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Out of the Lager and Into the Gulag: Romanian Foreign Relations Before and After King Michael's Coup

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Caught between two totalitarian powers, Romania found itself in a difficult position on the eve of the Second World War. In a dramatic struggle undertaken by Romania's young King Michael and his political associates to save Romania's independence and identity, a coup was staged in August 1944 by which Romania left the Axis and joined the Allies. The coup brought Romania into a tenuous alliance with the USSR. Romania's situation reflects the signature conundrum of Eastern European countries during World War II: the alternative to collaboration with the Nazi war machine was association with the equally dictatorial Soviet Union. Remaining in alliance with the Nazis was injurious to Romanian interests. But the other option was total surrender to the Russians, who had historically infringed on Romanian territorial sovereignty. To Romanians conditioned by this unstable history with the East, it was unthinkable to surrender to the Russians, and essentially forfeit independence. The king and the Romanian democratic front, with their country caught in the unfortunate geographical situation between the two totalitarian states, tried their utmost to bargain to keep Romania's sovereignty, knowing full well the weakness of their position and the threat of Soviet occupation. In this impossible situation, King Michael and his colleagues took unprecedented action through a coup d'état that miraculously succeeded in removing Romania from the Axis alliance, placing it on the Allied side, and securing armistice terms favorable to Romania. The coup and subsequent regime change succeeded in preserving Romania's territorial, political, and military sovereignty.

The Soviets, motivated by desire for hegemony in the region, immediately violated the armistice terms, which provided that Romania keep its sovereignty and essentially considered the Romanian army to be a cobelligerent. Soviet expansionist goals were therefore made obvious to the Americans. Differing Soviet and American goals for the management of Romania caused discord on the Allied Control Commission, ultimately solidifying the ambiguous tensions among the Allies into a concrete post-war infrastructure. The diplomatic war which occurred in the months after the Romanian armistice was signed confirmed that the Americans and Soviets were no longer keen allies. By the end of 1944, the Americans and the Russians were fighting the Cold War in Romania. The Russians' violation of the Romanian armistice was the first official act of the Cold War.¹ The remainder of the half-century struggle would be shaped on these unspoken terms of diplomatic combat that were built in post-armistice Romania.

Romania's position on the eve of World War Two was shaped by its fate during the First World War. Romania fought on the Allied side and therefore was rewarded by the victorious Allies at Versailles with territorial gains that almost doubled its population and land mass.² Romania received Transylvania, which had been traditionally Hungarian, Bessarabia, which Russia had taken from Romania in 1812, and Bukovina, which was largely ethnically Romanian but had belonged to Austria since 1775, as well as the small Austrian province of Banat.³ These territories became a source of national pride for Romanians. Stalin's 1940 annexation of Bessarabia and Bukovina, as ordained by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, would become a primary stimulus for Romania's entry

¹ Hazard, Elizabeth. *Cold War Crucible*. Boulder: Columbia University Press East European Monographs, 1996.

² Floyd, David. *Rumania: Russia's Dissident Ally*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965, 5.

³ *Ibid*, 5.

into the Axis alliance.⁴ These territories would also factor heavily into the negotiations at the end of the Second World War.

If anyone can be blamed for Romania's position of weakness on the eve of the Second World War it is King Michael's father, King Carol II. Carol exploited the Parliament's failure to form a coalition cabinet, took advantage of the parliamentary deadlock, hand selected a cabinet, and drafted a new constitution that consolidated legislative power to himself. In March of 1939, Carol made diplomatic contact with Nazi Germany: an economic agreement was signed between Germany and Romania that afforded Germany a near monopoly on Romanian oil.⁵ At this point, Carol knew the situation was desperate—Romania was caught between two mammoth enemy powers. Each power posed a threat, but the early gravitation towards a Nazi alliance was due to territorial concerns, to which the USSR posed the greatest threat. The historical Romanian fear of Russian occupation was ingrained in the Romanian psyche, and the claim has been made that Romanians would have even preferred German occupation to Russian occupation.⁶ Therefore, Romania's entrance into the Axis alliance was initially popularly supported only because it was understood to be a *temporary* alliance aimed at recovering the lost territory.⁷

Carol's exclusion of the popular democratic parties from the cabinet allowed General Ion Antonescu, appointed by Carol as Minister of Defense, to rise to power. Antonescu soon forced Carol to abdicate and fully established himself as a military dictator in the Nazi style. Antonescu understood the importance of the institution of the monarchy to national morale, and so kept up a façade of respect to the royal family. Thus, Michael was crowned in 1940. While the King's signature was technically required for some legislation, Marshal Antonescu continually excluded him from administrative affairs and treated him like a child. As Michael was increasingly excluded, he joined forces with Maniu and Bratianu, who with their democratic parties had been alienated from the government since Carol's 1938 constitution. Maniu's National Peasant Party and Bratianu's National Liberal Party became the "accepted opposition" within the Antonescu regime, and although they did not carry much power politically, they served as patriotic figures and would later play an instrumental role in the coup.⁸

For Romanians, life under the Antonescu regime was manifestly unpleasant, not only for domestic reasons but also because of how the war was going for Germany. Once Bessarabia and Bukovina were returned to Romania as promised after an initially successful German Eastern campaign, Antonescu insisted on remaining in the war. This decision was disastrous because it linked Romania to the Nazi ideology, and made enemies with the western powers that Romanian pre-war diplomacy of the 1930's had sought to befriend.⁹

⁴ Harrington, Joseph. *Tweaking the Nose of the Russians. Fifty Years of American-Romanian Relations, 1940-1990*. Boulder: East European Monographs, 1991, 1-2.

⁵ Ceaucescu, Ilie, Florin Constantiniu, Mihail E. Ionescu. *A Turning Point in World War II: 23 August 1944 in Romania*. Boulder: East European Monographs, 1985, 9.

⁶ Hazard, 29.

⁷ Porter, *Michael of Romania*, 70.

⁸ *Ibid*, 61-82.

⁹ *Ibid*, 93.

King Michael and the opposition parties, commonly referred to in documents as “The Maniu Coalition,” knew what it would mean if Romania ended up on the losing side of the war. Defeat would summon Soviet occupation and subsequent communization, the destruction of the monarchy and Romanian national tradition, and the suppression of the opposition parties. And so, for strategic reasons aimed at national self-preservation, the coalition sent out overtures of peace to the Allies, in the hopes of surrendering early to gain more benevolent armistice terms. Inherently distrustful of the Soviet Union, the delegation, led by Iuliu Maniu, appealed ardently to the West, desperately begging for Western intervention in an area clearly under Soviet jurisdiction. This Romanian-initiated diplomatic exclusivity with the West led the USSR to be wary of Western intentions, an attitude that placed strains on the alliance.

The king met with the opposition leaders to draft armistice terms. The original plan was to convince Antonescu to surrender. Although none of the leaders approved of the Antonescu regime, a quick surrender was the primary goal, and so a regime change was to be avoided simply because it would prolong and complicate the process of surrender. Michael and his colleagues sent Prince Barbu Stirbey, former premier and close friend to the royal family, to make overtures of peace to Allied representatives in the neutral diplomatic hive of Cairo.¹⁰ Antonescu was aware of Stirbey’s mission, and although he did not forbid it, it did not have his tacit approval or consent, and he did not consider its results binding on himself. The stage was set for a coup—it was obvious from Antonescu’s lack of enthusiasm that it would be difficult to negotiate a surrender that required his signature.

Similar to the Romanian logic, the Allies were more inclined to negotiate with Antonescu, simply because he was in power and would expedite the process of surrender. In the beginning of the negotiations, it is made clear in the initial February “Provisions” that “‘Rumania’ means, wherever applicable, whatever central government is in existence.”¹¹ The Allies wanted Romania out of the war as quickly as possible. Secretary of State Hull informed the U.S. Ambassador to the Greek and Yugoslav Governments in Exile in Cairo Lincoln MacVeagh, the Romanian delegation’s contact, on March 30, 1944 that “Prompt results are of the greatest importance...political considerations should therefore be examined with particular attention to the degree to which they might be restrictive of military effectiveness.”¹²

Although the Allies wanted to negotiate with whoever was in power for expediency, they did manifest a certain support for a political upheaval. The idea of a coup had been floated around Romania as early as 1938. Maniu, who had been prime minister several years before Carol destroyed the parliamentary system, was in contact with British Special Operations Executive officers, including Ivor Porter, whose mission was to stir up anti-Nazi sentiment and encourage resistance as part of Churchill’s command to “set Europe ablaze.” After Antonescu’s rise and Romania’s entrance into the Axis alliance the coup seemed less likely; however, Maniu held onto the idea and

¹⁰ Harrington, 4-5.

¹¹ FRUS 1944, 137.

¹² *Ibid*, 163.

briefed King Michael on his dealings with Churchill.¹³ Even in 1944, the democratic parties wished to use the coup to return to the pre-Carol constitution. But, by 1944 Allied interest in a Romanian coup was primarily based on the desire for a quick surrender. As part of the memorandum concerning the first set of terms proposed by the U.S. in February 1944, is included this apparent support for the coup:

It might be desired, either prior to or subsequent to the surrender, to replace the Antonescu regime by a Maniu-Bratianu government, or by some other group more representative than is the present regime of the popular will and better able to rally the Rumanian people to cooperation with the United Nations in the war against Germany.¹⁴

The Americans were here discussing a regime change as a military strategy. One of the potential benefits to a coup would be Romania's entrance into the war on the side of the Allies. Some scholars estimate that King Michael's coup directly shortened the war by six months through denying the Germans resources and an eastern corridor.¹⁵ The Allies certainly knew the value of this type of *volte face*.

The initial reaction of the Allies to the Maniu coalition's overture was to demand unconditional surrender.¹⁶ This hardline approach was a matter of national security to the Allies. The first line of the proposed "Provisions for Imposition Upon Rumania at Time of Surrender" sent by the Directory of the Office of European Affairs (James Dunn) to the U.S. Ambassador in the U.K. (Winant) begins "The provisions outlined below, which are deemed essential to the assurance of security and to the further prosecution of the war against Germany..."¹⁷ This language shows that the Romanian question was not one merely of balancing power with the Soviets, but one absolutely essential to the war effort. At this point, the Allies were looking at the potential of a Romanian surrender as a tool in their arsenal against the Nazis, rather than focusing so much on the long-term effects of the post-war management of Romania.

These early terms are harsh because at this point the Allied powers still viewed the negotiations as surrender of enemy territory. Although there had been talk of a coup, Romania was still allied to the Nazis and so was to be treated as a surrendering enemy. The early terms as set forth in February 1944, drafted by the Americans and awaiting Soviet and British approval, call for the following: 1.) Unconditional Military Surrender 2.) Submission to *Occupation Authorities* who control foreign policy, commercial and financial transactions, cultural agencies, the movement of people, communications, media, transport, and power, who have the right to impose further terms as they see fit under a period of occupation with *no time limit*. Additionally, Romania must pay the costs of occupation. 3.) Demobilization and disarmament of the Romanian army. 4.) Reparations of an unspecified amount.¹⁸

These terms would have allowed for an immediate Soviet takeover and incorporation of Romania as a satellite state. The Romanians knew this, adding to their motivation for the coup. So, Maniu started to promise the

¹³ Porter, Ivor, *Operation Autonomous*, 51-53.

¹⁴ FRUS, 1944, 136-145.

¹⁵ Ceaucescu, v-x.

¹⁶ FRUS 1944, 134.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 136.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 136-145.

Allies a coup. The terms changed for the better as Romania expressed more willingness to offer further support to the Allied war effort. Essentially, the new plan was to have Romania earn better armistice terms through anti-Nazi action. General Wilson makes it clear: “We shall judge by results and nature of peace terms ultimately imposed on Romania will be largely determined by the extent to which she contributes towards the defeat of Germany.”¹⁹

The terms gradually improved as it became clear that Romania was willing and able to participate in the war effort against the Nazis after its surrender. This would mean that Romania’s switching sides would be “more than a token surrender.”²⁰ The terms improved considerably in March, after Maniu introduced the idea of a regime change. Maniu said that the coup would be accompanied by some demands on the part of his new government: 1.) That Romanian sovereignty be respected 2.) That Romanian territorial rights be respected (presumably the return of Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transylvania) 3.) That Romania be granted cobelligerent status 4.) That the Allies help defend Romania from potential attack by Hungary or Bulgaria 5.) And that the Allies provide air support and possibly ground troops at Constanza.²¹

MacVeagh expressed to Hull his relative support of these demands. He stated that the Allied position should reflect these goals: 1.) Romanian sovereignty will be maintained 2.) Romanian territorial rights in Bessarabia and Bukovina will be recognized; Transylvania will have to wait until the end of the war. 3.) Cobelligerent status could be granted but *only* pertain to Romanian soil for the purpose of driving out the Germans. 4.) Romania is granted aid in war effort against Hungary or Bulgaria, as long as the Romanians do not attack these countries first. 5.) No position on this question yet—will most likely have to be Soviet air support.²²

This updated edition is a radical departure from the first official set of proposed terms. The Romanians were now being perceived by the Allies as more of equals; they had in fact increased their stock by promising a coup. The Romanians should have accepted these generous terms and signed the armistice. However, distrust of Soviet intentions prevented Stirbey from signing off—within the week he requested to meet with Novikov alone, presumably to gain assurances that the Soviets would keep their end of any deal negotiated. Stirbey continued to delay. Hull expressed to Winant that the time had come to tell Stirbey that “they [The Romanians] alone will have to bear the responsibility if they postpone action until too late.”²³ Hull’s impatience was certainly justified—Nazi troops had recently occupied neighboring Hungary and the Allies needed to assess their strength in the area.²⁴

Meanwhile, Antonescu had left for Germany to meet with Hitler and reaffirm his allegiance. To many in the Allied camp, this did not engender kind feelings toward the Romanians, although Antonescu did seem to have prevented Nazi military occupation of Romania.²⁵ General Wilson, Allied Commander in the Mediterranean, cabled to Antonescu: “You should on no account visit Hitler. If you do, this will be taken as final evidence of Roumanian

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 155.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 144.

²¹ *Ibid*, 150.

²² *Ibid*, 152.

²³ *Ibid*, 153.

²⁴ Porter, *Michael of Romania*.

²⁵ FRUS, 1944, 161.

intention to collaborate to the end with Germany and your country will have to take the full consequences.”²⁶ By fostering such distrust with the Western Allies, Antonescu’s behavior complicated matters, and, coupled with indecision on the part of the Maniu coalition, led to a deterioration of good will between Romanians and the Allies.

After a period of delay by the Maniu coalition, the Allies became exceedingly annoyed. Maniu’s coalition had considerable trouble organizing because it had to meet in secret, and at one point in April the Allies even toyed with the idea of smuggling Maniu to Soviet territory where he could operate on behalf of the Romanian opposition without interference from Antonescu.²⁷ On April 2 Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov published a declaration which informed the public that the Red Army had broken into Romania and was planning to continue the advance through Romania to German territory. The declaration explicitly stated that the Soviets had no intention of replacing the regime in Romania or of annexing territory.²⁸ The earlier proposed terms had allowed for passage of Allied troops through Romanian territory. Even under these seemingly generous stipulations, Maniu did not express any concrete wish to sign an immediate armistice. Even Stirbey became impatient and understood the gravity of the situation, that is, that there would never be better promises from the Russians. He expressed his frustration in a desperate cable to Maniu on April 4:

The time for halfhearted measures has passed. If after the British message today and the Molotov declaration you are still unable to take the action you asked me to affirm that you would take under even less exigent circumstances, I am forced to assume that you have grave reasons for not doing so and to conclude that there is no further point in my mission here.²⁹

Maniu’s reluctance can be attributed to his unrealistic hope to engage in unilateral negotiations with only the Western powers, thus avoiding any Soviet intervention in Romanian territory. In a telegram to Secretary of State Hull on June 29, 1944, MacVeagh explains the difficulties in communication that arose because Maniu was “apparently still unwilling to contact the Russians directly.”³⁰ The goal of the coup from the Romanian perspective was twofold: 1. Get out of the war and join the Allies, and 2. Replace the Antonescu regime with a democratic coalition and try to rebuild the pre-Carol government system. Maniu mistakenly thought that the Allies were as dedicated to the second proposition as they were to the first. A democratic Romania was an Allied priority in 1940 because of how it could be leveraged to put Britain in a position of strength in the early days of the war. Now, democratic or not, the Allies only wanted Romania to remove itself from the war.

With no word from Maniu, the Russians submitted an updated set of terms, which were, all but the promise to return Transylvania to Romania, approved by the U.S. These April 1944 terms presented no radical changes from the March terms, even going so far as to state that the Red Army would assist the Romanian army in expelling the

²⁶ *Ibid*, 155.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 179.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 166.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 169.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 182.

Nazis to “restore the independence and sovereignty of Rumania.”³¹ However, the terms expressed a non-negotiable demand for Bessarabia and Bukovina, and appended a clear warning that “These minimum conditions can be changed for the worse if Rumania does not accept them soon.”³² The State Department objected to the principle of the territorial determinations and wished to wait until the end of the war, believing that it was a matter for the peace treaty rather than the armistice.³³ Instead of fighting the Russians on this point, however, the West simply requested that the clause “subject to confirmation at the peace settlement” be added, which the Soviets granted.³⁴

Finally convinced that Antonescu would not cooperate, King Michael and the opposition leaders staged the coup the night of August 23, 1944. King Michael lured Antonescu to the palace under the pretense of a routine meeting, and after the Marshal’s outright refusal to sign an armistice, arrested and detained Marshal Antonescu as well as his premier, Mihai Antonescu, and several other cronies. Michael ordered the Romanian army to turn on the Germans, which they unquestioningly obeyed out of reverence to the monarchy, and immediately sent Stirbey to Moscow to sign the armistice.³⁵

The official armistice for the cessation of hostilities and the entrance of Romania into the Allied war effort was signed on September 12, 1944, in Moscow. Even after the frustration caused by Romania’s delay in signature, the coup resulted in surrender and was thus useful to the Allies, and so the final armistice terms were advantageous to Romanian interests. Firstly, Romania got to keep its governmental sovereignty and autonomy. The country would host an Allied Control Commission that would police the enforcement of the terms, but it would not be occupied, as it would have been under the “typical” surrender terms as first drafted in February. Secondly, it is noted that Romania “has entered the war and will wage war on the side of the Allied Powers against Germany and Hungary for the purpose of restoring Rumanian independence and sovereignty.”³⁶ However, and this will become a problem later, it is added that Romanian military operations will be conducted “under the general leadership of the Allied (Soviet) High Command.”³⁷ Additionally, 4/5 of Romanian reparations were forgiven. The final amount totaled 300 million U.S. dollars to be made payable in resources over six years. The Americans had wanted to postpone decisions on reparations to the peace settlement after the conclusion of the war, but, as discussed later, deferred to the Soviets on this point. The terms called for a complete de-Nazification of Romanian policies and culture, the free movement of Allied troops in Romanian territory for the purpose of waging the war, the freeing of Allied prisoners of war and also of anyone detained for supporting the Allies, the detainment of any Hungarian or German nationals on Romanian soil, and that Romania bear the costs of implementing these terms.³⁸

³¹ *Ibid* 170.

³² *Ibid* 170.

³³ *Ibid*, 172.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 173

³⁵ Porter, *Michael of Romania*.

³⁶ Bevans, Charles I. *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949* Washington, D.C.: Dept. of State, 1969, Volume 3: 1931-1945, 902.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 902.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 901.

On September 1, Maniu sent a telegram outlining the Romanian understanding of their position. They were on the same page with the Soviet terms on a number of points, most importantly that the Romanian army would not be disarmed because it was fighting against the Germans. However, Maniu assumed that the coup gained *de facto* cobbelligerent status, whereas the Soviets did not explicitly use this term.³⁹ The Soviet terms did not match their actions: Soviet troops soon began disarming Romanian troops on the eastern front.⁴⁰ In the days before the armistice was signed in Moscow, Cretzianu, representing the Maniu coalition, complained in a telegram to the U.S. that, even though there was an understanding that an armistice would soon be signed, Soviets were disarming Romanian troops. Cretzianu expresses fear that the Soviets were delaying signature in Moscow in order to gobble as much Romanian territory as possible before it became legally hairy to do so. He states: “The impression is beginning to spread that the delay in the signature of the armistice is being caused by the desire to occupy all Rumanian territory by Soviet troops.”⁴¹ While the Soviets, through their actions, did not seem to take Romanian sovereignty seriously, *on paper*, the USSR seemed to respect the status that Romania had gained by means of the coup. The forgiveness of 4/5 of the reparations was an idea that generated from the Soviets, implying their willingness to move forward and accommodate the interests of the Romanian government.⁴²

However, there are certain provisions in the armistice terms which, in retrospect, can be interpreted as paving the way to communization. For example, Article 16 gives the ACC (read Soviets) all control over Romanian newspapers, literature, cinema, and communication. This allowed for the ideological communist takeover and the suppression of rights usually expressed in an independent country.⁴³ The U.S. recognized that it was dangerous to let the Soviets have free rein in Romania. In a telegram to Ambassador Harriman, Secretary Hull warns Harriman to make it clear to the Russians that any action they take in Romania would be on behalf of all three Allies. Hull seemed to perceive the enmity between the Romanians and the Russians, stating that “the future of the Rumanian nation is not to be left exclusively in the hands of the one power with which Rumania has been directly engaged in combat.”⁴⁴

The U.S. eventually started to defer to the Soviet demands so as not to create tension with the touchy ally during a crucial time of the war. One such instance was in regard to territorial redistribution. The U.S. consistently made it clear throughout the negotiations that the apportioning of territory should wait until the peace settlement, as should reparations. Yet the Soviets continually demanded the immediate return of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. Their demands were so forceful that the Americans conceded and the clause about Bessarabia made it into the final armistice terms.⁴⁵ The Transylvanian territorial question also was included, at the Soviets’ behest.

³⁹ FRUS 1944, 207-211.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 213.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 215.

⁴² *Ibid*, 211.

⁴³ Bevens, 901-905.

⁴⁴ FRUS 1944, 169

⁴⁵ Bevens, 902.

John Campbell, who drafted many of the State Department memos on the subject and helped draft the armistice terms, remembers, years later:

The Russians put a settlement of the Rumanian-Hungarian territorial problem into the Rumanian armistice terms, which we opposed but they wouldn't yield. Finally we had them add "subject to confirmation at the peace settlement." They accepted that and this saved our theory, so to speak, but actually it didn't change the de facto situation. The armistice agreements, in that sense, did settle some of the permanent parts of the postwar status of these countries. We were not in a bargaining position, we felt at that time, to do anything about it.⁴⁶

He highlights the difficulty of the situation: the Americans recognized that the USSR had more direct interest in the region, but still wanted to be represented on the Allied Control Commission. Several practical problems made it difficult for the Americans to be involved in Romanian affairs. Firstly, Romania was physically isolated from any western Allied territory. This geographical reality supported the Soviet claim to control.⁴⁷ Economically, American and British oil had long been involved in Romania, and, politically, the West wanted to avoid the establishment of strict spheres of influence.⁴⁸

The Allied Control Commission (ACC) was set up as a provision of the armistice, as a means to exert Allied influence over the restructuring of Romania. The United States was meant to have some influence on the commission, but the Soviets were not eager to collaborate with the Americans in the territory which they believed to be rightly theirs. In July of 1945, General Schuyler, the U.S. representative on the ACC in Romania, cabled to the U.S. War Department that "in view of the uncooperative attitude which has been exhibited by the Russians...I feel that specific and detailed agreement on the highest levels is absolutely essential."⁴⁹ Cooperation between western and Soviet troops was fuzzy, unofficial, and often Soviet-dominated. The Americans on the ACC clashed with their Soviet colleagues over differences in interpretation and implementation of the armistice terms. For example, in General Schuyler's telegram to the War Department on July 24, 1945, he enumerates several Soviet actions with which he took issue: namely, the USSR's demand that Romania sustain Russian troops, Russian censorship of western media and entertainment in Romania, and the Soviet refusal to return Romanian naval ships. The retention of ships was a direct violation of the armistice, and the former two actions were distortions of the terms as the Americans saw them.⁵⁰ Schuyler expressed his insistence that something be done to remedy this, stating, "In this situation I feel that as chief U.S. representative I can no longer remain silent relative to certain policies which have been placed in effect in the name of the ACC and which I believe the United States Government would not desire to support."⁵¹

⁴⁶ John C. Campbell, interview by Richard D. McKinzie, June 24, 1974. Harry S. Truman Library & Museum, Accessed online October 6, 2015, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/campbell.htm>

⁴⁷ Floyd, 3.

⁴⁸ Porter, *Operation Autonomous* 40-41, and Harrington.

⁴⁹ FRUS, 1945, 687.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 709-710.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 710.

It was clear that the Soviets were violating the armistice terms, a fact that troubled Romanians and Americans alike. Schuyler the following day expressed to the War Department his opinion that unless the U.S. got tough with the Soviets, “changes in procedure would be nullified by the negative and uncooperative attitude of the Soviet Representatives on the Allied Control Commission.”⁵² The Soviets also endeavored to establish an exclusive Russo-Romanian oil trade pact, and confiscated Romanian oil under the pretense that it was German war-material. The West took issue with the Russians’ loose interpretation of the terms. The Americans proposed a more cooperative solution:

We deem it essential that the satellites not conclude treaties, agreements, or arrangements which deny to Allied nationals access, on equal terms, to their trade, raw materials, and industry; and appropriately modify any existing arrangements which may have that effect.⁵³

The co-management of the ACC was evidently anything but smooth, and the Soviets did not seem especially devoted to honest, transparent cooperation with the Western representatives on the ACC. The Americans were in no position to take a hardline approach to Soviet abuses of power. The U.S. still needed the Red Army on the Eastern Front, and there was still the possibility that the USSR would enter the war against Japan. A dismantling of the Grand Alliance would not help the war effort, and the war effort was the only objective until the war was won. John Campbell commented on the nature of U.S.-Soviet disagreement over Romania: “it wasn't a question which you would go to President Roosevelt about and say, ‘Stand up to Stalin on this.’”⁵⁴

So, as the Soviets took more and more control in Romania, the Americans’ hands were tied. They simply could not afford a rift with the Soviets. In other times, perhaps, the United States would have been in a position to challenge the Soviet takeover in Romania, but, especially after the war ended, the Americans could not risk entering into a military conflict with their dodgy ally.

While the Soviets were avoiding cooperative military measures on the ACC, they were also planning for an internal political takeover of Romania. Just months after the peace treaty at the Yalta Conference, Andrei Vyshinsky was dispatched from Moscow to Bucharest to orchestrate an internal communist takeover. He worked behind the scenes with Romanian communists to infiltrate and manipulate the newly restored parliamentary system.⁵⁵ Thus, with Soviet help, the historically infinitesimal Romanian Communist Party amassed a majority in the cabinet and phased out democracy. This Soviet tactic assumed that a military takeover was not the most cost-effective solution, given Romania’s technical sovereignty.

The Soviets were forced to perform their communization of Romania internally, because of the strength of the democratic infrastructure as preserved by the coup. Had the coup not happened, the Soviets could have easily justified a military takeover as the necessary occupation of a surrendered nation. Thus, the coup had legally protected Romanian sovereignty and the semblance of a democratic governing system, ultimately forcing the Soviets

⁵² *Ibid*, 716.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 745.

⁵⁴ John C. Campbell, Interview by Richard McKinzie, 1974.

⁵⁵ Porter, *Michael of Romania* 134-139.

to perform legal contortions to manipulate the domestic legal system through a Fifth Column. So, if it was somehow predestined that the Soviets would eventually incorporate Romania into their sphere, they certainly had to put forth more effort than in neighboring countries. The coup accomplished at least this.

Although Soviet duplicity was obvious on many occasions throughout the war, the case of Romania was the first taste the West had of *post-war* co-management with the Soviets. Romania is a microcosm of how the Cold War would soon be cemented into being through Soviet manipulation of post-war Eastern Europe. The Romanian case represents the inability of the West and the Soviet Union to engage in post-war co-management without coming to loggerheads. Romania was the first pawn the USSR used in the formation of the Cold War spheres of influence. Soon, this pattern would repeat itself throughout the rest of Eastern Europe. In Romania in 1944, the Americans first began to act strategically with regard to the post-war relationship with the Soviets, as they would be forced to do for the entirety of the Cold War.

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