the Western capitalist powers, which would allow him the much needed time to build up his armed forces. For Romania, the fall of its most important ally was close to a national disaster. The new Romanian leader, General Antonescu had assumed power after the catastrophic events in the summer of 1940, when Romania was forced to give in to the U.S.S.R., Hungary and Bulgaria significant parts of its territory. Antonescu was first mentioned as a potential candidate for power during these same negotiations with Bulgaria. The Bulgarian foreign minister made it clear to the American diplomats that Antonescu was tied to Germany and was expected to follow it in the near future. Consequently, the American minister in Bucharest, Franklin Mott Gunther, transmitted similar information regarding Antonescu's trust relations with high ranking Reich officials. However, Gunther believed that the general was mistaken if he put too much trust into the German territorial guarantees¹. Therefore, after the announcement of the

¹ *The Minister in Romania (Gunther) to the Secretary of State, Bucharest, November 1, 1940,*

founding of the new national-legionary state and Romania's adherence to the Axis, its relations with the U.S. declined significantly. They will culminate with the announcement of the state of war between the two countries one year later. Romania's diplomatic relations with Britain followed a similar pattern, but with a more dramatic curve towards open conflict. Under Antonescu Romania was forced to take much more radical steps against Britain since it was fighting a war with Romania's ally, Germany. They will climax with the withdrawal of the British mission in Romania. One important crisis occurred at the end of September 1940, soon after Antonescu assumed power. Britain accused Romania of kidnapping and hurting British citizens under the claim they were secrets agents. British foreign Minister, Lord Halifax, protested vehemently against these abuses and warned Radu Florescu, the Romanian charge in London, that if these acts of abuse continued, the British Government will have to assume they are made with the approval of the Romanian government².

A CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE

Until the launch of *Operation Barbarossa* – the invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany and its allies, Romania's relations with the U.S. and Britain were almost on the same coordinates. During a statement by the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, before the Committee on Foreign Affairs from the House of Representatives on January 15, 1941, the American official made a resume of his country's diplomatic efforts to avert war in the last couple of years. He supported *Lend-Lease* as an integrant part of American security policy and furthermore, he made a presentation of Germany and Italy aggressive acts that had lead to war. What is more significant, Hull made some remarks on Romania:

“[...] The period of the war has witnessed the invasion and occupation of Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and Luxemburg, in violation of the scrupulously observed neutrality of these countries and in contravention, in the cases of some of these countries, of assurances expressly given by Germany of her intention to respect their independence and sovereignty; the invasion and partial occupation of France; the splitting up of Rumania and the German occupation of the remaining portion of that country [...]”³.

in *Foreign relations of the United States diplomatic papers* (further will be quoted *FRUS*) 1940, vol. I, Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940, p. 525.

² Gheorghe Buzatu, *România și Marile Puteri: 1939-1947* [Romania and the Great Powers: 1939-1947], Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică, 2003, p. 334.

³ *Statement by the Secretary of State Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, January 15, 1941*, in *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy*,

If we take into account the reports sent by the American mission in Bucharest we can safely assume that, as far as the Department of State was concerned, Romania was now clearly in the German sphere of influence. This was proven by her adherence to the Axis, as well as by the entrance of German occupying forces into the country. Gunther informed Washington that Romania was negotiating with Germany and Italy for military assistance and training, and that meant the presence of Axis (German) forces in Romania. Rumours begin to circulate in the diplomatic circles that German air and land instructors were entering Romania in October 1940. They were housed around Bucharest and some other strategic areas:

“[...] the Rumanian General Staff and the German Military Attaché state categorically that no German troops or equipment have entered Rumania. The latter adds however that negotiations between the Rumanian, German and Italian Governments with a view to supplying Rumania with instructors and training cadres have been going on for some time and will probably be successfully concluded at an early date [...]”⁴.

As for Britain, Prime Minister Winston Churchill did not hesitate to announce his opinion that Romania was clearly on German side, even before it had adhered to the Axis. In a message to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he makes clear that he intends to take punitive actions against Romania:

“Now that the Roumanian Government is helping themselves to the property of British subjects, ought we not show the Roumanians that we shall use their frozen fund to compensate our people? I understand that about six weeks ago you blocked Roumanian assets in London. We have been treated odiously by these people”⁵. There were however some other British opinions on Romania, originating mainly from the Foreign Office. They tended to analyze Romania’s actions in the context of the much larger picture of Eastern Europe. For British interests Turkey played a significant role. But the Empire’s resources were dwindling and its options were limited, especially the military ones. Also, British prestige was at its lowest after Dunquerque. There was the ever growing prospect of Turkey falling into the arms of Germany, as did Romania in response to Soviet pressure. This made Britain examine her options in Eastern Europe in the early months of 1941. The press published a series of articles about Romania’s departure from the *Balkan Entente* and the dangers this move presented for the security of Turkey and consequently the Suez channel⁶. The

1931-1941 (further will be quoted Peace and War), Department of State, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1943, p. 615.

⁴ *FRUS*, 1940, vol. I, p. 519.

⁵ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. II, *Their finest hour*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1985, p. 574.

⁶ Nicholas Tamkin, *Britain, Turkey, and the Soviet Union, 1940-45: Strategy, Diplomacy and Intelligence in the Eastern Mediterranean*, Londra, Palgrave MacMillan, 2009, p. 33.

entrance of German troops into Romania was also a warning sign for London. Britain followed the standard policy in this case and declared that Romania was an occupied country. Hoare protested repeatedly against this seeming violation of Romania's neutrality and reported back to London the alarming numbers of German soldiers in the country. Considering this act as an obstruction of normal diplomatic activity in a neutral country, Hoare obtained permission from the Foreign Office to sever British relations with Romania. The British legation moved to Istanbul, but Hoare himself stayed in Bucharest a little longer. He conveyed with major Ratay, the American military attaché, and both of them concluded that German forces in Romania exceeded earlier numbers. Ratay even suggested that almost 10.000 German soldiers were entering Romania every day, which made the total German forces about 15 to 20 divisions strong⁷.

After that the Romanian government, at the request of Germany, restricted British and American diplomatic travels in the country and had their legacies under constant watch. Romanian citizens who were meeting with American or British diplomats were under surveillance. This made Hoare tell Antonescu that "his Majesty's Government decided to recall him" because "the Germans were using Romania as a military base"⁸. British interests in Romania would be represented by the American embassy. Romania retaliated to this action by withdrawing the Viorel Tilea led mission in London on February 23 1941. Romania also cancelled all of its oil shipments to Turkey, since they were sold to Britain⁹.

The Foreign Office and C.O.S.-the British Chiefs of Staff, both misinterpreted the build-up of German military forces in Romania. The arrival of Wehrmacht troops in Romania, which continued throughout the winter of 1940, was considered to be based on Germany's desire to have a strong presence in the area. British analysts also thought that these forces were meant to allow Germany leverage in the eventuality of talks with Turkey¹⁰. Even Churchill clearly states in his memoirs that in the autumn of 1940 London didn't have a clear picture of the Balkan area. British secret services could only detect a significant German build-up in this region¹¹. Germany's objectives, that is, her next target, could not be identified at that time. Coincidentally, Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary made a quick working trip in the region at that time. This gave Adolf Hitler a reason for pause and a pretext for invading Greece in the spring of 1941. The entire British diplomatically construction in the Balkan area collapsed after that, although it is safe to say London didn't have great

⁷ Gheorghe Buzatu, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's forgotten ally: Ion Antonescu and his regime, Romania 1940-44*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2006, p. 75.

¹⁰ Nicholas Tamkin, *op.cit.*, p. 34.

¹¹ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. II, p. 524.

expectation to begin with; it all came down to military strength and Britain didn't have resources except those committed in Greece. Although Under-Secretary Alexander Cadogan had expressed doubts that Yugoslavia and Greece would put up a fight¹², they actually opposed Hitler with arms, even if to no avail.

The concentration of German forces and equipment in Romania was also the focus of several diplomatic telegrams sent back to Washington by the American legation in Bucharest. Gunther made a very accurate assessment about the numbers of German soldiers in the country – roughly about 100.000. Yet, much like his British counterparts, he didn't see any long term goal for Germany's presence in Romania. He thought that the German policy was "purely opportunist, preventive and mandatory". He added that "Germany just wishes to be prepared for all contingencies". The similarity between his point of view and those of British diplomats is striking:

"[...] the great bulk of the German troops at both places have been sent – possibly amounting to over 25,000 – have been sent south to Giurgiu, Oltenita and other bridgeheads on the Danube where they face Bulgaria with pontoon and bridge equipment [...] It would therefore seem full pressure is mobilized to impress Filoff¹³ during his Vienna visit [...] Yugoslavia and Bulgaria are, however, in for a period of peaceful bullying and I wonder whether it is not time for a few words of direct encouragement. This however, to be effective should be backed with British assurance of real aid"¹⁴.

So although the Department of State was well informed of Romania's increasing diplomatic isolation and of the German penetration in the region, Gunther's efforts were rebuked by Washington. His conclusions were irrefutable – the new Romanian Prime-Minister, Ion Gigurtu will steer Romania towards Germany and the Axis; as for the Foreign Office, even official documents speak of the absence of any other choice for Romania given that Germany dominated Europe in the autumn of 1940:

"When called upon to form a government in September 1940, Antonescu made the King's abdication a condition, and having secured that, faced the task of governing the country in the face of a German menace of occupation with the people incensed at the loss of territory, with the new King only 18 years of age, and with the Iron Guard ready and anxious to make trouble ... As regards the German occupation, the only question was whether this should take place with or without consent. Although Antonescu had always been pro-British in sympathy, he decided that it would be better for the country not to be occupied by an openly hostile force. His

¹² Keith Neilson, T.G. Otte, *The permanent under-secretary for foreign affairs, 1854–1946*, New York, Routledge, 2009, p. 251.

¹³ President of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers.

¹⁴ *FRUS*, 1941, vol. I, p. 273.

decision has been severely criticized, but in view of the impossibility of obtaining help from the Allies, it is hard to see what else he could have done”¹⁵.

This alignment of Romania with Germany’s new order in Europe was therefore, understood up to a point by Britain and by the U.S. At the same time events were on the rise again in Eastern Europe with the Fuhrer at their centre stage. His decision to attack the Soviet Union, *Operation Barbarossa*, altered the course of the war, and brought Romania furthermore under the scope of Washington and London based analysts. The main reason for it was that Romania was the largest contributor to the German war effort among her satellite allies. Antonescu was the only allied leader warned by Hitler of the impending onslaught unleashed on the Soviets.

At that point, the U.S. Minister in Bucharest was involved in a massive analysis for the Department of State and for the President with the aim of „clearing the fog” around the German military presence in Romania. It was clear that, since the German build-up of forces exceeded the needs of the campaign in the Balkans, Berlin had further goals in the area. Gunther made some predictions about the developments which we feel were interesting:

„[...] Inasmuch as war between Germany and Russia is being increasingly discussed in this part of the world I have endeavoured to analyze from this angle the chances for and against such a conflict [...] Russia is daily getting stronger militarily and economically and according to some good military opinion will be fairly well organized in 2 years [...] There is at work adroit pressure from General Antonescu and his Government to the end that Hitler should not play second fiddle to Stalin in Russian occupied Rumania or condone the latter’s continued threats to the mouth of the Danube [...] It would seem that the balance tips in favour of an early war between Germany and Russia [...]”¹⁶.

Even after June 22 1941 Gunther had intensified his working meetings with contacts in the Romanian government, despite the fact that the U.S. had arranged war shipments for the Soviets. During his discussions with Mihai Antonescu, the new Romanian Foreign Minister, and with general Antonescu, Gunther was able to form a clearer picture of the front for his superiors in Washington. He did promise to M. Antonescu that the Romanian point of view would be made known to the Department of State and vice versa¹⁷. Gunther made significant efforts to change America’s perception that Romania was an occupied country. This was even more pressing since

¹⁵PRO, FO 371/37379, document R5111, 10 June 1943. *Foreign Office Research Department Handbook, 'Constitution and Politics of Romania'*, 20 April 1943, Foreign and Press Service, Balliol College, Oxford, *Royal Institute of International Affairs*, directed by Arnold Toynbee, pp. 3–4, *apud* Dennis Deletant, *op.cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁶FRUS, 1941, vol. I, pp. 129-130.

¹⁷Gheorghe Buzatu, *op.cit.*, p. 337.

the U.S. had decided to freeze all Romanian assets, which made the Romanian charge in Washington to say that America was no longer neutral in the war¹⁸.

The invasion of the Soviet Union was a pivotal event for the way U.S.A. and Britain regarded Romania, now involved military as an ally of Germany in war. Churchill had warned in London in a radio cast on February 9 1941 that Germany had major interests in the Black Sea region now that it had managed to occupy Romania and Hungary¹⁹. British and American interest for Eastern Europe took a sharp increase after June 22 1941, when the Romanian Army helped liberate Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. British press noted through *The Times* that Romanians supported the campaign against the Soviet Union, although the alliance with Germany was more of a necessary evil²⁰. From his post in the capital of Romania, Gunther made similar remarks as he remembered a discussion with general Antonescu:

“[...] Nevertheless, it has always been my impression – one which has recently been confirmed by the General’s pro-German as well as his anti-British feelings are not dictated by sentiment but solely by what he considered to be national interests and date from Russia’s incursion into Rumania and the collapse of France [...]”²¹.

The Romanian government however made significant efforts to persuade both Britain and U.S.A. that its participation in the war against the Soviets was the just thing to do. Through discussions with opposition members – Iuliu Maniu in particular – Gunther was able to understand and relay back home the difficult position in which Romania found itself. Alexandru Cretzianu notes that that the American minister “did everything humanly possible to achieve some measure of understanding so that America would not think of us as German partners”²². Gunther pressed further by asking the Department of State to issue a statement in which it would express sympathy for the war of freedom these small states – Romania and Finland – were forced to fight against the U.S.S.R. He noted his sorrow that the Romanian people thought America was on the side of the Soviets. For that same reason he believed it was necessary that the U.S. clarify its position regarding this conflict²³.

On July 25 1941, the Department of State declined Gunther’s requests and reminded him of Undersecretary Sumner Well’s statement a day after Germany attacked Russia. In it was the only position the U.S. government would take for the time being. America’s view of the war in Europe was well detailed:

“[...] But the immediate issue that presents itself to the people of the United States is whether the plan for universal conquest, for the cruel and brutal enslavement

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ Alexandru Cretzianu, *Ocazia pierdută* [Missed Occasion], Iaşi, Institutul European, 1998, p. 87.

²⁰ Dennis Deletant, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

²¹ *FRUS*, 1941, vol. I, p. 291.

²² Alexandru Cretzianu, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

²³ *Ibidem*.

of all peoples, and for the ultimate destruction of the remaining free democracies, which Hitler is now desperately trying to carry out, is to be successfully halted and defeated [...] the opinion of this Government, consequently, any defence against Hitlerism, any rallying of the forces opposing Hitlerism, from whatever source these forces may spring, will hasten the eventual downfall of the present German leaders, and will therefore redound to the benefit of our own defence and security. Hitler's armies are today the chief dangers of the Americas"²⁴. Unfortunately for the future of mutual relations, this meant that the Department of State remained rigid regarding Romania. Still, the Americans were willing to wait some time before taking more drastic measures. There is proof for that in the fact that the U.S. didn't reply immediately to Romania's declaration of war. Instead there was hope in Washington that ignoring this declaration will not inflate the situation and will allow time for the opposition in Bucharest to remove Romania from the Axis. For the moment the Department of State choose to maintain relations and, more significantly, promised via Gunther that if the American government should at some point consider important to change its position, it would take into consideration Romania and Finland²⁵.

One important person that worked to ensure Romania and the Saxon powers are maintaining close relations was Mihai Antonescu. The Foreign Minister was keen American and British officials know the Romanian side of the story concerning military operations against the Soviet Union. Immediately after Romanian troops liberated Bessarabia and proceeded to the siege of Odessa, he sent instructions so that the Romanian legation in Washington could explain with clarity the objectives that Romania pursues beyond the Dniester. At that time it was understood that it would limit its participation at a defensive posture along the banks of that river²⁶. The Department of State was to be informed that Romania's only goal in the war was the retrieval of the robbed territories in 1940. Any incursion beyond the river was purely military motivated²⁷. Here was an attempt by the Romanian government to convince America that crossing the Dniester was a military decision and was no based on any desire of territorial expansion.

On the 1st of July 1941, Iuliu Maniu, head of National Peasants' Party, had a talk with Gunther. The Romanian politician expressed his concerns over the crossing of the Dniester and informed the American diplomat that he had asked Antonescu to withdraw the troops back to the river, even though he wasn't sure Hitler would allow such a daring move. For Gunther though the main issue was the diminishing sympathy of the Romanian people for American and for Britain. The cause of this, he

²⁴ *Statement by the Acting Secretary of State (Welles) at a Press Conference, iunie 23, 1941, in Peace and War*, pp. 683-684.

²⁵ Alexandru Cretzianu, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 92.

²⁷ Dennis Deletant, *op.cit.*, p. 86.

felt, was the unwavering support these countries had shown to the cause of the Soviets, with which Romania was at war. Most of the Romanians were hoping for an Allied victory, but not a Soviet one. It was puzzling for them as to why the U.S. was backing the U.S.S.R. and there was cause for concern about the treatment in store for Romania at the future peace conference²⁸.

We can conclude that even though the official position the U.S. and British governments was quite reserved on the matter of Romania's participation on the war with the Soviet Union, the media from these countries had already labelled Romania as an enemy state. The Romanian politicians made significant efforts to prevent this, but to no avail. For the U.S. in particular, the fact that Romania had given in to Germany's demands so easily, with no fight, was a tale tell sign and made quite a terrible impression for the common American, especially when Finland or Yugoslavia tried heroically to stave the German onslaught²⁹.

The German attack of the U.S.S.R. had the immediate effect of alleviating the position of Britain in the war. At a time when the military situation seemed desperate, the news from Russia was welcomed at London. Still, this attack came as a surprise for Britain, as for the entire world. Even though British intelligence was aware of the „concentration of important German forces in Eastern Europe”, an attack on Russia was „too good to be true”.³⁰ From conversations at the Foreign Office and the Army we know that all of these institutions harboured a natural distrust of Russia's goals and plans. The Chiefs of Staff noted that the best course of action was to avoid any official understanding with the Soviet Union regarding territorial changes until after the conclusion of the war³¹. Yet almost immediately after the German attack, Churchill open a channel of communication with the Soviet dictator, Josef Stalin, which would go on for the whole war. It was necessary to harmonize the relations and put together the military plans if Nazi Germany was to be defeated. Through this personal channel of communication Stalin made his partner aware that the Soviet Union desired a clarification of both partners' intentions in the war. In his telegram on September 3 1941 Stalin clearly states that the balance of forces on the front was broken because Germany had aid from Romania. Because of this the U.S.S.R. was forced to evacuate Western Ukraine³². Consequently, to the increasing demands of

²⁸ *FRUS*, 1941, vol. I, p. 322.

²⁹ Dennis Deletant, *op.cit.*, p. 84.

³⁰ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. III, p. 317.

³¹ Geoffrey Warner, *From ally to enemy: Britain's relation with the Soviet Union, 1941-1948*, in Michael Dockkrill, Brian McKercher (eds.), *Diplomacy and world power: studies in British foreign policy, 1890 – 1950*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 222.

³² *Personal message from Premier Stalin to the Prime-Minister, Mr. Churchill*, 3 septembrie 1941, in *Correspondence between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain durin the Great*

materials and war equipment he soon added the additional request that Britain and the Soviet Union should reach an arrangement regarding territorial clauses *during the war*, as opposed to after it. He also wanted that Britain would immediately declare war on Romania and Finland. As Churchill notes in his great book, these requests mark one of the toughest chapters in British-Soviet negotiations during the war.

The fate of Romania in the context of British-Soviet talks (soon the U.S. would join them too) rested on Moscow's ability to convince its partners of the necessity to declare war on Germany's minor partners. British and American plans and projections had to navigate Stalin's increasingly bigger plans for Eastern Europe. London and Washington had to find a way to balance the Soviet Union's fair desire for security and the fears that it may overrun the whole region. During these negotiations, Romania played a central part. As 1941 was closing, Soviet Russia's pressure on its partners increased dramatically and was two-folded: the recognition of the borders as they stood in 1940, and the declaration of war on Romania. Those were Stalin's main concerns regarding Romania.

THE SOVIET FACTOR BECOMES DOMINANT

Until August 3, 1941, Romania benefited from U.S. and British sympathy. Its struggle with the Soviets was seen as a just fight to take back its territories. Romanian diplomacy managed on some levels to present this position with moderate success. Hull had shown sympathy towards the retrieval of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. As for Churchill, he had clearly stated that the annexations of 1940 were made by force. Britain could not applaud Romania's contribution to the Nazi war effort, but it would not condemn it either. After August 3, however, the situation was modified. The Foreign Office protested immediately after Romanian troops had passed the Dniester. The Romanian Army was conducting military operations deep into Soviet territory and Britain had no choice but to criticize this act. Because of this and of increasing Russian pressure, Britain began to back down on its issue of the war declaration³³.

When the British and the American missions led by Lord Beaverbrook and Averell Harriman respectively, began talks with the Soviets, Stalin showed his interest for a declaration of common goals in the war. He did not believe that the *Atlantic Charter* held all that Britain and America hoped to achieve. For the U.S.S.R. the Charter was vague and didn't touch important subjects such as war reparations. Beaverbrook even had the feeling that Stalin wanted to turn the war-limited agreement into a full-fledged alliance that would satisfy the long-term objectives of

Patriotic War (further will be quoted Correspondence), 2nd edition, vol. I, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1975, p. 28.

³³ Dennis Deletant, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

both Soviet Russia and Great Britain³⁴. What Stalin basically wanted was: 1) Britain to declare war on Finland and Romania; 2) the recognition of the borders prior to June 22 1941 – that meant that the Baltic States, Bessarabia, Eastern Poland would be given back to the U.S.S.R. Without these concessions he could not see a future for the alliance against Germany. Over the coming months his demands became increasingly fervent and he even went so far as to say that without them there could be no mutual trust between the Soviet Union and Britain. In his message for the British Prime-Minister on the 8th of November, Stalin noted that the Soviet demands had somehow reached the press and claimed that this could be used to weaken the Russian-British relations in the future³⁵. For the moment however, Churchill wasn't prepared to be forced in this matter. He believed that a war declaration would just silence those voices in Romania and Finland that opposed the war with Russia. In this matter he and the Americans were seeing "eye to eye". Still, he announced that, if these countries would not stop the support they are giving to the Nazi war effort by December 7, he would have to make the final step of declaring the state of war. Furthermore, he would send Anthony Eden to Moscow to discuss these issues with Stalin. For territorial matter however, the British government was quite clear: they would not be discussed until Soviet Russia, Great Britain and the U.S.A. would sit together at the "conference table as equal partners in the struggle against Nazism"³⁶.

Thus Antony Eden travelled to the Soviet capital convinced that his task was quite difficult. His prerogatives were limited and he was to sign no treaty that included territorial clauses. Yet he personally believed that a soviet victory in the war, as unlikely as it seemed at that time, would make Stalin want to impose his own borders in Eastern Europe. For that reason he had recommended to the War Cabined to reach a full agreement with the Soviets as early as possible so as to use it to limit communist expansion after the war. He would openly say a few months after, in February of 1942, that any German defeat in that year could only happen on the Eastern front; Britain, even with the help of the Americans, could not mount any significant invasion of Europe during that 1942. So any victory would be "strictly soviet", with all of "its implications". It was of the highest importance to "solve the differences and to sign a long-term deal with the Russians". That did not mean that Eden ignored his suspicions about the Soviet Union however. He simply thought that such a deal would "eliminate Russian pretexts, which are quite numerous at the moment"³⁷.

³⁴ Herbert Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 24.

³⁵ *Personal Message from Premier Stalin to Prime-Minister Churchill*, 8 November, 1941, in *Correspondence*, p. 40.

³⁶ *Winston Churchill to J. V. Stalin*, 22 November, 1941, in *Ibidem*, p. 40.

³⁷ Geoffrey Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

Despite Churchill's hesitation in the matter, Eden was convinced of the necessity of this step so in the following weeks he worked to convince the other Cabinet members. Unexpectedly however, the Soviets increased their demands. They required that after the war Romania and Finland would sign a secret protocol that enabled the Red Army to build military bases on their territories. Officially this would be backed by a treaty of mutual friendship and cooperation. Even Oliver Harvey, who worked with Cadogan at the Secretary of the Foreign Office, and who was an ardent believer in the cooperation with the Soviets, opposed this latest demand. When Molotov arrived the next spring in London to sign the treaty, Harvey will state that such a demand would mean in practice handing those countries to Moscow. He recalled that the Baltic States suffered a similar fate after signing such treaties in 1940³⁸. But the real opponent was Cadogan. As his colleague, Orme Sargeant, he wanted to build a common front with Turkey and Russia together, Britain acting as a mediator. Unlike the British ambassador in Russia, Sir Stafford Cripps, Cadogan wasn't too sympathetic towards Russian needs and interests however. He saw the Balkan area as just secondary theatre where British agents would create problems and distractions for the Germans. If there were war between Britain and these countries, those agents would have a hard time accomplishing their tasks³⁹. In this matter he had the support of Churchill. They both wanted to delay the territorial issue until the end, unlike Eden, who as Cadogan said, "was ready to throw all principles to the wind", which would upset the Americans⁴⁰. On the other hand, Churchill did not want to alienate the Soviets. The fear that Stalin would sign a separate peace treaty with Hitler stayed with him for years.

Yet the British Prime-Minister had other concerns on his mind at that time; during the crucial week of 20-27 of December 1941 there was the final attempt on behalf of the American government to find a peaceful resolution on its conflict with Japan. These last propositions were quite hard and Churchill was aware that Japan was likely to reject them. We have no real evidence to support that Churchill openly said that war was imminent, but he must have thought it. He could suspect that America would join the war on Nazi Germany and that would spare him of any commitment with the Soviets. This is one reason why he delayed the talks with Stalin and he carefully avoided any agreement. Eden's instructions for the Moscow trip were handed to him only on December 4 1941 and Churchill was careful to say to the American ambassador, Winant, that Eden's only task was to discuss common plans in the war. Eden had no prerogatives to sign any territorial treaty and he would have to convince Stalin to uphold the Atlantic Charter and its principles. The only discussion

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ Keith Neilson, T. G. Otte, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 250.

on the future of Europe he was authorized to carry was that of disarming Germany and the possibility that small states would form federations⁴¹.

By the time Eden had his first round of negotiations with Stalin and Molotov on December 16 1941, the global situation was very much different; the German offensive on Moscow had been halted and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor meant that Germany had to face the might of the U.S.A. in the near future. As so, even though Eden had to give the soviets the bad news about the suspending of shipments in the near future, Stalin had his own concerns. He needed to get the British to sign an alliance with clear territorial clauses and he needed it very soon before the American contribution to the war effort would outweigh his. But Eden was unmovable; he wouldn't sign the proposed document and all the basis he had to offer was the postponement of territorial talks until the end of the conflict with the Axis⁴².

On his side, Churchill did discuss these events with American president, Franklin Roosevelt, during the *Arcadia Conference*, in January 1942. Both agreed that territorial discussions would nullify the Charter and its moral standards; the U.S. media would strongly oppose it⁴³. Yet some members of the British Cabinet were making strong demands for the appeasement of the Soviets. Halifax, now the British ambassador in the U.S. discussed this with Summer Welles soon after taking office. All that he obtained was the promise that the American ambassador in Moscow, William H. Standley, would open negotiations with the Soviet Union. Personally, Roosevelt was convinced that Stalin didn't trust the British because they "didn't live up to their promises"⁴⁴; he was sure he could appease the Soviets without giving in on the issue of territorial discussions.

On the British side however Churchill was beginning to lose the battle with the Foreign Office. The War Cabinet members as well were convinced that the cooperation, both during and after the war, between Britain and Soviet Russia depended on the issue of mutual trust and security. They recommended reaching a compromise on the issue of the borders. If not, at least agree the idea of Soviet military bases in Finland and Romania⁴⁵. Eventually Britain would agree to an alliance treaty that recognized the Soviet borders of June 22 1941, with the exception of the one with Poland⁴⁶.

⁴¹ Herbert Feis, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁴² Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, Londra, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962, p. 192.

⁴³ Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 337.

⁴⁴ Susan Butler, *My Dear Mr. Stalin: The Complete Correspondence Between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph V. Stalin*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2005, p. 63.

⁴⁵ Robert Dallek, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

⁴⁶ Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

As for the war declaration, the matter was resolved with significant speed. Earlier that year Britain had issued an ultimatum to Finland, Hungary and Romania to withdraw their troops and support for the Wehrmacht. In the case of Romania, the document was sent through the American Minister, Gunther, since Britain had broken relations. Romania did not respond in time and so the following message was issued by the Foreign Office on the 6th of December 1941:

“On 29 November, His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom sent the Romanian Government through the US minister a message according to which if, by 5 December, the Romanian Government did not cease military operations and did not withdraw effectively from any active participation in the hostilities against the USSR, His Majesty’s Government would have no option than to declare the existence of a state of war between the two countries. Since the Romanian Government has not responded to this message and since, according to the information available to His Majesty’s Government there is no indication that the Romanian Government intends to accept the conditions mentioned above, a state of war will exist between the two countries from 12.01 Greenwich Mean Time on 7 December⁴⁷”.

Romanian-American diplomatic relations seemed to follow a similar direction with the one exception: the U.S. did not declare war immediately. Between June 22 1941-2nd of June 1942 Gunther tried to play a significant role in the Romanian political life despite the fact that his position was rapidly deteriorating. He maintained contacts with opposition leaders, especially Iuliu Maniu. But, as a further proof that Washington was contemplating more decisive actions, he was soon instructed to gather information on Romanian oil equipment, which would be sent to London⁴⁸. The U.S. was subordinating relations with Romania to the more important issue: helping the British war effort.

In the first half of 1942 Romania had to engage more troops on the Eastern Front. Germany had suffered huge losses in the previous winter at Moscow and the Russian counteroffensive even threatened to tear the line apart. As a consequence, for the next offensive in the summer on 1942 the German High Command (O.K.H.) required the participation of greater allied forces. That was especially true in the south, where the main thrust would take place. For the attack on Stalingrad and the Caucasus Germany demanded the commitment of numerous Romanian divisions⁴⁹. By the time the American field agents and diplomats identified these new Romanian

⁴⁷ ANIC, *Ministerul Afacerilor Interne, Trial of Ion Antonescu, file 40010, vol. 8, p. 100, apud Dennis Deletant, op. cit., p. 91.*

⁴⁸ Paul D. Quinlan, *Ciocnire deasupra României: Politica anglo-americană față de România, 1938-1947* [Clash over Romania: Anglo-American policy towards Romania, 1938-1947], translated from English to Romanian by Gheorghe Onișoru, Iași, Fundația Culturală Română, 1995, p. 72.

⁴⁹ Basil Lidell Hart, *History of the Second World War*, London, Casell & Company, 1970, p. 247.

forces Romania had taken the step of declaring open war, alongside of Hungary in December 1942. It was a decision taken because of increasing German pressure, of course. Marshall Antonescu did not consider the U.S. an enemy; when the American charge, Webb Benton came to say goodbye to his friend Mihai Antonescu, the Romanian Foreign Minister made a remarkable statement by saying that “Romania will commit no aggression against the United States”,⁵⁰. The American response didn’t arrive immediately. The U.S. would declare war on Romania and the other German minor allies on the 2nd of June 1942.

ROMANIA AND THE LOCATION THE “SECOND FRONT”

Relations in the Allied camp were even from the onset affected in some way or another by the issue of the “second front”. The idea was to support the Red Army by opening a second front against the Germans, but where and when? It had to be somewhere in Western Europe, of course and it had to be an amphibious operation. In the beginning it seemed that there was a chance for a common position between American and British planers. At least as 1942 was concerned, it was imperative to draw German forces away from Russia, especially, after in the spring, their offensive was picking momentum. At that time, and this is true for 1943 as well, Stalin didn’t have any preferences; Any landing would suit him just fine as long as it accomplished the goal of forcing the Germans to relocate some of their divisions away from the Eastern Front. Roosevelt proved to be a fervent supporter for a landing as soon as possible to avoid the unsettling prospect of a separate German-soviet peace treaty. America had to make a move in 1942 to claim participation at the peace conference since at that time Britain and particularly Soviet Russia were carrying the war for the Allies. The first real talk about the second front took place with Molotov, during his visit in Washington in May 1942. Roosevelt took the opportunity to assure the Soviet Foreign Deputy that he intends to open a second front later that year. More so, in the common statement it is specified that the operation will be directed against Europe, even though the President was aware that the British side wanted to invade Axis North Africa⁵¹.

In fact for the first two year of cooperation, the U.S. War Department officials insisted on their British counterparts for an early attack against “fortress Europe”. For the American side the Soviets were bearing the brunt of the German war machine and they had to be helped soon or else Stalin would admit a peace with Hitler. So in 1942-1943 American planning services emphasized the need to support the Soviet war effort and the main way of doing that was to cross the English Channel as soon as possible⁵². But the British side had its own plans and from the beginning we have the

⁵⁰ Alexandru Cretzianu, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

⁵¹ Wilfried Loth, *The Division of the World, 1941-1955*, London, Routledge, 1988, p. 60.

⁵² Mark A. Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and*

so-called “the Great Strategic Debate”: the C.C.S. (Combined Chiefs of State) was witness to some strong arguments about where and when to attack the Germans. The British, Churchill most of all, wanted a flexible approach and an offensive against the enemy’s weakest link – Italy and the Mediterranean and then the Balkans. The American Chiefs of Staff, with George Marshall at their lead, supported a crushing blow in Northern France as soon as possible. At their very first meeting in Washington in the winter of 1941, Churchill scored an important victory over his friend, Roosevelt: in the common statement of the meeting we find the location of the next Allied target, North Africa:

“[...] In 1942, the methods of wearing down Germany’s resistance will be[...] ever increasing air bombardment by British and American forces [...] assistance to Russia’s offensive by all available means [...] (and operations) the main object (of which) will be gaining possession of the whole Northern African coast [...] It does not seem likely that in 1942 any large scale land offensive against Germany, except on the Russian front, will be possible [...] (but) in 1943, the way may be clear for a return to the continent across the Mediterranean, from Turkey into the Balkans, or by landings in Western Europe [...]”⁵³.

The fact that Churchill managed to squeeze in the Balkans as a potential new front for the Allies was an important accomplishment for him. This proved that, at least in the beginning, the British had the upper hand in this dispute thanks to their superior logistics and their greater experience. Later on however, this would change dramatically. Still, for the moment Roosevelt didn’t give up on the idea of helping Soviet Russia by means of a direct attack on “fortress Europe” that same year. Through two long telegrams to Churchill on March 7 and 9 he formulated his strategy:

“[...] I am becoming more and more interested in the establishment of this new front this summer, certainly for air and raids [...] And even if though losses will doubtless be great, such losses will be compensated by at least equal German losses and by compelling (the) Germans to divert large forces of all kinds from Russian fronts”⁵⁴.

Churchill resisted these advances and there were no Allied landings in France in 1942. But there was a moderate success in Tunisia and although the Axis forces there would be removed only after 6 months, in the spring of 1943, this meant that the Allied airpower could now hit Italy and Central Europe. But even as the German forces were still in Tunisia, in December 1942 the dispute was reheated. General Alan Brooke insisted that the Allies should continue on the “Mediterranean” path and

the U.S. strategy in World War II, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2000, p. 123.7

⁵³ Gordon A. Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack*, p. 9, *apud* Herbert Feis, *op.cit.*, pp 47-48.

⁵⁴ Francis L. Loewenheim, Harold D. Langley, Manfred Jonas (eds.), *Roosevelt and Churchill, Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, New York, E. P. Dutton&Co., Inc., 1975, pp. 184-190, *apud* Robert Dallek, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

should attack Italy in the summer. He thought that the conditions for an invasion of France were not met. It was necessary that the Germans suffer a series of crippling blows to soften their potential. On the other hand, Italy was vulnerable, both military and politically. A bombing campaign would sap its morale and a beachhead there would bring Allied bombers in range of Ploiesti, where the Axis oil reserves rested. Furthermore, with Italy eliminated, the Allies could attack the shipments in the Aegean and cut Germany's chrome supplies from Turkey⁵⁵.

After the defeat and the expulsion of the Axis forces in Northern Africa, the third Washington Conference, codename *Trident*, was held. The same Brooke continued to plea for taking the offensive into Sicily and then mainland Italy. Beyond the obvious gains – taking Italy out of the war, this course of action would enable the now huge Allied Air Force to engage Romanian oil targets with increased efficiency⁵⁶. *Trident*, which started on May 11 1943, masked for some time the decreasing influence the British had on Allied affairs. The decision was made to continue down the path wanted by Churchill and his staff: the next Allied target would be Italy. It seemed at first that this was a major British success⁵⁷. Yet again they managed to convince their partners of the justness of their reasoning. At a closer look we can see this was not the case; the whole of North Africa was indeed in Allied hands. This meant increased security for the shipping in the Atlantic and the losses during May 1943 were just 5% compared to March that same year. Overall the strategic initiative was firmly in Allied possession. Still the American build-up in Britain did not reach the intended parameters. In the Isles there were only 2 operational divisions. In Africa on the other hand, there were 9, plus 30 British ones. It was obvious that for the remainder of 1943 the Allies would have to act on the Mediterranean theatre of war, much to the disappointment of the Americans.

As for Romania, *Trident* marked the determination of the Allied commanders to bring the full might of the bombing campaign down on Ploiesti, the site of many of Romania's oil refineries. The decision to start this campaign as Admiral William D. Leahy, the Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief said, was part of a set of measures designed to soften the German resistance potential in preparation for *Overlord*, the landings in Normandy, which was set to take place in 1944⁵⁸.

After Italy fell, Churchill tried to convince the Americans that the best course of action was to prepare an expeditionary force for the Balkans. This time however Roosevelt declined with resolution. At the first Quebec Conference, codenamed

⁵⁵ Andrew Roberts, *Masters and Commanders: How Four Titans Won the War in the West, 1941-1945*, New York, Harper Collins, 2009, p. 303.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 367.

⁵⁷ Brian J. C. McKercher, *Transition of Power: Britain's Loss of Global Pre-Eminence to the United States, 1930-1945*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 324.

⁵⁸ Andrew Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

Quadrant, he was adamant that all of the Allied resources were to be poured into *Overlord*. By the end of this conference it became apparent that the balance of power in the Allied camp was shifting in favour of the Americans. The differences in the approach to war remained the key to understanding the relations between the two partners and at first the British were able to impose their views because they had the experience and the logistics. But by 1943 the increasingly greater U.S. financial and military contribution began to leave their mark. Britain had a long-standing military tradition stretching back to the Napoleonic age that was all about attrition warfare; the U.S. on the contrary, were still the adept of a Civil War style decisive hit to win the war in one blow. The fact that *Overlord* remained ironclad meant that America had the greater say in the alliance now⁵⁹.

Still, there were signs of cracks even in the American camp. By mid-1943 we can see some differences of opinion between the President and Marshall. Even before the meeting with Stalin in Teheran, Roosevelt told Marshall that the Soviets might accept cooperation in the Balkans if the Allies would commit enough troops there that the Germans would be forced to pull divisions away from Russia. Russian forces were just sixty miles away from the Polish border and just forty from Bessarabia so for Roosevelt the ideas seemed doable. Marshall however found it frightening; this was exactly what Churchill had been advocating for 2 years and he and the other American Chiefs of Staff had been fighting it all along. Marshall advised Roosevelt not to bring it up in Teheran since the British Prime-Minister would pick it up and present it to Stalin as a common Allied proposal⁶⁰. Which indeed happened; happily for Marshall, Stalin refused it bluntly – Eastern Europe would be liberated by the Red Army alone.

Some early conclusions are in order after this first round of Allied negotiations on the role of Eastern Europe in and after the war. Romania, and its neighbours for that matter, did not represent a priority for the U.S. or for Britain. Still, the British in particular could not ignore the fact that Romania was close to Turkey and Greece. So throughout 1942-1943 British diplomacy strived to ensure the existence of a “Balkan alternative” to *Overlord*. Although initially considered just a way of distracting the Germans away from Russia, this British proposal had bigger ambitions in store; it would turn into a full-fledged second front if the Americans would take the bait. They did not since American planners were suspicious of British interests to start with. The U.S. participation in the Second World War, they announced, was not to be in favour of British influence in Eastern Europe or anywhere. Marshall and his fellow Chiefs of Staff had no intention of bringing American troops in this little conflict of influence in

⁵⁹ Alan P. Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century: Of Friendship, Conflict, and the Rise and Decline of Superpowers*, 1995, New York, Routledge, p. 77.

⁶⁰ Lloyd C. Gardner, *Sfere de influență-împărțirea Europei între Marile Puteri, de la Munchen la Ialta* [Spheres of Influence. The Partition of Europe, from Munich to Yalta], translated from English to Romanian by Anca Angelescu-Boldor, Bucharest, Editura Elit, 1995, p. 222.

Eastern Mediterranean between the British and the Soviets. It had a long standing history stretching back to the tsar area and the Americans wanted nothing to do with it⁶¹.

POSTBELIC PLANNING

American planners started to analyze U.S. post-war security only at the end of 1943. Even then they emphasized the idea of acquiring forward air and naval bases to ensure the defence in depth of the American mainland. This was thought as the best defence against a new Pearl Harbor. At that point the American studies were quite lenient with Soviets demands in Eastern Europe. This would change in the following years, but generally speaking, until the end of 1944 there was no major opposition against giving the Soviet Union a white check in Eastern Europe⁶². In Washington it was considered that this appeasement would make Stalin feel safe and he would be willing to work together with the West in building the new order after the defeat of the Axis. It was imperative to make the Soviet dictator feel safe since all of the assessments revealed that the U.S.S.R. will become the greatest land power in the world at the end of the war. The Department of State regarded Romania and the whole of Eastern Europe only in connection with the Soviet Russia. As early as 1942, G-2, the U.S. Military Information Division, warned that the Soviet Union will be able to defeat Germany and will, most likely, communize the whole of Eastern Europe. American planners were not oblivious to the dangers presented by these prospects, but Russia's contribution was vital in defeating Germany. More so, Britain was undoubtedly on the decline, so it was imperative to convince the Soviet leaders to continue to cooperate after the war for the security of the world⁶³.

Both G-2 and J.S.S.C. (*Joint Strategic Survey Committee*), the last being formed by Roosevelt, considered Britain a second rate power, its influence being a thing of the past. Since the Army was insisting on securing Soviet help for the war with Japan after the defeat of Germany in Europe, J.S.S.C. proposed a list of measures for the relations with Moscow. Among those, the emphasize rested on "acceptance of the fact that after that defeat Russia will be in a military position to impose whatever territorial settlements it desires in Central Europe and the Balkans", and on the idea that "the great importance to the United States of Russia's full participation in the war against Japan after the defeat of Germany as essential to the prompt and crushing defeat of Japan at far less cost to the United States and Great

⁶¹ Mark A. Stoler, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁶² Melvyn P. Leffler, *National Security and US Foreign Policy* in Melvyn P. Leffler, David S. Painter (edit.), *Origins of the Cold War. An international history*, New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 24.

⁶³ Mark A. Stoler, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

Britain”⁶⁴. These conclusions were approved by the Chiefs of Staff and by the President himself and were the basis on which he conducted the negotiations at Yalta.

In the end, for Washington the future of Eastern Europe seemed sealed; the postwar world would be dominated by just two powers: the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Britain was on a down slope economically. Although J.S.S.C. and G-2 would say it openly a year after that, they delivered their conclusions as early as 1943. J.S.S.C. also warned at that time that any Allied military operation in Eastern Europe would only raise suspicions in Moscow and would pull the U.S. in the influence contest taking place there between the Soviets and the British. American military planners wanted from their diplomats to guarantee to the Soviets a free card in the affairs of Eastern Europe and even in the Balkans. Still some pressure groups, mostly ethnic, forced Roosevelt to take some actions the Soviets could only interpret as an American encroachment into their sphere of influence. Roosevelt thought that he should indeed recognize Soviet control (note that “control” didn’t mean that he would be allowed to install communist regimes in these areas), since the Soviet Union had to suffer the German aggression through Eastern Europe. But once Stalin would be assured he would feel safe and he would be swayed to work closely with Britain and America to make the new world a better place. He would relinquish the control he once had over Eastern Europe. That was the plan, but when Stalin took unilateral decisions about these areas, the President did not understand that it failed. American diplomacy was trapped somewhere between the desire to appease Moscow and the goal of integrating Eastern Europe in the new world order and organizations and it failed at both⁶⁵. When the more realistic Churchill reached stroke a bargain with Stalin, Roosevelt and the Department of State disapproved it stubbornly. This only made Stalin even more suspicious of a plot against the Soviet Union.

British views of this matter were changing also. It regarded the Eastern Europe-Balkan area with some interest, but it focused its attention of Greece and Turkey. Practically, any other country could be bargaining chips except these two. That didn’t mean that the Foreign Office did not recognize some importance for Romania. At Casablanca and other Allied Conferences it was the British side that wanted to include Romania both in military operations and different plans of reorganization after the war. As we pointed out, at the start of the war there were some British plans for the federalization of Eastern Europe. The idea behind this was that, after Germany’s inevitable defeat, there would be a power vacuum in this region. That proved to be disastrous at the end of World War I and Britain didn’t want to repeat the mistake. Three new federal actors, one in North, another in Centre and the third in

⁶⁴ JCS 506, “*Instructions concerning Duty as Military Observer at American-British-Soviet Conference,*” Sept. 18, 1943, CCS 337 (9-12-43), sec. 1, RG 218, NA, *apud*, Mark A. Stoler, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁶⁵ Wilfried Loth, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

South, would bring stability on the continent as they would be controlled by the Great Powers. Britain was ready to accept some kind of Soviet special interest in the Eastern⁶⁶. Admiral Roger Bellairs, part of the M.S.C. (Military Subcommittee) wrote the first memorandum about this matter and he circulated it at the Foreign Office at the end of 1942. The document supported Roosevelt's idea for "the four policemen" that would organize the world after the war; for Eastern Europe it reverted back to an older Foreign Office idea to create federations of small states that would work with the U.S.S.R. and Britain and that would act as "forts against German penetration". More importantly, there is phrase in the document that states that the "Primary responsibility for Europe would fall on Britain and the U.S.S.R for geographical reasons and 'by virtue of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty, which...however, need not preclude arrangements being made by Great Britain in Western Europe and by the Soviet Government in Eastern Europe in order to control the foreign policies of the local Powers". The War Cabinet, through Eden, approved of this plan on November 27 1942 as "the present basis of our foreign policy"⁶⁷.

The analysis on the Soviet demands at the end of 1941 made British analysts very sceptical about Moscow's good will and intentions. If in London there were the tendencies to accept with some compensation the idea of Soviet special interests in Eastern Europe, the British agents and diplomats in the field disapproved it. Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr, the British ambassador in Moscow, told Eden in his report that the Russians are not to be trusted and they will not accept any Western intrusion in their influence zone. Kerr thought that the Soviets were interested in securing their Western border and they would push it westwards as much as they are allowed to⁶⁸. The same conclusion was reached by the head of the S.O.E. (*Special Operations Executive*) in Moscow, General Hill. He put forward a memorandum about Russia's intentions after the war in which he specified that:

"1) General. Russia will insist on incorporating Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Bessarabia. No compromise will be accepted with these countries. Post-war Russia will need almost anything it can get its hands on in order to rebuild its devastated territories [...] Reconstruction will be their main goal and it could take some time. For now they show no sign of wanting to install communist regimes in Poland or Germany"⁶⁹.

Of course, the General's opinion was not the only one; the clashes between the Foreign Office and the S.O.E. are documented. What is certain is that at the time of

⁶⁶ Marian Zidaru, *Relații economice și politice româno-britanice, 1939-1947* [Romanian-British political and economical relations], Bucharest, Universul Științific, 2005, p. 222.

⁶⁷ Julian Lewis, *Changing direction: British Military Planning for Post-war Strategic Defence, 1942-1947*, Portland, Frank Cass Publishers, 2003, pp. 36-37.

⁶⁸ Marian Zidaru, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

⁶⁹ Mihai Retegan, *Din arhivele britanice: Preludiu la acordul de procentaj* [From British archives: prelude to the percentage agreement], in *Magazin Istoric*, nr. 4 (505), aprilie 2009, p. 42.

this document – November 1943 – there was the common perception that the U.S.S.R. wanted to ensure its security and nothing else. Stalin was thought to be shrewd enough to understand his position and negotiate “Great Powers” style his own influence zone after the war was won. Still, General Hill warned:

“[...] In my opinion, no matter how hard Russia will bleed until it obtains victory, it will be there at the conference table whether we like it or not, relying on a huge and experienced land army, on well equipped and trained tank forces and on a considerable air power. Soviet Russia is the only <European> power ready and willing to financially support a permanent army. Those who think (like America’s representatives) that at the end of the war the Russian generals will take action in to their own hands and force a clash with the government and will topple the current Soviet leadership are living in a fantasy land. The Red Army would never do that. What Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Turkey think about the Soviet military domination does not matter. What will Britain and the U.S. do at the Peace Conference and afterwards does and that is the only factor that will determine how the Soviet army will be used by the regime”⁷⁰.

American planners had, by now, reached similar glooming conclusions. Admiral Leahy thought by 1944 that the Soviet power had grown at a phenomenal rate, but he still nurtured hopes for cooperation⁷¹. At the same time, in a J.C.S. report in that same summer, it was told that quite clearly after the war the Soviet Union would dominate Central Europe and Nord-East Asia⁷².

The British also circulated a lot of documents in 1944 mapping the future Soviet moves in diplomacy and power projection. In march 1944 the *Foreign Office Research Department* theorized that Soviet Russia’s “desire to prevent any risk of a revival of the German menace in Central and South-Eastern Europe would lead to the exertion of powerful influence upon Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia”⁷³. Of all of these countries the British officials realized they could stop this process only in the latter. This assessment came after the notorious conflict between Eden and Sargent on how to react to increasing Soviet pressure in Eastern Europe. Sargent had analyzed the reports from all over the region as well as from the South-Eastern Department which was the Foreign Office’s structure tasked with supplying event analysis and political prognosis in that area. The head of the Department, Howard, had suggested that an Anglo-American military presence was required to counter Soviet hegemonic tendencies. E. M. Rose, another key figure of the Department, claimed that the Soviets will use the abundant ethnic problems

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

⁷¹ Melvyn P. Leffler, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁷² Emanuel Plopeanu, *Politica Statelor Unite față de Turcia între anii 1943 și 1952* [U.S. policy towards Turkey between 1943 and 1952], Iași, Institutul European, 2009, p. 108.

⁷³ Julian Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

present there in order to facilitate their penetration⁷⁴.

The issue of the second front was finally resolved at the Teheran Conference. Roosevelt brought the problem to the table suggesting that an Allied landing in the Balkans could link up with Tito's partisans and help the Soviets break the German line. Churchill was enthusiastic. This was his brain-child - an Allied offensive sweeping through Bulgaria and Romania would safeguard British interests in Greece and would put them at a better bargaining position at the peace conference. Stalin was opposed however and he was well prepared to block off any attempt. He claimed that this plan would only serve to divert resources and men away from the main strike in France. His position is shockingly similar to the one J.C.S. supported before the conference. Roosevelt had no option but to endorse it by the end of that meeting. *Overlord* was on as the main Allied push for 1944⁷⁵.

CONCLUSIONS

It is fair to say that Romania played only a minor role in the big scheme of things that was the Great Alliance, as Churchill called it, between Soviet Russia, Great Britain and the United States. But these smaller matters tend to mask bigger strategic conflicts and the case of Romania is no exception. Bucharest found itself in the middle of a wider struggle for dominance that stretched from the Baltic to the Adriatic between Britain and the U.S.S.R. American interests were limited in the area at the beginning years, but as the war progressed it became obvious that American diplomacy will play an important role in the shaping of the post-war world. In the course of the Second World War Eastern Europe was included in a series of plans by both the British and the Americans but only the former truly realised the danger that the Soviet Union posed for a united Europe.

It could be argued that the lack of commitment on the part of Washington allowed the Soviets to extend their influence on the whole region. On a more thorough analysis this idea becomes less clear; while America seemed determined to follow the "Big Four policemen" concept for post-war security (especially under President Roosevelt), it didn't however ignored the obvious fight for influence in Eastern Europe between Britain and the U.S.S.R. American policy-makers just assumed Stalin will be reasonable and agree to a certain relaxation and democratisation of the area after the war's end. Here lie the seeds of the emerging Cold War when it became clear that this was not the case, and Romania was on the forefront during the next years after 1947.

⁷⁴ Marian Zidaru, *op.cit.*, p. 224.

⁷⁵ David Stone, *War Summits: The meetings that shaped World War II and the Postwar World*, Washington, Potomac Books, 2005, p. 120.