

## THE LEGIONARY REBELLION IN THE DIPLOMATIC REPORTS OF IVAN MILECZ

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**Abstract:** *The study of diplomatic records revealed new details concerning the Nazi Reich's satellites in the setting of early 1941 Central Europe. It is well known today that Hitler played a decisive role in the conflict between Ion Antonescu and the Legionary Movement. However, new findings concerning the events in Romania in January 1941 continue to provide conflicting results. This investigation focuses on the reports of Ivan Milecz, the Slovak diplomat accredited in Bucharest, which were not known to previous historians. The problem of sources poses a major challenge to historians in their efforts to reconstruct the past. Although he was not well informed, Milecz managed to relay details about the legionary rebellion in Bucharest. These reports had a double significance for Bratislava. They were not merely information but political suggestions for the top power struggle in Slovakia. Their study contributes to a more complete picture of the nature of the January 1941 events for both Romania and Slovakia.*

**Keywords:** *Ivan Milecz, Legionary Rebellion, diplomatic reports, Slovakia, Hitler.*

**Rezumat:** *Rebeliunea legionară în rapoartele diplomatice ale lui Ivan Milecz. Studiul rapoartelor diplomatice dezvăluie noi ipostaze în care se găseau sateliții Reich-ului nazist, creionând mai precis tabloul general al Europei centrale la începutul anului 1941. Istoricii au demonstrat că, în conflictul dintre Ion Antonescu și Mișcarea Legionară, cuvântul decisiv i-a aparținut lui Hitler, care a înclinat balanța în favoarea fostului general, apoi mareșal al României. Noi dezvăluiri asupra evenimentelor petrecute în România în ianuarie 1941 continuă să ofere însă informații contradictorii. Investigația autorului se centrează pe rapoartele diplomatului slovac acreditat la București, Ivan Milecz, necunoscute până în prezent de către istoricii care au analizat problema. Deși nu era bine informat, diplomatul a reușit să trimită superiorilor săi detalii ale rebeliunii legionare de la București, cu o dublă*

*semnificație pentru Bratislava. Acestea nu aveau doar rolul de informare, ci au devenit sugestii politice pentru lupta care se dădea la vârful puterii din Slovacia. Analiza rapoartelor ajută la conturarea unei imagini mai complete asupra naturii evenimentelor din ianuarie 1941.*

## INTRODUCTION

Small states that came under German domination in the early years of World War II suffered from German interference in domestic politics, even to the point of internal armed conflict. The leaders of these states had to accept collaboration with the Germans and tolerate their repressive policies. However, a particular political practice cannot be generalised. The cases of Romania and Slovakia have many similarities, but also several differences. The events that bloodied Romania in January 1941 are very well known<sup>1</sup>. They were highlighted in both internal documents and diplomatic reports. However, until today, the information sent by Ivan Milecz, the Minister Plenipotentiary of Slovakia in Bucharest has not been brought to the forefront. These pieces of information are kept in the custody of the National Archives in Bratislava and contain a series of notes and reports issued between January 22nd and February 6th, 1941. They were intended to decipher the sources of the struggle for power in Romania for the Foreign Office in Bratislava. The political scene in Bratislava was divided between two opposing parties. The struggle for power between Ion Antonescu and the Legionary Movement echoed loudly in Slovakia. Given that the Slovak political scene was also divided into two antagonistic parties, the events in Romania proved suggestive for the Slovaks. President Jozef Tiso and conservative groups opposed the Hlinka Guard, a radical organisation close to Nazi circles. On the one hand, President Jozef Tiso was in favour of a pragmatic collaboration with Germany, which would have allowed him as much independence as possible. On the other hand, Prime Minister Vojtech Tuka and the Hlinka Guard wanted to integrate more deeply into the sphere of influence of National Socialism.

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<sup>1</sup> Dana Honciuc-Beldiman, *Statul Național Legionar. Septembrie 1940 – ianuarie 1941. Cadrul legislativ* [Legionary National State. September 1940 – January 1941. Legislative Framework], Bucharest, The National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, 2005; Luiza Lazăr, *Ion Antonescu și Mișcarea Legionară – parteneri sau adversari la conducerea statului național legionar, 14 septembrie 1940 – 21 ianuarie 1941* [Ion Antonescu and the Legionary Movement – Partners or Opponents to the Leadership of National Legionary State], in “Orizonturi istoriografice”, Vol. I, No. 1, Iași, Demiurg Publishing House, 2010, p. 190 – 209.

Slovakia was born on March 14th, 1939, following the collapse of Czechoslovakia. Contradictions between President Jozef Tiso and the Hlinka Guard were not so visible from the beginning. The two political camps collaborated to gain power in Slovakia and supported the country's independence. The hostility between Tiso and the Hlinka Guard grew as time went on. Tensions reached a critical point in January 1941 when Alexander Mach, commander of the Hlinka Guard and the country's Minister of the Interior, resigned. The president relied on the vast majority of members of the Slovak People's Party, the Catholic intelligentsia and clergy, and the military to sustain the nationalist and conservative spirit in the country. Vojtech Tuka and the Hlinka Guard relied on the paramilitary organisations within the Party and the administration, and the organisation of the Germans in Slovakia. The various radical structures had entered the party and the administration, forming the backbone of the state apparatus. A direct confrontation between the two diverging camps would have been much more destructive for the Slovak state. Slovak historiography was defined after 1992 when Slovak researchers studied the political regime of Jozef Tiso in various aspects.<sup>2</sup> Slovak fascism has not caught the attention of Western historians as much, given its "Cinderella" status in the studies of fascism. The Hlinka Guard, the Nazi-like political organisation, has become even less studied than Tiso's regime.<sup>3</sup>

In its turn, Romania was in a similar situation. The National Legionary State established on September 14th, 1940, was a compromise between General Ion Antonescu and the Legionary Movement led by Horia Sima. General Antonescu relied on the military circles, the administrative and police apparatus, and the

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<sup>2</sup> For Slovakia, see Peter Sokolovič, *Hlinkova Garda, 1938-1945* [Hlinka Guard, 1938-1945], Bratislava, Ústav Pamäti Národa, 2009; Róbert Letz, *Slovenské dejiny*, Vol. V, 1938-1945 [Slovak History. Vol. V, 1938-1945], Bratislava, Literárne informačné centrum, 2012; Svätoslav Mathé, *Prvá Slovenská Republika. Politologický náčrt* [The first Slovak Republic. Political Science Sketch], Bratislava, Post Scriptum, 2010; Ivan Kamenec, *The Slovak State, 1939-1945*, in Mikulaš Teich, Dušan Kováč, Martin D. Brown (Eds.), *Slovakia in History*, Cambridge University Press, 2011; Anton Hruboň, *Fašizmus náš slovenský* [Our Slovakian Fascism], Bratislava, Vydavateľstvo Premedia, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Jelinek Yeshuayu, *The Parish Republic: Hlinka's Slovak People's Party 1939-1945*, Boulder 1976; Thomas Anselm Lorman, *The Christian Social Roots of Jozef Tiso's*, in Rebecca Haynes Martin Rady (eds.), *In the Shadow of Hitler. Personalities of the Right in Central and Eastern Europe*, London, New York, I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011; James Mace Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator. Josef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia*, Ithaca, London, Cornell University Press, 2013.

state political services, also capitalising on the trust of the political parties, although the latter remained formally outside the law. The Legionary Movement was supported by the nationalist intelligentsia, the lower ranks in the army and the police, the young people in the administrative apparatus, and also the compromised elements from the periphery of society. The “marriage” between the General and the Legion was under the patronage of the German Reich and its representatives in Romania. The Wehrmacht and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported Antonescu, while the NSDAP, the Gestapo and its secret services were on the side of the legionnaires. The Antonescu-Sima dualism survived as long as the two parties needed to prepare to strike the decisive blow against each other. The contradictions between the two leaders, as well as between the interest groups that gravitated around them, were irremediable from the beginning and reached their peak in January 1941. As far as the historiography on Romanian fascism is concerned, the researchers have been more inclined to deal with the Legionary Movement in the interwar years until the events of January 1941. The period of National-Legionary rule has benefited from analysis, but attention has been focused on Ion Antonescu’s regime, with the Legion led by Horia Sima being considered only as a secondary partner in government.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, Romanian historiography has neglected the issue of Romanian-Slovak bilateral relations. These are mentioned only in a general context, without any analysis that would make them specific, but the researcher Jana Bauerová has dealt with these relations in various aspects, using Slovak archival sources, mainly the diplomatic reports of Ivan Milecz, the Slovak diplomat accredited in Bucharest.<sup>5</sup>

This is why the comparison between Ion Antonescu and Jozef Tiso, on the one hand, respectively the Legionary Movement and the Hlinka Guard, on the other, give Milecz’s reports a particular relevance. Our investigation seeks to highlight how the Slovak diplomat managed to pass on the information, without placing himself in one of the two opposing camps. Without revealing his

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<sup>4</sup> For Romania, see Armin Heinen, *Legiunea “Arhanghelul Mihail”. Mișcare socială și organizație politică. O contribuție la problema fascismului internațional* [Archangel Michael Legion. Social Movement and Political Organization. A Contribution to the Problem of International Fascism], Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 1999; Hans Rogger; Eugen Weber (coord.), *Dreapta europeană. Profil istoric* [European Right. A Historical Profile], Bucharest, Minerva Publishing House, 1995; Dennis Deletant, *Aliatul uitat la lui Hitler. Ion Antonescu și regimul său. 1940-1944* [Hitler’s Forgotten Ally. Antonescu and his regime], Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Jana Bauerová, *Slovensko a Rumunsko v rokoch 1939-1944* [Slovakia and Romania between 1939-1944], Filozofická Fakulta Trnavskej Univerzity v Trnave, 2014.

orientation to either political side, Milecz found himself in a delicate situation. Coming from the old Czechoslovak diplomacy, the Slovak diplomat was a partisan of President Tiso but directly subordinated to Vojtech Tuka, the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Consequently, he did not know on whose side the balance could tip, but he understood that Germany's role could be decisive both in Bucharest and in Bratislava.<sup>6</sup> This study details the diplomatic reports signed by Ivan Milecz without correcting the errors, which have been mentioned in the footnotes to show the exact position of the Slovak diplomat during those complicated days. The reports have been condensed for a clear presentation of ideas, avoiding repetitions, and have solely used the comparison approach to highlight the similarities between the political systems of Romania and Slovakia.

### IVAN MILECZ AND THE JANUARY 1941 POLITICAL-MILITARY STRUGGLE IN ROMANIA

The outbreak of the legionary rebellion surprised the Slovak diplomat in quasi-isolation. His reports show how unclear the situation was and how little reliable information was disseminated in Romania at the time. He returned with further clarifications in each informative note, despite not having accurate data. Milecz strove to create the impression that he had acquired information from government sources close to General Antonescu, but he did not name them. In the confusion of those days, he managed to have a meeting with Alexandru Cretzianu, at the Romanian Foreign Office, on the afternoon of January 22nd. The Romanian official informed him that Antonescu had been dissatisfied with the legionnaires for a long time and was preparing to eliminate "anarchic elements" from the structures of leadership. Although the Slovak diplomat had no news about the course of events, he assumed correctly that the final decision would be taken by Hitler. Despite not knowing anything about Hitler and Antonescu's Berchtesgaden talks, he assumed that the meeting would be decisive in the Bucharest conflict.<sup>7</sup>

Only after the fighting stopped did Milecz manage to send several reports and informative notes on the situation in Romania. In the absence of definite information, he had to come back with additions and suppletion. Thus, on January

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<sup>6</sup> Augustín Maťovčík, *Slovenský biografický slovník. Zväzok IV* [Slovak Biographical Dictionary, Vol. IV], M–Q, Martin, Matica Slovenská, 1990, p. 185.

<sup>7</sup> Slovenský Národný Archív, Bratislava, Ministerstvo Zahraničných vecí 1939–1945 [Slovak National Archive, Bratislava, Ministry of Foreign Affairs] (hereinafter SNA MZV), škat. 505 B, doc. 112/1941.

23rd, Milecz described the first details in his report, marked “secret”. He noted that the beginning of the “second legionary revolution”<sup>8</sup> took place in the afternoon of the 21<sup>st</sup>. His additions to the document submitted the day before were not likely to clarify things, testifying to the fact that he was still poorly informed.<sup>9</sup> He was attempting to validate the claim that the unpopular economic measures implemented by the legionnaire commissaries were among the causes of the conflict between Ion Antonescu and the Legionary Movement. The assassination of Major Döring and Antonescu’s decision to replace the legionary ministers, led by General Constantin Petrovicescu, who was replaced by General Dumitru Popescu<sup>10</sup>, did not escape him either. It was the first document in which he labelled the events as anarchic and warned that the legionnaires indulged in murder and destruction, going as far as threatening foreign private property. He announced that the legionnaires refused to hand over the occupied buildings, such as the headquarters in Rome Street or the Capital Police Prefecture, although they were summoned by Antonescu to comply. Since during those days, no other important publication could appear except the legionary press, Milecz used manifestos or pro-legionary newspapers to collect information. Various sources reported that, during the days of the rebellion, the newspapers did not appear regularly, except for the legionary ones, which published truncated information containing only the Legion’s point of view.<sup>11</sup> Even General Antonescu’s January 21<sup>st</sup> Appeal was never published. Thus, Milecz had a difficult time finding information for himself. He noted that the assassination of Major Döring was attributed to the Jews and the British Intelligence Service using a Greek agent.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This opinion was correlated with the events of September 3-4, 1940, described by legionnaires as a revolution.

<sup>9</sup> In reality, events took a turn for the worse following the radio broadcast of the Minister of Labour, Vasile Iasinschi’s speech on January 19. See Radu Florian Bruja, *Extrema dreaptă în Bucovina* [Far Right in Bukovina], Târgoviște, Cetatea de Scaun Publishing House, 2012, p. 374.

<sup>10</sup> The assassination of the German major was the pretext for replacing Constantin Petrovicescu with general Dumitru Popescu, the military commander of the Capital, an active general, unsympathetic of the Legion. Ottmar Trașcă, Ana-Maria Stan, *Rebeliunea legionară în arhive străine (germane, maghiare, franceze)* [Legionary Rebellion in Foreign Archives. (German, Hungarian, French)], Bucharest, Albatros Publishing House, 2002, doc. 25, p. 227.

<sup>11</sup> Ioan Hudiță, *Jurnal politic (7 septembrie 1940 – 8 februarie 1941)* [Political Journal (September 7, 1940 – February 6, 1941)], introductory study and notes by Dan Berindei, Iași, European Institute, 2000, p.235.

<sup>12</sup> The action of Dimissorialetri Sarandos, a Greek infiltrated by the British secret service,

Milecz understood that the army's intervention had ended the legionary resistance, but only after Horia Sima sent a clear message of cessation of hostilities on the morning of January 23rd.<sup>13</sup> The Slovak diplomat stated, rather subtly, that external forces who wanted to concentrate Romania's entire leadership in the hands of a single person were behind the power struggles. He reaffirmed the idea that the Berchtesgaden meeting between Hitler and Antonescu could be the key to the outcome of the struggle in Romania.<sup>14</sup>

One day later, on January 24th, Milecz called again with a briefing, citing General Antonescu's Appeal to the country and Horia Sima's cease-fire order, emphasizing again that the general relied on the friendship and alliance of Germany and Italy and that Romania fitted into their policy. Through these texts, he showed that the "legionary revolution" had ended in accord with Germany's wishes. Milecz commented that Antonescu proposed the creation of a new legionary movement, led by the general himself, to avoid further manifestations that would take the country to the brink of anarchy.<sup>15</sup>

In the following days, he delivered further information to Bratislava, enclosing exact details on the nature of the events. Milecz considered, on January 25th, that the government reconfiguration imposed by Antonescu led to the outset of the power struggle. This started with a peaceful demonstration on January 19th, in Bucharest, against the change of General Petrovicescu and Alexandru Ghica, the head of police, from office. Antonescu justified the change by claiming that the two had failed to ensure internal order and peace and were supposedly responsible for the assassination of the German major. At this point, he clarified that the violence began throughout the country on January 21st, with legionnaires

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who killed Helmut Döring, the head of the Transport Department of the German Military Mission in Romania, has remained unsettled until today. Ottmar Trașcă, Ana-Maria Stan, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>13</sup> Although Horia Sima issued an "Order to all legionnaires" on the morning of January 23 to cease resistance, fighting continued throughout the day. See A. Simion, *Regimul politic din România în perioada septembrie 1940 - ianuarie 1941* [The Political Regime in Romania between September 1940-January 1941], Cluj-Napoca, Dacia Publishing House, 1976, p. 268.

<sup>14</sup> SNA MZV, șkat. 505 B, doc. 119/41.

<sup>15</sup> SNA MVZ, șkat. 505 B, doc. 134/41. Joachim von Ribbentrop made the suggestion which was published in one of General Antonescu's *Addresses* to the Country. Gh. Buzatu, *Mareșalul Antonescu în fața Istoriei*, Documente, mărturii și comentarii editate în colaborare cu Stela Cheptea, V. F. Dobrinescu, I. Saizu [Marshal Antonescu in Front of History. Documents, Testimonials, Comments edited in collaboration with Stela Cheptea, V. F. Dobrinescu, I. Saizu], vol. 1, Iași, 1990, p. 191.

occupying numerous institutions and Prefecture headquarters and the struggle for power was accompanied by robberies and murders. Milecz did not possess details about what had happened on Romanian territory, merely noting that the legionnaires had taken control of the centre and some suburbs of the capital city. The diplomat mentioned in the same document the general's failed attempt to negotiate with the leadership of the Legion, which prompted the army to intervene and calm the situation, while the blame was placed entirely on Horia Sima, General Petrovicescu and Al. Ghica.<sup>16</sup>

### FROM 'LEGIONARY REVOLUTION' TO 'LEGIONARY REBELLION'

On January 26th, the Slovak diplomat sent back home the most extensive report on the events, which he further defined as the "Legionary revolution". He also attached a translation of General Antonescu's January 25th manifesto concluding that the army's sacrifice and the general's efforts to restore order were appreciated in Berlin.<sup>17</sup> The Slovak diplomat considered the manifesto very important and said of Antonescu that he was a determined and very honest man, who always spoke the truth. From this report, he drew some conclusions about the events. The "Revolution" was the first internal battle that Antonescu was forced to fight. Milecz concluded that the legionary revolution was compromised and defeated from the beginning precisely because of its anarchic nature. He mentioned those who were allegedly responsible for the situation thus created and arrested. Nicolae Malaxa, the affluent owner of some metallurgical and armament factories, a former collaborator of King Carol, who supported the legionnaires with money and offered them the house on Alexandru Alley, was at the top of the list.<sup>18</sup> Milecz then revealed a series of documents that compromised the

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<sup>16</sup> A summary of the documents can be found in Jana Bauerová, *op. cit.*, p. 86-87.

<sup>17</sup> General Erik Hansen, commander of the German Military Mission in Romania, supported Antonescu before von Ribbentrop and Hitler and acted to liquidate the rebellion. He detailed his position to Soviet investigators after the war. See *Erik Hansen își amintește* [Erik Hansen remembers], Bragadiru, Miidecărți Publishing House, 2019, p. 42-45.

<sup>18</sup> His son claims that the building on Alexandru Alley was allegedly occupied abusively by the legionnaires on January 21 because it had a good view of the entire neighborhood. The army fired on the house and managed to drive out the rebels, while Nicolae Malaxa was arrested. Marian Conovici, Silvia Iliescu, Octavian Silivestru, *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul. Mișcarea Legionară în documente de istorie orală* [The Country, the Legion, the Captain. Legionary Movement in Oral History Documents], Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2008, p. 265-266.



Legionary Movement and Horia Sima personally. He concluded that the outcome of the rebellion was decided beforehand, following the meeting between Hitler and Antonescu. In this report, he also announced that Sima had been arrested and that Antonescu had established a military dictatorship.<sup>19</sup>

To paint a more accurate picture of the same political context in Slovakia, the diplomat insisted that Hitler had determined the power struggle in Romania. The legionary rebellion's example, with emphasis on murders and violence in the latest reports, and Antonescu's harsh measures against the rebels could also serve as illustrative examples for the radicals in Slovakia, who were planning a political coup against President Tiso. Hitler had supported moderate politicians in both countries, according to Milecz, who could ensure internal order and the smooth running of the economy. The Romanian precedent had resonated throughout Slovakia, and leaders such as Tuka or Alexander Mach, the head of the Hlinka Guard, were in the position of Horia Sima, fearful that a firm attitude against Tiso would compromise them in Berlin.<sup>20</sup> The Slovak press also picked up the echo of the legionary rebellion in Romania. The "Slovák" gazette, close to President Tiso's circles, published lengthy details of the events. Titles such as *Rozkaz generala Antonescu: V Rumunsku sa musí obnoviť pokoj a poriadok* ('General Antonescu's order: Order and peace must be restored in Romania') from January 23rd or *V Rumunsku je pokoj* ('There is peace in Romania') from January 25th were meant to calm down the tense moods from Slovakia.<sup>21</sup> Following the events in Bucharest, even the most radical members of the Hlinka Guard concluded, without blaming Ion Antonescu or the Romanian legionnaires, that the premises of the conflict in Romania had to be analysed and that the Slovaks should thereupon prevent them. To avoid the fate of the Legionary Movement, the Hlinka Guard conformed to Tiso's authority, realizing that they did not enjoy support in Berlin.<sup>22</sup>

For that matter, Milecz reported that Romania simply faced a change of government, not a change of regime. He appreciated that calm and quietude were imposed over the entire country. The soldiers who replaced the legionnaires were the guarantee of internal order. On the other hand, there was no change in foreign policy.<sup>23</sup> Although it is obvious that the Slovak diplomat understood that the

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<sup>19</sup> The rumor of the arrest of the legionary leaders circulated in Romania in those days. SNA MZV, škat. 505 B, doc. 144/41.

<sup>20</sup> Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe [Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs] (hereinafter AMAE), Fund 71 Slovakia, vol. 11, f. 200.

<sup>21</sup> Jana Bauerová, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>22</sup> AMAE, Fund 71 Slovakia, vol. 11, f. 200-203.

<sup>23</sup> Jana Bauerová, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

outcome of the events in Bucharest was also a signal for Slovakia, where Tiso managed to secure the trust of Berlin at the expense of the Hlinka Guard, he refrained from any comparison with what had happened in Romania.

The report on January 28th detailed the appointment of the new government and the internal political situation. The Slovak diplomat sent the list of the new cabinet – the ministers and secretaries of state – under the presidency of Ion Antonescu, who was also ad-interim of the Foreign Office. Upon the occasion, Milecz underlined that it was not a party government, but one that sought to bring calm and discipline to internal political life and that this government did not change anything to the country's external orientation. It was only in this report that he used for the first time the term 'rebels' for the legionnaires and mentioned that their entire leadership had fled across the border. At the same time, he gave the first details about the confiscations of weapons and ammunition from the legionnaires carried out by the military authorities.<sup>24</sup> The next day he announced a preliminary assessment of the "legionary revolution", similar to the documents he sent to Bratislava starting on January 23rd. He noted that 370 people were killed and 444 were injured in Bucharest alone. This preliminary assessment also reported that 14 soldiers were killed and 46 wounded in the battles with the legionnaires. He also mentioned 32 deaths outside Bucharest.<sup>25</sup> He further talked about the amounts of money and goods confiscated and reminded of the previous notes, with additions, mentioning that the list of goods consisted of lei, marks, francs, dinars, leva, American dollars, sums owned by the legionary quaestor Ilie Stângă.<sup>26</sup>

Meticulously, Milecz continued to provide information about the rebellion and its aftermath. A second, much larger assessment was sent on January 31st. Milecz assured that the entire country was calm, although still concerned despite

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<sup>24</sup> He mentioned the sum of 34 million lei found on legionnaire Stoicescu. SNA MZV, škat. 505 B, doc. 152/41.

<sup>25</sup> A statistic by the Ministry of the Interior came up with the following figures: 261 dead (120 of them were Jews) and 377 wounded. Ilarion Țiu, *Mișcarea Legionară după Corneliu Codreanu*, vol. II, *Regimul Antonescu (ianuarie 1941 – august 1944)* [The Legionary Movement after Corneliu Codreanu, vol II, Antonescu's Regime (January 1941 – August 1944)], Bucharest, Vreimea Publishing House, 2007, p. 36.

<sup>26</sup> SNA MVZ, škat. 505 B, doc. 159/41. Police Quaestor Ilie Stângă had commissioned Colonel Ștefan Zăvoianu to form the team that arrested some of the Carlist ministers in the fall of 1940. Because of his actions, Ilie Stângă came to the attention of General Antonescu, who had reasons to arrest him after the rebellion. Ottmar Trașcă, Ana-Maria Stan, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

reports about the arrests of legionnaires and the confiscation of weapons. To be more convincing, he mentioned the devastations committed by legionnaires in Dudești Street.<sup>27</sup> Without indicating his source, Milecz stated that he was received at the Romanian Foreign Office, where he was informed about the new realities in Romania. There he was notified of the acts of violence and cruelty committed during the days of the rebellion, labelled as terrorist acts. Milecz also mentioned other crimes perpetrated by the legionnaires during their government, reminding of the cases of Iorga and Madgearu or the assassinations at Jilava, from November 1940. He remained nonetheless assured that there had been no change in the country's foreign policy and that the army remained loyal to Antonescu. He concluded that in Berlin Antonescu was the single viable option because he wanted order in the country. At the same time, he believed that economic relations were the most important issue in Berlin's eyes.<sup>28</sup> Since the Hlinka Guard would soon take a step back, the details provided by Milecz are not insignificant. As in the case of Slovakia, the diplomat placed economic issues at the forefront of relations with Germany.

Milecz supported President Tiso's cause, but could not reveal his options to Vojtech Tuka. The numerous details, albeit many erroneous, and the return to the same conclusion in almost every document suggest that his reports were more than mere briefing notes. Milecz favoured his point of view on the matter, which was motivated by the understanding that the political decision would ultimately be made in Berlin. And the denouement, followed in detail until February, presented Antonescu as Berlin's option.

Ivan Milecz continued to provide information about the consequences of the rebellion. He dispatched a new report on the internal political conditions in Romania on February 3rd. He showed that the country's peace and calm were restored, but the situation remained confusing. Police and gendarmerie patrols were on the streets to maintain order and peace. He had noticed the three police cordons that secured the University area in the afternoon of February 2<sup>nd</sup>. He pointed out that dozens of people were arrested and numerous weapons and ammunition were confiscated as a result of the searches carried out on January 31st and February 1st.<sup>29</sup> Milecz even spoke about the execution of three people

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<sup>27</sup> See details in Jean Ancel, *Contribuții la istoria României, Problema evreiască*, vol 1, *Partea întâi, 1933-1944* [Contributions to the Romanian History. The Jewish Question], Bucharest, Hasefer Publishing House, 2001, p. 407-436.

<sup>28</sup> SNA MZV, șkat. 505 B, doc. 336/41.

<sup>29</sup> The new German minister in Bucharest, Manfred von Killinger, warned Berlin that Ion

caught with weapons that they had refused to hand over on the authorities' order.<sup>30</sup> On February 6th, he returned with revised figures for the dead and injured, estimating 144 Jews, 118 of whom were victims of the Legionnaires.<sup>31</sup> He resumed the same day with a final concise report on the outbreak of the events of January 20th, discussing Antonescu's accusations against Ghica and Petrovicescu, the two legionnaires dismissed because they could not ensure internal order. Milecz described the beginning of the legionary demonstration on the evening of January 20th, organized by Viorel Trifa and Dumitru Groza, emphasizing how peaceful it was initially. The legionnaires then took over the headquarters of the Police Prefecture and the Telephones' Palace. Radu Mironovici refused to hand over the occupied institutions the next day and armed the legionnaires. Antonescu allegedly tried to negotiate through the military and the gendarmerie. He then recalled the legionnaires Roșca and Stănicel,<sup>32</sup> who occupied the headquarters in Rome Street and the increased tensions followed by the opening of fire. To prevent bloodshed, Antonescu supposedly gave an ultimatum, valid for 12 hours, until January 22nd. He then described the massacres on Văcărești and Dudești streets. He also recalled the destruction caused in those days when the precise number of participants and victims remained unknown.<sup>33</sup>

The events in Romania echoed loudly in Slovakia, and the way the conflict was resolved was a convincing example. Antonescu's heavy blow to the Legionary Movement was an example of what could have happened in Slovakia if the Hlinka Guard had opted for open conflict with President Tiso. Vojtech Tuka and Alexander Mach were warned that the Romanian example stood as proof that the Nazi Reich required order in Europe and was not tolerant of anarchic manifestations of the imposition of the National Socialist ideology. The tone of the

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Antonescu intended to punish in an exemplary manner the legionnaire leaders involved in the events. Radu-Dan Vlad (Ed.), *Evenimentele din ianuarie 1941 în Arhivele Germane și Române*, vol. II [The Events of January 1941 in the Germans and Romanians Archives], Bucharest, Majadahonda Publishing House, 1999, doc. 41, p. 107-108.

<sup>30</sup> SNA MVZ, șkat. 505 B, doc. 379/41. In all, over 13,400 legionnaires were arrested, but more than half were soon released. Ilarion Țiu, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>31</sup> Like in many other cases the information was inexact. SNA MZV, șkat. 505 B, doc. 402/41.

<sup>32</sup> In reality, Roșca was in the Public Guards barracks, while Stelian Stănicel was at the legionary headquarters in Rome Street. The two coordinated the resistance against the army between 21-23 January and managed to leave the country after the events. Ottmar Trașcă, Ana-Maria Stan, *op. cit.*, p.382.

<sup>33</sup> SNA MZV, șkat. 505 B, doc. 403/41.

Hlinka Guard propagandists changed. They continued to laud the National-Legionary principles, similar to the National-Socialist ones, which they wished as a model for Slovakia. However, to satisfy the German susceptibilities, they chose to portray the Romanian model as one of German inspiration. The Slovak press wrote that the legionnaires fell into place in the life of the state, without mentioning the repression directed against them. However, taking a step back, the members of the Hlinka Guard did not suffer any affliction. If the legionnaire leaders escaped punishment by fleeing to Germany, the Hlinka leaders remained in the country accepting to collaborate with Tiso, under the conditions imposed by the Slovak president.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Antagonizing political forces competed for power in Bucharest and Bratislava. They were, however, steered directly from Berlin in both states. In Romania, Ion Antonescu and the conservative and nationalist political and intellectual circles were preferred over the Legionary Movement. In Slovakia, the Germans opted for President Tiso and the conservative circles around him. Although it took a step back, the Hlinka Guard was not removed from power. The Hlinka Guard was considered ideologically close to the Legionary Movement. The blow struck by the Germans in removing the legionnaires from power was an example for the members of the Hlinka organisation. Its leaders took a step back, learned from the Romanian example and escaped the repression Antonescu used against the legionnaires. The reports of the Slovak diplomat in Bucharest were not known to most members of the Hlinka Guard, but their conclusions were understood by Tuka and Mach.

The Slovak diplomat's reports and notes ought to be understood from two perspectives. Firstly, he corrected himself with each document he sent back home, adding to or detailing how the events happened. Therefore, it seems that he kept repeating himself or delivering irrelevant details. Secondly, he did not highlight any of his documents to suggest which facts were most important. Only one document is labelled as "secret", while the rest are labelled as "confidential," according to Milecz. However, given the information he provided, one could discern some definite suggestions for the political orientation of Bratislava's political leaders. Therefore, one can clearly notice, as a conclusion to the Slovak diplomat's messages, that he constantly stated how the final decision was reached at Berchtesgaden, and that Germany was the deciding factor, that was satisfied with Antonescu's attitude. He then insisted on the nature of the events in Romania,

implying that the Legionary Movement and its members could not ensure the internal order that Germany desired. At the same time, he exposed several crimes and transgressions committed by legionnaires between January 21-23, labelled as “terrorist”, despite first defining the events as a “legionary revolution”.

Last but not least, his reports disclosed consistent details about the damage caused by the legionnaires and about their victims, as well as the measures taken by Antonescu after January 23rd. The precedent set by the legionary rebellion, with its emphasis on crimes and violence in his late reports, as well as Antonescu’s harsh measures against the rebels could serve as illustrative examples for radicals in Slovakia if they attempt to remove President Tiso from power. The figures of those arrested (including Horia Sima, who, in reality, had fled the country with the support of the Germans) served as a warning to others who could find themselves in a similar position. The allusion was obvious to the members of the Hlinka Guard. Therefore, Milecz’s reports served not only as observation and information but also as political suggestions for the power struggle raging in Bratislava.

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