

THE RED ARMY AND THE CHANGING OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN ROMANIA

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Abstract. The radical transformation of Romanian society and its transition to a system similar to that in the Soviet Union implied, on the one hand, the elimination of the influence exerted by the traditional (historical) parties, and, on the other hand, the formation of a government that would entirely serve the interests of the Kremlin. The concrete plan for seizing political power by the Communist Party and its allies was drawn up outside the country's borders. The victorious powers at the end of the World War II were concerned with shaping the postwar world. In Romania, the democratic opposition increased its attempts to make Western political-diplomatic circles aware of the evolution of the political situation in Romania. Iuliu Maniu sent messages to the Potsdam Conference (17 July-2 August 1945) in which he asked for the support of the Great Powers in establishing a representative government in Romania, a government that would consist of all democratic political forces and that would prepare the groundwork for free elections. Immediately after Stalin's death, the Soviet Government began to reevaluate its relations with its satellite countries. The policy of detente, proclaimed by N. Khrushchev, influenced the situation in Romania. In March 1955 the work camps were abolished and several political prisoners were liberated. In April 1956 the council of ministers allowed disgraced persons to return to their original homes and they were given back their confiscated houses and lands. After the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania, the Communist leaders in Bucharest could express their disagreement with the leaders in Moscow with respect to the debates which took place at the end of the 1950s and at the beginning of the 1960s and which tackled the functioning and organizational principles of the Economic Council for Mutual Assistance.

Keywords: Red Army, armistice, convention, Allied Control Commission, Andrei Vyshinsky, Petru Groza, King Michael I, I.V. Stalin, N.S. Khrushchev, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej.

The withdrawal of Romania from the Axis on 23 August 1944 had profound consequences for the subsequent evolution of Romanian politics¹. During the first weeks after the overthrow of Marshal Ion Antonescu's government, Romanian society

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¹ For more details, see Gh. Buzatu, *Din istoria secretă a celui de-al doilea război mondial*, București, 1988; Eliza Campus, *Din politica externă a României 1913-1947*, București, 1980; Ion Enescu, *Politica externă a României în perioada 1944-1947*, București, 1979; *România în anii celui de-al doilea război mondial*, vol. III, București, 1980; Paul D. Quinlan, *Clash over Romania: British, and American Policies towards Romania 1938-1947*, Los Angeles, 1977.

was permeated with an exultant harmony.² The Communists in Romania were rigorously complying with Moscow's instruction sent to all the Communist parties in Europe, to cooperate with any political force that had declared itself against Fascism, even if its orientation was anti-Communist. Under these circumstances, collaboration between the parties which made up the National Democratic Block (National Liberal, National Peasant, Social-Democratic, and Communist) was real and efficient.

On 31 August 1944 royal decrees 3.053 of 5 September 1940, 3.067 of 6 September 1940, and 3.072 of 7 September 1940, which had established the legal bases for the dictatorial regime, were repealed, and the 1923 Constitution was restored³. The rights and privileges of all Romanian citizens which had been revoked in February 1938 were also restored.

The end of September 1944 and the beginning of the next month brought about an important change in the attitude of the Communist Party toward its coalition partners. Most of Romanian territory was under the control of the Red Army. With this occupation, Stalin's dictum that "*Anyone occupying a territory also imposes his own social system; everyone imposes his own social system as far as his army has advanced*,"⁴ became a painful reality for Romanians, although all of the implications of this were not yet perceived or felt by society at large or by the representatives of the Western powers in Romania. On 7 October 1944 Michael Wright informed the British authorities that: "90% of the [Romanian] peasants are against Communism," and he did not think that Romania would become Communist in the near future because a "series of discussions with Marshal Malinovsky highlighted some encouraging clues concerning the fact that Romania would not be Sovietized by Russia."⁵

After negotiations of Soviet and British interests in the Balkans, on the occasion of the visit of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to Moscow (between 9 and 17 October 1944)⁶ the Soviets felt they had gained the upper hand. They were therefore no longer willing to abide by their own assurances made to Romanian politicians in April⁷ and June⁸ of 1944, with regard to respecting the independence of the Romanian state. It was also unwilling to comply with Molotov's declaration on 2 April 1944 that Moscow would not "intervene to change the social

² Florin Constantiniu, "*Societatea românească în perioada eliberării Transilvaniei de nord*," conference presented at the National Military Club on 20 October 1994.

³ *România liberă*, 5 September 1994.

⁴ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M.-S.S.L, Politica internă, dosar 1/1954, f. 364.

⁵ Great Britain, P.R.O., RO. 371/43988, f. 23.

⁶ For more details see Nicolae Baciuc, *Agonia României 1944-1944*, Cluj-Napoca, 1990, pp. 85-97; Titu Georgescu, *România între Yalta și Malta*, București, 1993, pp. 32-33; Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *Sovietizarea României. Percepții anglo-americe (1944-1947)*, București, pp. 8-9.

⁷ Arh. M.A.E., dosar S.I., Stockholm, vol.1, pp. 157-159.

⁸ *Ibidem*, ff. 214-215.

order,"⁹ although these statements had been formally reasserted and sustained by the signing of the Armistice Convention on 12-13 September 1944. The political and military means and instruments resorted to by the Kremlin to impose its own political-social system in Romania were starting to work. According to a note addressed to the president of the council of ministers on 28 September 1944 by the Romanian General Staff¹⁰, political forces without any importance or cohesive power in interwar Romanian society were beginning to display revolutionary tendencies.

To counteract these new political parties' ascent to power, and also to avoid a state of anarchy, a specialized body (Department II) authorized by the Romanian General Staff recommended a note that: "His Majesty King Michael I should inform the country that under his rule social justice would follow the example given by King Ferdinand I who, in order to protect the country from the infection of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, decided by royal decree that he would distribute land to the peasants."¹¹ Although the atmosphere in the country indicated increasing political dissension - John Le Rougetel, the British political representative in Bucharest, called it revolutionary in his telegram sent to the authorities in London on 28 September 1944 - the president of the council of ministers, General Constantin Sănătescu, responded to the Romanian General Staff on 6 October 1944¹² that: "It is necessary to wait."¹³

The events in Romania were precipitated by the influence of the Soviet Union exerted through the military occupation of the country by the Red Army. The basic foundations of democratic society in Romania quickly disintegrated and their very existence was threatened. The form of government, the structure of the state, and the political regime went through unimaginable changes. The Comintern activists, Soviet political agents including Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca (Laszlo), accompanied by political experts and a whole network of agents of the N.K.VD., made up of many Jews, Russians, Bulgarians, and Hungarians, returned from the Soviet Union.¹⁴

The institutions and the structures of power, as well as the administrative structures of the Romanian state, fell completely under the control of the occupying troops through the intervention of the Soviet Allied Control Commission, a body created after the Armistice Convention had been signed by the Romanian Government and the representatives of the coalition of the United Nations in Moscow

⁹ Al. Vianu and his collaborators, ed., *Relații internaționale în acte și documente*, vol. II, 1939-1945, București, 1976, pp. 165-166.

¹⁰ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M., Cabinet Sănătescu-Rădescu, dosar 1411/1944, f. 136.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² Great Britain, P.R.O., *F.O.*, 371/44004, f.107.

¹³ Arh. Inst. Centr., fond P.C.M., Cabinet Sănătescu-Rădescu, dosar 1411/1944-1945 f. 138.

¹⁴ Titu Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

on 12-13 September 1944.¹⁵ The official mission of the commission was to oversee the observance of all the provisions of the Armistice Convention by Romania, but in fact it was an instrument for the political and military control of the Romanian territory in keeping with the agreements reached between the main partners of the coalition of the United Nations.

During the war London recognized that Romania was "integrated within the sphere of Russian military occupation" which had "the main role in the application of the Armistice."¹⁶ The Pentagon informed the representative of the United States to this body, Brigadier General C.V.R. Schuyler, when he was on his way to Romania, that: "the Soviet president of the Allied Control Commission [Marshal Rodion Malinovsky] *was to be given complete authority in the leadership of this country* [italics added]."¹⁷

This point of view is revealed in the fact that the number of Russian representatives on the Allied Control Commission in Romania surpassed, during all its period of activity, that of the Anglo-Americans,¹⁸ and the possibility of the latter to influence the functioning of this political body was strictly limited. The representatives of England and the United States were often surprised by the way in which their governments were getting involved in Romania.

Unhappy about the activities of the head of the British military organization, Vice-Marshal D.F. Stevenson, and the political representative in Romania, John Le Rougetel, Prime Minister Winston Churchill warned the Foreign Office on 7 November 1944 that "they are throwing themselves into the organized disorder in Bucharest," not realizing that "as long as the Russians give us free hand in Greece, we can do nothing more than stand by and watch what is happening in Romania."¹⁹ The British prime minister finally recommended that the two diplomats be careful about becoming involved in Romanian problems.²⁰

An important objective of the occupying Soviet forces in Romania was the subordination and the direct or the indirect control over the institutions of the state, especially those authorized by the Constitution to defend the independence, sovereignty, and order of society: the army, the police, the gendarmes, and the administration. The annihilation of the army began during the very first days after 23 August 1944, when thousands of experienced Romanian officers and soldiers were taken prisoners and confined in the camps in Bacau, Vaslui, Roman, and Iași,²¹ while

¹⁵ For more details see Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, *România și organizarea postbelică a lumii 1945-1947*, București, 1988, pp. 59-86; Gh. Buzatu, *Din istoria secretă a celui de-al doilea război mondial*, vol. I, București, 1988, pp. 336-345.

¹⁶ Great Britain, P.R.O., *F.O.*, 371/44011, f. 70.

¹⁷ Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁸ Arh. M.Ap.N., fond Microfilme, r. P., 2.265, C. 150-154.

¹⁹ Great Britain, P.R.O., *F.O.* 371/44012, f. 19.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 18.

²¹ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M., Stenograme, dosar 1/1944, f. 58; 2/1944, f. 99.

reserve units, formed mostly of recruits, with no experience and insufficient training, were thrown into battles. Thus, thousands of young Romanian soldiers fell, most of the time needlessly, on the battlefield.

On 3 October 1944 the chief of the General Staff, General Gheorghe Mihail, addressed a memorandum to the commander of the Second Ukrainian Front, Marshal Rodion I. Malinovsky, in which he complained that "The Soviet authorities are continuing to give daily attack missions with remote objectives to these inexperienced troops, against a powerful enemy which has at its disposal numerous weapons and which holds a defensive position on very difficult terrain" and asked that an order be given to the commander of the army group, Trofimenko, "not to charge the Fourth Romanian Army with offensive missions, inappropriate for its fighting capacity, without providing it with all the necessary military supplies, including armored cars, anti-tank armament, artillery, and air-support."²² The request was necessitated by the fact that after 21 September 1944, in accordance with the Armistice Convention, the freedom of command at the level of the headquarters of the Romanian Army was annulled. The Romanian Fourth Army was placed under the authority of Trofimenko's army group, and the First Army was subordinated to Managarov's army group.²³

In order to strike at the line of command, the moral force of the Romanian Army, the Communist Party newspapers, at Moscow's behest, began a vehement campaign against the military personnel office at the beginning of the autumn of 1944. Frequently, in *Scanteia* and *Romania libera* articles appeared that "exposed" the activities of high-ranking officers, who stood accused of having served Marshal Ion Antonescu's regime and who were labelled as Iron Guardists. Through a report addressed to the council of ministers on 26 September 1944 the minister of War warned that "This press campaign systematically aims at weakening and disintegrating the morale and fighting capacity of our military forces which, in its extant form, is considered to be the only obstacle to the fulfillment of the social and political objectives of extremist Left-wing parties."²⁴ An appeal by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Romania, published in *Scanteia* at the end of September 1944,²⁵ encouraged workers and soldiers to "arrest and hand over Fascist criminals to the civil and military authorities."²⁶ This action was coordinated by the Allied Control Commission in Romania. Its vice-president, General Vinogradov, warned the Romanian Government that it was not taking strong enough measures to get rid of the Iron Guardist elements in the state apparatus and the army.²⁷

²² *Istoria Statului Major General Roman. Documente 1859-1947*, București, 1944, pp. 371-372.

²³ Arh. M.Ap.N., fond M.S.T./S. III, dosar 2722, ff. 13-20.

²⁴ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M., Cabinet Sănătescu-Rădescu, dosar 1411/1944-1945, ff. 136-137.

²⁵ *Scânteia*, 21 September 1944.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

The representative of the United States on the Allied Control Commission, General C.V.R. Schuyler, wrote about this matter in his diary: "The prefect of police, General Ghika, told Colonel Farnsworth that bands of armed Communists were roaming the streets, attacking policemen and forcing their way into houses, searching for the so-called 'Fascists.' The police have no power because its forces are reduced, because the Russians have forbidden them to use their weapons, and because it seems that many of the bands are accompanied by Russian soldiers."²⁸

The Romanian General Staff repeatedly requested the council of ministers to state precisely the terms for collaboration between the Romanian Army and the Soviet troops in the joint fight for the liberation of Transylvania and to define Romania's position from a juridical perspective "within the new coalition which they joined on 23 August."²⁹ At the end of September, talks took place between Marshal Rodion I. Malinovsky, the commander of the Second Ukrainian Front and Soviet president of the Allied Control Commission in Romania, and general of the adjutant corps of the army, Gheorghe Mihail, chief of the Romanian General Staff. The protocol established was aimed at the "annihilation of all large units in the interior."³⁰

General Mihail explained that the Soviet reasoning for such a severe measure regarding an ally fighting against a common enemy was that: "Behind the front no Romanian division was supposed to exist for fear that, at a certain moment, when something dissatisfied the Romanians, they might react by using these interior divisions which they held in reserve."³¹ Consequently, he refused to sign any act which would entail the "crippling and disintegration of the army for whose greatness he had fought for a lifetime"³² and then resigned from office. The protocol through which the forces of the Romanian Army were drastically diminished, although they should have been increased both qualitatively and quantitatively, was signed by General Nicolae Radescu³³ on 26 October 1944. He stipulated in an addendum to the document that he had signed it against his will.³⁴

Two weeks after the protocol had been signed, ten divisions of infantry and mountain scouts, three of cavalry, one mechanized division, and five commands of large units were disbanded. At the same time, the forces of the Fifth Corps of the Army, the forces of the mountain troops, and of three mountain divisions and of infantry were demobilized and reduced to peace time levels.³⁵

²⁸ C.V.R. Schuyler, *Misiune dificilă. Jurnal (28 ianurie 1945-20 septembrie 1946)*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1997, p. 24.

²⁹ Arh. M.Ap.N., fond M.St.M./S. III, dosar 2722, ff. 13-20.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, fond Microfilme, r.P.II, 2.240, c. 600.

³¹ Biblioteca Academiei Române (*The Library of the Romanian Academy*), Arh. Ist., fond XIII, dosar 1009, f. 46.

³² *Istoria Statului Major General Român. Documente*, p. 376.

³³ *Ibidem*, pp. 377-380.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ Arh. M.Ap.N., fond M.St.M./S. III, dosar 457/72, ff. 94-95.

Referring to the impact that the measures of disbanding these large divisions had on Romanian public opinion, the president of the National Peasant Party, Iuliu Maniu, in the letter addressed to A.I. Vyshinsky on 15 November 1944, pointed out that "This measure, which does not abide by the conditions of the Armistice was accepted by the Romanian Government only under the threat of the disarmament of Romanian troops by Soviet forces, although, unlike Finland, the Armistice with Romania does not include such a stipulation."³⁶

Dissatisfied with the way in which reductions in the anti-aircraft defense units on Romanian territory were implemented, on 30 November 1944 the Soviet Allied Control Commission in Romania issued a demand to Prime Minister Sanatescu, adjutant general of the army, to disband all command structures and aviation units in the interior of the country, including seven military aviation schools³⁷ (by 20 December 1944). One aviation school, one school for training sailors, and one school for artillery and anti-aircraft officers, the number of students ranging from 100 to 250, were allowed to remain open. To maintain the inventory and the reserves, as well as to supply the units on the front, the First and Third Aviation Bases remained active, but without the naval personnel.³⁸ If one takes into account that seventeen anti-aircraft artillery batteries were eliminated,³⁹ it can be seen that Romanian air space was completely unguarded at the very height of the war.

After measures through which the interior army was reduced to symbolic forces were implemented, the Soviet Allied Control Commission addressed the reduction and modification of structures for the organization and control of the police, the gendarmes, and the fire brigades. Through order V-243 on 25 November 1944, addressed to the president of the council of ministers, Marshal R.I. Malinovsky requested the reduction of the number of gendarme units to levels not to exceed 30,178 men, including reservists.⁴⁰ The order also required that by 1 December 1944 the Allied Control Commission should receive plans for the reorganization of the structure of the gendarmes, a plan for the relocation of gendarme units in the country, and a plan for reforming those particular units⁴¹ in order to establish the numerical composition and especially the territorial reapportionment of the forces of order.

Using arbitrary measures, the reduction of the police forces and those of the public gendarmes throughout the country was imposed upon the Romanian Government. The big cities of the country were left with forces that were inadequate for providing security and public order. In the capital, for instance, of 1,435

³⁶ *Misiunile lui A.I. Vâșinski în România. Documente secrete*, București, 1997, p. 95.

³⁷ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M.-C.R.A.A., dosar 2749, vol. III, f. 64.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 65.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M.-C.R.A.A., dosar 2749, vol. III, f. 2.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, f. 3.

policemen, 764 were retained in their positions, while of 2,507 public gendarmes, only 2,148 remained on active duty.⁴²

The Romanian authorities protested against these abuses, stating that such measures contradicted articles 1 and 17 of the Armistice Convention⁴³ and encroached upon the independence and sovereignty of the state, which was officially acknowledged by the Soviet Union. It was pointed out that, under the circumstances, specifically since Romania was an active participant in the fight against Germany, and, at the same time, compelled to comply with the provisions of the Armistice Convention, to ensure order and public security, 70,239 gendarmes were necessary. The Soviet Allied Control Commission responded through General-Lieutenant Vinogradov, the vice-president of the Allied Control Commission, that: "The High Command of Romania and the Government acknowledged that Romania was defeated in the war against the Allied States, a fact on the basis of which the conditions of the Armistice had been received,"⁴⁴ and, consequently, the Romanian Government was called upon to enforce these indications and instructions to the letter.⁴⁵

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In flagrant violation of the stipulations of the Armistice Convention which provided for the independence and the sovereignty of Romania (article no. 1) and the restoration of civil administration throughout Romanian territory (article no. 17),⁴⁶ the Soviet military authorities hindered the Romanian Government, by force and abuses, from exerting its administrative power on its own territory.⁴⁷

Two months after the Armistice had been signed and after military operations ceased on Romanian territory, the government was not allowed to administer southern Bucovina, northern Moldavia, and Dobrogea. The Soviet High Command controlled the administration in these territories directly or through office workers appointed on the spot, unconfirmed by the central authorities in Bucharest.

In the government session on 28 September 1944 it was decided that it was "absolutely necessary to specify the nature of the relationship between the local Soviet headquarters and the local administrative bodies,"⁴⁸ on behalf of the appointed and dismissed prefects, and the police and security forces; their appointments and dismissals were in fact contrary to the provisions of the Armistice Convention. The

⁴² *Ibidem*, f. 25.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, f. 56.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 55.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ *România liberă*, 17 September 1944.

⁴⁷ Constantin Hlihor, "Ocuparea României de către Armata Roșie. Premise, etape, consecințe" in *Revista istorică*, nos. 9-10/1994, p. 870 et seq.

⁴⁸ Arh. 1st. Centr., fond P.C.M., Stenograme, dosar 1/1944, f. 212.

Soviet military authorities appointed a hairdresse⁴⁹ from Suceava as prefect in Huși, and a Jew⁵⁰ in Vaslui. In Constanta the gendarmerie and the police were removed by the Soviets approximately 15 km⁵¹ outside the town, being replaced with the so-called "civil guards," made up of 2-5 persons, some of them armed by the local Soviet headquarters.

The administration improvised by the Soviet military authorities in the territories controlled by them also began to undertake social and economic reforms. Estates whose owners had fled were taken over by certain "civil committees"⁵² to be administered within a kolkhoz system. A part of the harvest was delivered to the Soviet Army and the rest was divided among those who had worked on that estate.

As a result of discussions with Marshal R.I. Malinovsky, the president of the Romanian Commission for the Application of the Armistice, I. Christu, obtained permission to reinstall Romanian administrative bodies in Moldavia, southern Bucovina, and Dobrogea on 25 September 1944.⁵³ In accordance with this agreement, on 24 October 1944 the Romanian Government sent a special train with military and civil authorities to the northern half of Moldavia and to southern Bucovina, so that they could resume their duties, but the train was delayed for several weeks at the railway station in Adjud.⁵⁴

In some counties, after great efforts, some of the authorities sent by the government managed to arrive, but they were prevented from resuming their duties. On 6 November 1944 the police station in Dorohoi reported to the General Inspectorate of Police that the authorities sent there were carefully examined and selected by a commission presided over by the lawyer Livenshon Jake on 4 November 1944. "Although after this thorough selection — as the report stated — the police forces could not settle down to work since they were rejected by the ad-hoc commander of the local police, L. Rorlich, who improvised a police station consisting of approximately 120 persons, all armed with rifles and automatic weapons."⁵⁵ In Huși, at the end of November 1944, the administration was still directly controlled by the local Soviet headquarters.⁵⁶ At the same time, the prefect of Radauji, who had been appointed by the Soviets, refused to send a statistical report to the Romanian Commission for the Application of the Armistice, since this report had not been approved by the local Soviet headquarters.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 211.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, dosar 2/1944, f. 70.

⁵² *Ibidem*, f. 213.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, f. 244.

⁵⁴ Arh. M.Ap. N., fond Microfilme, r. P. II.2.240, c. 629.

⁵⁵ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D," dosar 7129, f. 339.

⁵⁶ Arh. M.Ap.N., fond Microfilme, r. P. II. 2.240, c. 630.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, c. 629.

Having analyzed the grave and confusing situation in these territories, the Romanian Government, through the Romanian Commission for the Application of the Armistice, demanded in a memorandum delivered to the Allied Control Commission in Romania on 11 November 1944 the restoration of northern Moldavia and southern Bucovina, according to articles no. 1, 4, and 17 from the Armistice Convention because, as General Dumitru Damaceanu had said at the session of the council of ministers on 26 September 1944, "from certain points of view, Moldavia has been severed from the rest of the country."⁵⁸

Iuliu Maniu, in a letter sent to A.I. Vyshinsky, brought to the Soviet diplomat's attention a case in Dobrogea where the Romanian authorities were hindered by Soviet troops from exercising their right to appoint a prefect for Constanta.⁵⁹ The response was the establishment of the direct military occupation of northwestern Transylvania, thus shattering any illusions that the political and military authorities in Bucharest were harboring.

The local Soviet military headquarters in Sfântu-Gheorghe, Miercurea-Ciuc, Targu-Mures, Cluj, and other towns in the territory which had previously been given to the Hungarians through the Diktat of Vienna and which recently had been restored to Romania, ordered Romanian authorities to leave the respective localities. The brutality with which the Romanian authorities were driven away is revealed by the telephone report of the Police Inspectorate in Targu-Mures, on 11 November 1944: "At 13:00, on 11 November 1944, a meeting was held at the Soviet headquarters in town, including the prefect of the county, the commander of the legion of gendarmes, the police inspector, and the chief of the local police, in which it was announced that all the office workers who had come from the Old Kingdom should immediately leave that part of Transylvania, allowing the Soviet headquarters to staff the administration with local people (of Magyar origin). The conference ended at 13:15 and the office workers were given 30 minutes to leave their work places."⁶⁰ On 14 November 1944 the Allied Control Commission endorsed these measures. The petition addressed to the vice-president of the Allied Control Commission, General Vinogradov, on 19 November 1944, in which the reestablishment of the Romanian civil administration in northern Transylvania was requested,⁶¹ did not bring about a legal solution. The Soviet military headquarters in Cluj, Huedin, Bistritsa, șimleul Silvaniei, Oradea, Satu Mare, Baia Mare, and Sighet continued to oppose the installation of the Romanian forces of the police and the gendarmerie.⁶²

In most of the localities throughout the country, the representatives of the Allied Sub-Commissions for Control in the Territory and those of the Soviet

⁵⁸ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond PCM., Stenograme, dosar 2/1944, f. 219.

⁵⁹ *Misiunile lui A.I. Vâșinski în România. Documente Secrete...*, p. 94.

⁶⁰ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 7129, f. 463.

⁶¹ Arh. M.A.E., fond 71/The Soviet Union, vol. 11, 1945-1948, p. 14.

⁶² Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 8912, ff. 13-25.

headquarters relentlessly interfered with the Romanian administration. The General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie, through a note addressed to the Ministry of Home Affairs on 11 October 1944, appealed to the Allied Control Commission in Romania to put an end to interference in the administration by the local Soviet headquarters in Focșani.⁶³ In the village of Poenarii Burchii (Prahova County), the local Soviet headquarters ordered the distribution of the estate owned by D. Matoc to the villagers in that locality.⁶⁴ In Turnu-Magurele, the chief of the local Soviet headquarters, Captain Pentain, fined 12 local merchants.⁶⁵

On 10 November 1944 the Seventh Department of the Romanian General Staff informed the military delegation of the Romanian Commission for the Application of the Armistice that "in different regions of the country Soviet headquarters have been established which assume administrative responsibilities and the task of exploiting the economic resources of the territory."⁶⁶ Such headquarters were set up at Pârlița, Sărulești, and Vidra in the county of Ilfov, Cobadin and Ferdinand (Constanța County), and Corabia (Romania County) and terrorized the civil and military local administration.⁶⁷

During the night of 15-16 November 1944, at 23:00 p.m., the Soviet headquarters in the village of Darașești (Covurlui County) arrested all the leaders of the local administration and the principal landlords without any explanation and without the knowledge of the Romanian police and security forces in the respective area.⁶⁸ The list of such examples of interference is extensive, proving that the incidents were not accidental and that they were not only tolerated, but also sponsored, by the senior officials of the Red Army in Romania.

With no real or legal reason whatsoever, the commander of the Second Ukrainian Front, Marshal Rodion I. Malinovsky, forbade the Romanian Government to post guards for more than one year⁶⁹ along the eastern frontier which had been imposed on Romania through article 4 of the Armistice Convention. Officially, this was motivated by the need for the unimpeded circulation of Soviet troops on Romanian territory. On 14 October 1944 the Soviet headquarters in Galaji ordered the Romanian frontier guards to retreat from the portion of the territory where they were stationed (Chilia Veche, Tulcea, Isaccea, and Galaji), because "the frontier between the Soviet Union and Romania has not yet been established."⁷⁰

The same situation occurred on the western frontier of the country, where armed elements from Tito's army regularly crossed the frontier under the protection of

⁶³ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond I.G.J., Central, dosar 41/1944, f. 168.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 173.

⁶⁵ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 7129, f. 235.

⁶⁶ Arh. M.Ap.N., fond Microfilme, r. P. II. 2.240, c. 789.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸ Arh. Ist. Centr, fond I.G.J.-Central, dosar 25/1944, f. 135.

⁶⁹ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond PC.M.-C.R.A.A.

⁷⁰ Arh. M.Ap.N., fond Microfilme, r. P. II. 2.240, c. 681.

Soviet troops, requisitioning supplies and promoting anti-Romanian propaganda.⁷¹ The only secure frontier in the autumn and spring of 1944 was the southern one, yet the Romanian pickets of frontier guards were constantly attacked. From 23 August 1944 until the end of September 1944, twelve armed attacks were made against the pickets of frontier guards, and in October another seventeen similar actions took place, resulting in a number of wounded and dead.⁷²

In response to the repeated requests by the Romanian authorities for permission to post frontier guards on the eastern border of Romania, the Soviets responded that the problem was to be resolved through a convention. Consequently, the Allied Control Commission in Romania informed Prime Minister General Constantin Sanatescu, through order no. V-242, of the decision made by Marshal Malinovsky: the Romanian Government should "reorganize" the frontier troops⁷³ through a substantial reduction in the number of officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers. Besides the effective date — 30 November 1944 — the note did not specify any reason. The Romanian Government, engaged in a race to win the Soviets' goodwill, yielded as it had yielded to the earlier ultimatum handed down by Malinovsky to reduce the forces of the interior Romanian Army, of the police, and of the gendarmerie.⁷⁴

Aided by the occupation troops and based on a scenario elaborated in Moscow,⁷⁵ the Communist Party began a vast campaign of forcibly removing the local authorities who did not fall under its control. During November 1944 prefects who had joined the National Democratic Front⁷⁶ were installed in over a half of all the counties. These prefects set about to enforce measures of a economic and social character beyond the authority of the government. Their purpose was to accumulate political capital for the benefit of the Soviet Allied Control Commission. In the meeting of the council of ministers on 14 December 1944 Prime Minister General Nicolae Radescu, referring to these abuses and illegalities, pointed out that under the circumstances "it is impossible for the government to administer this state of affairs," in which "each prefect does what he likes."⁷⁷

"Democratizing" the state apparatus by dominating the local administration provided the opportunity for ample political confrontations, including violent street protests. On 11 February 1945 General Nicolae Radescu, in a speech given in Aro Hall in Bucharest, explained that it was necessary "to maintain order so that all of us

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, c. 660.

⁷² *Ibidem*, c. 756-758.

⁷³ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M.-C.R.A.A., dosar 2749/1944, f. 40.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, ff. 1-40.

⁷⁵ Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria Partidului Național Țărănesc*, București, 1994, p. 419.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁷ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M., Stenograme, dosar 5/1944, f. 6; Constantin Hlihor, "Rolul armatelor sovietice de ocupație în schimbarea regimului politic din România," în vol. *6 Martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, București, 1995, p. 16.

can work in peace and as intensely as possible to increase production, so that we can all cope with the duties agreed upon in the Armistice that was signed."⁷⁸ He consequently called for an end to the "harmful manner of political protest," as "the consequences would be unforeseeable."⁷⁹

By the end of February 1945 the tactic of occupying prefectures had become common.⁸⁰ Faced with this situation, on 24 February N. Radescu ordered the headquarters of the Seventh Corps to take necessary measures in accordance with legal provisions, specifying that: "If demonstrators try to occupy public institutions by force, legal action will be taken, after which the first salvo will be fired. If they do not retreat and continue to try to occupy the institutions, the army will do its duty; it will shoot."⁸¹ He understood that such actions were initiated by "a handful of people, led by two foreigners, Ana Pauker and the Hungarian, Vasile Luca," who "are striving, through terror, to seize power."⁸²

Previously, Professor Nicolau, a member of the National Democratic Front (F.N.D.), representing the General Confederation of Labor, and Constantin Agiu, on behalf of the Communist Party in Romania, presented themselves at the headquarters of the Seventh Corps requesting authorities "to reconsider the measures for maintaining order, and to join the F.N.D., and not to carry out the orders coming from the lawful superior authorities." Furthermore, they threatened to hold all commanders responsible for any such action "before the people."⁸³

The overthrow of the local administrations in most of the country's towns and localities was made with the direct and indirect help of the Soviet military authorities. The legion of gendarmes from Ilfov reported to the General Inspectorate of Gendarmes on 16 October that the representatives of the Patriots' Union, Petre Ionescu and Dumitru Nicolae, from Bucharest, presented themselves at the "local Soviet headquarters in the Vidra commune, asking for two soldiers to go to the commune of Varaşti-Ilfov to arrest the current mayor and notary and to install a new mayor and notary who belonged to the Patriots' Union."⁸⁴ Having been informed, the authorities took action; the Soviet soldiers ran away, and the "delegates" of the Patriots' Union were arrested because they had not been given a mandate "by the competent bodies for replacing local authorities"⁸⁵ in the Varaşti commune.

In localities such as Orastie, Arad, Brad, Calan, Ghelar, Petroşani, and Lupeni, officers and soldiers of the Red Army became involved in propaganda activities to

⁷⁸ *România. Viaţa politică în documente*, 1945, coordonator Ioan Scurtu, Bucureşti, 1994, p. 139.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 140.

⁸⁰ Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 425-426.

⁸² Nicoleta Frank, *O înfrângere în victorie (1944-1947)*, Bucureşti, 1992, p. 159.

⁸³ Arh. M.Ap.N., fond Microfilme, r. P. II. 2.249, c. 102.

⁸⁴ Arh. Ist Centr., fond I.G.J.-Central, dosar 41/1944, f. 142.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*.

convince the inhabitants to replace the old authorities.⁸⁶ At Sibiu, for example, on 15 October 1944 the local Soviet headquarters ordered the population to gather at the town-hall. A captain and a first lieutenant addressed the population about the Communist regime, the purpose of the war, and about the alliance between the Soviet Union and Romania.⁸⁷

The Soviet Allied Control Commission in Romania compelled the Romanian Government to adopt measures for "purging the public administration of elements of the Iron Guard, Fascists, and people guilty of cooperating with the Antonescu regime."⁸⁸ King Michael I signed laws no. 216 on 19 September 1944, no. 486 on 7 October 1944,⁸⁹ and no. 594 on 23 November 1944,⁹⁰ which established the norms and the stages for legalizing these measures. These legal maneuvers legitimized a number of abuses and illegalities. Those willing to cooperate with the Soviet occupation authorities were not affected by these laws. Thus, according to a message from the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmes on 21 December 1944, "at Tutova, the Communists appointed Zanca as prefect. He is a former Iron Guardist, a former worker at the railroad station in Barlad, and known for the multiple abuses he had committed."⁹¹ "Purifying" commissions which were established within all the ministries, and local and central institutions of the state were entirely under the control of the Communists or of organizations under the influence of the Communist Party.⁹² They were used to modify the balance of power and to influence the masses; a balance that, at the end of 1944, was tilting in favor of the traditional parties.⁹³ The exclusively political, and not moral or reparative, intent of these "purification" laws is revealed by the imprecise and evasive articles, as well as by the fact that these laws were imposed by the Soviet authorities. The Soviet Allied Control Commission in Romania, ascertaining that the activity of "purifying is not developing in the expected rhythm or direction," addressed a threatening ultimatum to the council of ministers on 4 December 1944 under the pretext that "a large number of Fascists have not been removed from the army, the police, and the gendarmerie, and that these would camouflage or even support attacks"⁹⁴ against Soviet officers. They warned the Romanian Government that: "If the purification of the police and gendarmes does not take place immediately," the Allied Control Commission would be forced to

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 130.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, fond P.C.M., Cabinet Sănătescu-Rădescu, dosar 1359/1944, f. 22.

⁸⁹ *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 233, 8 October 1944.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, no. 273, 24 November 1944.

⁹¹ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond I.G.J. — Central, dosar 72/1944, f. 8.

⁹² *Ibidem*, dosar 19/1944, f. 79; Nicolae Rădescu, "Începutul ocupației," in *Memoria*, no. 6, 1992, p. 108.

⁹³ Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 418.

⁹⁴ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M., Cabinet Sănătescu-Rădescu, dosar 1417/1944, f. 294.

"ascertain the capacity of the government to reinstate order and to take proper measures to insure the safety of Red Army personnel."⁹⁵

The military and administrative control in most of the country's territory, through the Soviet Allied Control Commission and its subcommissions, required a change in Moscow's attitude toward the evolution of the political regime in Romania. The fundamental problem that arose at the end of 1944 and at the beginning of the next year was that of political power and control.⁹⁶ The form of government had not yet been challenged, since it was well-known that Romanian public opinion supported the monarchy and democratic institutions. So as not to arouse suspicion and to increase the Communist Party's prestige among the people, Vasile Luca, a leading member of the party, brought in the country by the Soviets after 23 August 1944, was of the opinion that: "The F.D.N, has to assume a conciliatory position and to prove through our actions we intend to be loyal to the king and that we want to work together."⁹⁷

The N.K.V.D. Troops and the Establishment of the Groza Government

The radical transformation of Romanian society and its transition to a system similar to that in the Soviet Union implied, on the one hand, the elimination of the influence exerted by the traditional (historical) parties, and, on the other hand, the formation of a government that would entirely serve the interests of the Kremlin. The concrete plan for seizing political power by the Communist Party and its allies was drawn up outside the country's borders. In the period between 31 December 1944 and 16 January 1945, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, a member of the Communist leadership and minister of Communications in the Radescu Government, made a visit to Moscow during which the modalities for "overthrowing the government in Bucharest were established."⁹⁸ On 24 January 1945, after returning to Romania, Gheorghiu-Dej presented the instructions received from Moscow to the Council of the National Democrat Front, stating that: "At this moment the military and political context inside and outside the country has led us to a government led by the F.N.D., firstly because Romania's position with respect to the Allies is not even equal to that of a belligerent country."⁹⁹

The chief of state and the leaders of the political parties, although they had not been informed that their country had been included in Moscow's sphere of influence through the percentage agreement made on 9 October 1944 between Stalin and

⁹⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁹⁶ Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 413; Gh. Buzatu, *România și războiul mondial din 1939-1945*, Iași, 1995, p. 49 et seq.

⁹⁷ *România. Viața politică în documente, 1945*, p. 106.

⁹⁸ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 7432, f. 172; Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 421; Nicolae Rădescu, "Începutul ocupației," in *Memoria*, no. 6/1992, p. 108.

⁹⁹ *România. Viața politică în documente, 1945*, p. 82.

Churchill,¹⁰⁰ correctly inferred the sense of the political evolution expected by the Soviet Union. The repeated demands for assistance addressed to the Western Powers to end to Soviet interference in Romanian internal affairs were answered only by reassuring statements. Just such a statement was made by the American political representative in Romania, Burton Berry, in response to a question asked by the Marshal of the Palace, Dimitrie Negel, on 30 November 1944, which referred to what would happen to the king if the Communists prepared a *coup d'etat*: "I turned off the question by saying that I felt the marshal was thinking in a much too pessimistic vein and that tomorrow morning, after a good night's sleep, he would likely laugh at his own question."¹⁰¹

Iuliu Maniu, the president of the most influential party of the time, demanded the truth from the British representative in Bucharest, John Le Rougetel, on 29 November 1944,¹⁰² and from the American spokesman, Burton Berry, on 8 December 1944¹⁰³ — had or had not Romania been given over to the Russian sphere of influence? The representatives of the Western Allies had been instructed to deny this¹⁰⁴ and to assure the Romanian people that their country would remain independent, although things were different.¹⁰⁵ C.V.R. Schuyler a few days before the formation of Dr. Petru Groza's government wrote in his diary that "Both Bratianu and M. Radulescu have paid me a visit today, each separately, for small pieces of advice. I could certainly offer them none."¹⁰⁶

On 29 January 1945 *Scînteia* published the governing platform of the National Democrat Front, drafted at the initiative of the Communist Party. It focused on the resolution of some urgent problems confronting Romanian society, as for instance, agrarian reform and the elimination of other objectives which had not been appropriated at that stage. Church properties were exempted from expropriations, since it was known how deeply the religious sentiment was felt in Romanian society. Referring to this, Vasile Luca, in the session of the Council of the National Democratic Front on 24 January 1945, stated that: "It would be a mistake to make the church our enemy. So not confiscating the church estates is not a matter of tactics, but a result of a profound understanding of the social realities of our country".¹⁰⁷ Following the advice of Moscow — as Vasile Luca introduced it to the session of the Council of F.N.D. on 31 January 1944 which was dedicated to the overthrow of the

¹⁰⁰ Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *Sovietizarea României*, p. 17; *History of Romania*, edited by Kurt Treptow, The Center for Romanian Studies, Iași, 1997, pp. 512-513.

¹⁰¹ Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, edited by Cornelia Bodea, The Center for Romanian Studies, Iași, Oxford, Portland, 2000, p. 39.

¹⁰² Great Britain, P.R.O., *F.O.*, 371/43989, f. 73.

¹⁰³ Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries*, pp. 43-45.

¹⁰⁴ Ivor Porter, *Operațiunea "Autonomous"*, București, 1991, p. 301.

¹⁰⁵ Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-109.

¹⁰⁶ C.V.R. Schuyler, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

¹⁰⁷ Arh. Ist. Centr., Arh. C.C. a P.C.R. (the Romanian Communist Party), fond 49, dosar 16/1945, f. 13.

Radescu Government — "of being more diplomatic, and, so as to add a colorful note to the government we are setting up,"¹⁰⁸ the Communists drew to their side a number of well-known dissidents from the National-Liberal and National-Peasant parties.

Speculating on the peasants' desire for land, the National Democrat Front set off a government crisis, provoking animosity, both in the countryside and in the towns. The Communist press and the media controlled by the Communist Party and the Allied Control Commission in Romania mounted a virulent campaign against the Radescu Government and against the leaders of the traditional parties.¹⁰⁹ The actions of removing the local administrative bodies by force and occupying town halls was resumed more violently by the representatives of the National Democrat Front with the support of Soviet troops.¹¹⁰

Impressive demonstrations were organized in the county seats and in other localities, although General Nicolae Radescu, from the moment of his appointment as prime minister, had imposed the unanimously accepted condition that: "The ministers of the F.N.D. should not remove the workers from the factories and send them out to demonstrations."¹¹¹

According to the Romanian Security Service, on 5 February 1945, "Those who took part in the demonstrations were paid 2,000 lei each by the Communists. Soviet troops participated in these uprisings in several places, such as, for instance, Constanta. There were cases in which Soviet officers and soldiers of the Red Army made speeches rousing the population".¹¹² The climax was reached during the demonstrations of 24 February 1945.¹¹³

General Nicolae Radescu's attitude of not yielding to force and of defending peace and order in the country at any price was well-known.¹¹⁴ Specially trained saboteurs, protected by the crowds, incited unrest and attacked the authorities with weapons, assailing the Ministry of Internal Affairs — where General Radescu's headquarters were located — the Communication Center, the Military Center, and other central institutions. According to report 32.130, handed to the Soviet High Command in Bucharest by the Military Headquarters of the Capital on 25 February 1945, in the area of the Palace Square and around the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the events in the afternoon of 24 February had developed as follows: "Between 16:30 and

¹⁰⁸ *România. Viața politică în documente*, 1945, pp. 100-101.

¹⁰⁹ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 7432/1945; Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-428.

¹¹⁰ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M., Stenograme, dosar 5/1944, f. 5.

¹¹¹ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 7432, f. 87.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, f. 172.

¹¹³ Dinu C. Giurescu, "Din documentele guvernării generalului Nicole Rădescu. Evenimentele de la 24 februarie 1945," in *Arhivele totalitarismului*, year II, nos. 1-2/1944, f. 197; *Ibidem*, *Guvernarea Nicolae Rădescu*, București, 1996, pp. 225-247; Nicolae Rădescu, "Începutul ocupației," in *Memoria*, no. 6/1992, pp. 111-113; *A History of Romania*, p. 514; Keith Hitchins, *Romania. 1866-1947*, București, p. 547.

¹¹⁴ Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 423; Dinu C. Giurescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-198.

17:30 the demonstrators started to gather in the Palace Square and in front of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. When a group was formed, isolated shots coming from the direction of a pile of blocks were heard. At this signal, the demonstrators began to respond with gun shots aimed at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, at the entrance on Wilson Street, with the obvious intention of entering the courtyard of the ministry. While the demonstrators were assailing the groundfloor entrance, an automatic weapon was fired from the Boteanu-Wilson block at the military guard on duty. In the meantime, the public prosecutor legally ordered the soldiers to discharge a salvo into the air. The demonstrators retreated."¹¹⁵ At the Communication Center one of the demonstrators, Anton Moisescu, a supporter of the F.N.D., broke the entrance window and stabbed Corporal Marian Dumitru who was on duty. Arrested by Romanian authorities, he was freed by a patrol of the N.K.V.D. which was nearby.¹¹⁶

In the account written on 25 February 1945 by General Schuyler the events unfolded as such: "The Communists and other parties which constitute the National Democrat Front organized a demonstration yesterday at 14:00. A crowd of approximately 50,000 people gathered in National Square, where Communists leaders such as Gheorghiu-Dej, Ana Pauker, and others made speeches. They marched along Calea Victoriei and once at the Royal Palace they continued to demonstrate till 19:00. During the parade a crowd of approximately 500 persons, most of them armed with clubs, tried to get in the building of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, where the prime minister's office was. The soldiers, placed there as a precaution, discharged firearms above the heads of the crowd. As a result of a sporadic exchange of shots, which lasted almost an hour, at least one person was killed and seven were wounded."¹¹⁷

The involvement of Soviet troops in the events that took place in Bucharest and in other towns of the country on 24 February 1945 is confirmed by documents from the archives of the Russian Federation. In the telegraph message sent by the Allied Control Commission deputy, Rear-Admiral VL. Bogdenko on 24 February 1945 at 19:45 to A.I. Vyshinsky the following measures taken in Bucharest were reported:

1. At 17:00 I asked the Prime Minister Radescu to order the police and gendarme troops to cease fire on the demonstrators otherwise the Soviet High Command would resort to its own means for ending the conflict. Radescu promised to fulfill our requests and said that he would order a cease fire.

2. Bucharest's military commander, General Maksiutinov, gave an ultimatum to the Romanian commander, General Tatarascu, demanding him to cease fire by 18:00, otherwise the Soviet High Command would take it upon itself to ensure order in the city. This demand was carried out.

¹¹⁵ Arh. M.Ap.N., fond Microfilme, r. P II. 2.246, cc. 116-117.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁷ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond Microfilme, S.U.A., r. 693, cc. 279-280.

3. The commander of the division of N.K.VD. troops, Colonel Alexeev, presented an ultimatum to the chief of the Gendarmes, General Anton, asking him to cease fire. The ultimatum was accepted. At present our reinforced guards and patrols supervise order in the city.¹¹⁸

While in the Soviet Union the Romanian Government was accused by the mass media of having fired at the demonstrators who had been protesting in the streets against the "pro-Fascist regime" both in the capital (as reported by the Harkov radio station)¹¹⁹ and in Craiova, Braşov, and Caracal (as reported by the Tass Agency).¹²⁰ While the intervention of the Soviet forces was requested to establish order "behind the triumphant front on which the quick and definite victory against the Fascist beast depended" (as reported by the Novorosl radio station, 26 February 1945).¹²¹ In Western diplomatic circles the situation was presented "so confusingly that nobody knows precisely what is going on. What is certain is that this crisis surpassed the others in scope and that it is no longer an internal matter, but it has reached the international stage."¹²²

After the events of 24 February 1945, political life in Romania was steered by the Soviet Allied Control Commission in the direction expected by the Kremlin. The occupying military authorities were convinced that the establishment of Communist power in Romania could not be achieved in the same way as in Russia because "they lacked the age-old tradition for shaping inspired and enthusiastic fighters."¹²³ Therefore, a series of political-military measures were enacted with the purpose of annihilating the main state institutions, especially the army. According to a memo from the Ministry of War addressed to the president of the council of ministers on 26 September 1944, the army "in its present form is probably the only obstacle in the way of carrying out the social-political objectives of the extremist parties of the Left wing."¹²⁴

From 27 February to 5 March 1945 the Allied Control Commission sent to the Grand General Staff and to the Ministry of War a number of ultimatums which had in view the disarmament of the Firemen's Corps, the Guard Battalion of the General Staff, the Building Detachments no. 1 and 2 of the units which were guarding the factories and other institutions of national interest.¹²⁵ The forces of the gendarme troops were again reduced to a mere 14,500 soldiers,¹²⁶ although their numbers had

¹¹⁸ *Misiunile lui A.I. Vâşinski în România...*, p. 122.

¹¹⁹ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 7070, f. 484; C.V.A. Schuyler, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

¹²⁰ *23 August 1944. Documente*, vol. IV, p. 191.

¹²¹ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D," dosar 7070, f. 483.

¹²² *Ibidem*, f. 484.

¹²³ *Ibidem*, f. 483.

¹²⁴ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond Cabinet Sănătescu-Rădescu, dosar 1411/1944-1945, ff. 136-137.

¹²⁵ Arh. M.Ap.N., fond 1367, dosar 199/1945, f. 295; Nicolae Rădescu, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

¹²⁶ Arh. M.Ap.N., fond 1367, dosar 199/1945.

just been reduced in November 1944 to 30,700,¹²⁷ an already insufficient number for ensuring safety and order in the country.

The units of frontier guards (who were supposed to guard Romania's eastern border, but were then residing in Bucharest as they had not yet received the consent of the Soviet Allied Control Commission to be sent to the frontier), were dispatched to the Mihai Bravu-Videle-Alexandria region, while part of the units of the Guard Division were redirected towards the front.¹²⁸ The forces remaining in the capital were entirely insufficient for public defence considering the fact that the country was still engaged in a war. Beginning on 1 March 1945, the headquarters of the First and Fourth Army, which were fighting alongside the Soviet troops against the German armies, were forbidden by the Soviet High Command to maintain radio communication with the General Staff.¹²⁹

At the main entry points into Bucharest, Soviet control stations were set up. No motor vehicle of the Romanian Army or of any Romanian officer, irrespective of rank, could enter or leave Bucharest without the Soviets' permission.¹³⁰ The Allied Control Commission in Romania forbade any activity in Romanian air space and the Soviets assumed responsibility for guarding the airport.¹³¹ Meanwhile, in the capital, a number of active Romanian officers — as was noted by the Romanian General Staff on 5 March 1948 in a memorandum addressed to the Romanian Commission for the Application of the Armistice — were subjected to offensive treatment by Soviet patrols who searched their places of residence¹³² and some officers were disarmed publicly in the street. The measures taken by the Soviet authorities for the annihilation of the potential for riposte and resistance of the country's military force were known by the Anglo-American representatives in Bucharest, but, according to the instructions received from their governments,¹³³ these representatives did not intervene. Prime Minister Winston Churchill addressed a relevant note to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anthony Eden, on 14 March 1945 in which he stated that: "Strict instructions must be sent to our representatives in Romania not to establish and to develop an anti-Russian political front there."¹³⁴

In addition to the measures for the annihilation of the defensive potential of the Romanian military forces, the Soviet military forces of occupation were strengthened in Bucharest and in the main towns of the country. According to the Romanian Intelligence Service, on 28 February 1945, "In the last few days new N.K.V.D. units have arrived in Bucharest. Six battalions are now quartered at Regiment Two

¹²⁷ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M.-C.R.A.A., dosar 2749/1944, ff. 2-3.

¹²⁸ Arh. M.Ap.N., fond 1367, dosar 199/1945, f. 295.

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 312; Nicolae Rădescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-115.

¹³⁰ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 7071/1945, p. 226.

¹³¹ *Ibidem*.

¹³² Arh. M.Ap.N., fond Microfilme, r. P. II. 2.249, c. 109.

¹³³ Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 120; C.VR. Schuyler, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 214.

Vanatori, the Mihai Viteazul Regiment Six, and in other buildings in the capital."¹³⁵ Stalin ordered Beria to deploy two divisions of the Red Army in Bucharest during the crisis.¹³⁶ Strategic points in Valea Jiului, Craiova, and Mehedintj were patrolled and controlled by units of the Soviet Army.¹³⁷

On 2 March 1945 the Allied Control Commission enforced a complete censure of all messages and actions by the political parties, as well as on statements made by party leaders. Declarations on the radio, even those from the government, were forbidden.¹³⁸

In response to directives given by the trade unions controlled by the Communists, press workers refused to print the newspapers *Dreptatea*, *Dreptatea țaranilor*, *Viitomi*, and others,¹³⁹ which belonged to the traditional (historical) parties. These parties found themselves faced with the impossibility of using their main means of political propaganda.

In this atmosphere and under these circumstances in which Romania had become tacitly a "guinea pig" of the Yalta agreements (4-11 February 1945),¹⁴⁰ Andrei Vyshinsky, the chief deputy of the people's commissar in charge of Soviet foreign affairs, and Marshal Rodion I. Malinovsky, commander of the Second Ukrainian Front, arrived in Bucharest on 26 and 28 February respectively. The latter, on his arrival, received the report of the Soviet High Command in the country, and, on the following day, contacted General Iosif Teodorescu, the military commander of the capital.¹⁴¹ After several interviews with King Michael on 1 March 1945 which — according to the declarations of some important politicians and diplomats present in Bucharest — could not be characterized as a state visit at all and took place under duress, the Kremlin's emissary, Andrei Vyshinsky, transmitted to Moscow the agreement of Romania's head of state to the appointment of Dr. Petru Groza as prime minister.¹⁴²

The king tried to resist the brutal Soviet interference, but Constantin Vișoianu's appeal to the representatives from the United States and Great Britain in Romania for political support proved illusory. The American and British governments were preoccupied with pleasing Stalin.¹⁴³ "I'm very afraid of our going any further, taking

¹³⁵ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 7070, f. 13.

¹³⁶ Arh. Secției de istorie orală a Radiodifuziunii Române, r. 281, doc. 1109; *Misiunile lui A. I. Vâșinski în România...*, pp. 141-142.

¹³⁷ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 7070.

¹³⁸ *Ibidem*, dosar 7071, f. 23.

¹³⁹ Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 427; Nicolae Rădescu, *op. cit.*, 110.

¹⁴⁰ For more details see Nicolae Baci's *Yalta și crucificarea României*; Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, *România și organizarea politică a lumii*; Titu Georgescu, *România între Yalta și Malta*, etc.

¹⁴¹ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 7070, f. 513.

¹⁴² Arh. Ist. Centr., fond Fotocopii Rusești, pachet XIII, doc. 5, 7-21, published in the vol. *România. Viața politică românească în documente 1945*, pp. 165-166; *Misiunile lui A.I. Vâșinski în România*, p. 135.

¹⁴³ Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.

into account the unofficial arrangement with respect to Greece and the strict way in which this was observed by U.J. (Uncle Joe, that is Stalin)," Great Britain's prime minister, Winston Churchill, pointed out to Minister of Foreign Affairs Anthony Eden on 4 March 1945 that, "After all, the Romanians and the Bulgarians were our enemies and we cannot assume the same risks for them as we did for Greece and Poland."¹⁴⁴

Under these circumstances King Michael, on 2 March 1945, charged Dr. Petru Groza with the formation of a government and insisted that he include representatives of the historical parties. Dr. Petru Groza's discussions with the representatives of the National Peasant Party and of the National Liberal Party did not result in the expected agreement of political cooperation, mainly because of the uncompromising attitudes manifested by both sides with regard to the portfolios of the ministries of Internal Affairs, National Defence, Foreign Affairs, and Justice.¹⁴⁵ On 6 March, under threats and pressures from Moscow's representatives —Vyshinsky and Marshal Malinovsky — the king accepted the government presented by Dr. Petru Groza. The National Democrat Front received most of the portfolios — the leadership of the council of ministers and fourteen departments, and Tatarascu's Liberal Party was offered the vice-presidency and three ministries. Thus, Moscow's will was realized.

In the memorandum addressed to Dr. Petru Groza in 1950 concerning the make-up of the government, Onisifor Ghibu wrote: "Without any scruple you agreed to preside over a government in whose composition are ministers, at the most important levels — Foreign Affairs, the Army, and Finances — who are neither Romanian citizens, nor body and soul Romanians, but Jews like Ana Pauker, Carpathian-Russians like Emil Bodnaraș, and the Hungarian, Vasile Luca — all three being Soviet citizens. I do not think there has ever been in the whole world such an abnormality and I do not think that one can ever account for this immense monstrosity, which is tantamount to the first step in the process of murdering Romania as a state, and of the Romanian spirit."¹⁴⁶

That evening Andrei Vyshinsky and Marshal Rodion I. Malinovsky were received at the palace. They congratulated King Michael I on the decision he had made. The next day, on 7 March 1945, King Michael invited Andrei Vyshinsky, Marshal Rodion I. Malinovsky, commander of the Second Ukrainian Front, General I.Z. Susaikov, president of the Allied Control Commission, and General VP. Vinogradov, plenipotentiary Soviet minister in Bucharest, A.P. Pavlov, Rear-Admiral VL. Bogdenko, political counsellor of the president of the Allied Control

¹⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 122.

¹⁴⁵ *România. Viața politică în documente*, 1945, pp. 172-173; Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 31; Nicolae Rădescu, *op. cit.*, p. 111; Mircea Carp, "Primul guvern comunist din istoria României," in *Memoria*, no. 6/1992, p. 119..

¹⁴⁶ Onisifor Ghibu, *Chemare la judecata istoriei*, vol. I, București, 1992, p. 93.

Commission, and some members of Dr. Petru Groza's government to breakfast at the palace.¹⁴⁷

The Communist Party's plans for drawing people out in the street¹⁴⁸ again were cancelled. However, on the evening of 6 March 1945 a meeting organized by the F.N.D. took place in the National Square during which the tasks of the new government were announced; yet, people were also incited to violence and intolerance toward the opposition National Peasant and National Liberal parties.¹⁴⁹

The change of government on 6 March 1945 was not perceived by the Romanian public as an essential modification which entailed deep historic repercussions. Many people were satisfied that "something had happened"¹⁵⁰ and they considered Groza — according to the Romanian Intelligence Service in a report dated 10 March 1945 — "an energetic man, well-meaning with regard to his country's interests, and who has constructed a team suited to the present situation."¹⁵¹ The National Liberal and National Peasant leaders were of the opinion that the formation of the government of Dr. Petru Groza with Soviet help was indeed an essential change, but they also thought it was "a lost cause for the Communists, as everybody understood that the ascension to power of the Democrat Front was solely due to Russian support."¹⁵²

The changes in the political situation in Romania, despite misunderstandings between the Allies, caused anxiety in Anglo-American diplomatic circles and took the mass-media by surprise as well.¹⁵³ The tone and attitude of British newspapers toward the interference of the Soviet Union in Romania's internal affairs were acceptable to Moscow.¹⁵⁴ The United States Government deemed that: "The political situation in Romania should become the object of consultations between the main Allied governments,"¹⁵⁵ and, on 14 March 1945, it asked the Soviet Government to take this into consideration as a means for working out the political problems in Romania.¹⁵⁶ This stance was also assumed by Anthony Eden in a speech made on 14 March 1945 to the British Parliament.¹⁵⁷

¹⁴⁷ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 7071, f. 55.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, dosar 7432, f. 74; *România. Viața politică*, 1945, p. 177; *Misiunile lui A.I. Vyshinsky, Romania...*, p. 150.

¹⁴⁹ *Scântea*, 8 March 1945, p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 432.

¹⁵¹ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 7432, f. 148.

¹⁵² *Ibidem*, ff. 120-122.

¹⁵³ *Ibidem*, ff. 149, 172.

¹⁵⁴ St. Lache, Gh. Țuțui, *România și conferința de pace de la Paris*, Cluj-Napoca, 1978, p. 155 et seq.

¹⁵⁵ St. Lache, Gh. Țuțui, *op. cit.*, p. 154; Liliana Saiu, *The Great Powers and Romania, 1944-1946*, Boulder, 1992.

¹⁵⁶ *Coroșdența Președintelui Consiliului de Miniștri al U.R.S.S. cu președinții Statelor Unite și primii miniștri ai Marii Britanii din timpul Marelui Război pentru Apărarea Patriei*, vol. II, București, 1958, p. 295.

¹⁵⁷ St. Lache, Gh. Țuțui, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

London's and Washington's appeals to the Soviet Government did not change Stalin's intentions concerning the parts of Central and South-eastern Europe, including the Romanian territory, under his control.¹⁵⁸ Consequently, a number of measures were taken by Moscow to consolidate the position of the government installed on 6 March 1945 in the eyes of public opinion.

One day after having received the telegram (9 March 1945) in which the president of the council of ministers, Dr. Petru Groza, expressed the desire of the Romanian people to "integrate Transylvania into Romania,"¹⁵⁹ Stalin responded that: "The Soviet Government has decided to fulfill the Romanian Government's desire and, in keeping with the Armistice Convention of 12 September 1944, to agree to the establishment in Transylvania of an administrative body appointed by the Romanian Government."¹⁶⁰ At the time (9 March 1945), northeastern Transylvania, although free from Hungarian occupation, was, contrary to international law, under Soviet military administration.

The festivities occasioned by the establishment of Romanian administration and legislation in the northeast of the country took place in Cluj on 13 March 1945 in the presence of King Michael I, members of the Romanian Government and of the Soviet Allied Control Commission, and a few American and British military officials.¹⁶¹ The speech made on this occasion by the people's vice-commissar for the Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, Andrei Vyshinsky, aroused great interest not only in the local population, but also abroad. A Paris radio station, in its 19 March 1945 broadcast, noted that: "In Cluj, Mr. Vyshinsky outlined Romania's future policy."¹⁶²

Documents recently discovered in the Russian archives confirm the fact that Stalin and the Soviet leadership used the political-judicial status of northeastern Transylvania, an area which had been taken away from Romania through the Dictate of Vienna, as an instrument to ply pressure on political leaders in Bucharest. In a report sent on 6 December 1944 to A. Vyshinsky by Lavrentiev it was stated that: "The problem of retroceding northern Transylvania to Romania is that this area represents *the most important influential factor on the government, not only in relation to the obligations imposed by the Armistice, but also within the sphere of the internal and foreign policy* [italics added]"¹⁶³.

Subsequently, aided by the vast influence of the Soviet occupation authorities, Dr. Petru Groza's government undertook a series of economic, administrative, and political measures to consolidate its position. On 23 March 1945, the decree for

¹⁵⁸ Andre Fontaine, *Istoria războiului rece*, vol. 1, București, 1992, p. 300; C.V.R. Schuyler, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹⁵⁹ *Romania. Viața politică*, 1945, p. 197; C.V.R. Schuyler, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

¹⁶⁰ *România. Viața politică*, 1945, p. 198.

¹⁶¹ Constantin Sănătescu, *Jurnal*, Humanitas, București, 1993, p. 196.

¹⁶² Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 7432, f. 149.

¹⁶³ Arh. Secției de istorie Orală a Radiodifuziunii Române, red 281, doc. 1109.

agrarian reform¹⁶⁴ was adopted on the basis of which 1,468,946 hectares were expropriated, of which 1,109,562 hectares were divided among 917,777 peasant families. A few days later, on 30 March, the chief of state promulgated a decree purging the public administration; as a result of this decree prefects, mayors, and other office holders in the territory were replaced with supporters and members of the Communist Party.¹⁶⁵ Many at different levels of the administrative hierarchy were replaced, including police and gendarmerie officers who were known Iron Guardists or die-hard conservatives; the number of officers detained under the accusation of having committed "war crimes and crimes against peace"¹⁶⁶ or "of being responsible of the country's disaster" was increased, as the decree dated 21 April 1945 stipulated.¹⁶⁷

The persons were first arrested and then searches were made of their places of residence to find "evidence."¹⁶⁸ Most of these persons were arrested at the request of the Soviet Allied Control Commission in Romania.¹⁶⁹ The N.K.V.D. resident in Bucharest, G.B. Ovakimean, reported on 24 March 1945 to L.P. Beria that he was dissatisfied with the way in which the arrests of the Iron Guardists and Fascists took place during the Sanatescu and Radescu governments. He intensified the purges. "Since the new government has been installed," Ovakimean went on, "the Ministry of Home Affairs is led by a representative of the 'compatriots patriots,' Teohari Georgescu. Concomitantly with the reorganization of the ministry, Georgescu, counting on our immediate support and availing himself of the information supplied by our agents which indicated operative actions, has acted decisively for the purpose of destroying the Iron Guard movement."¹⁷⁰

Those detained were judged by an extraordinary authoritative body, the People's Tribunal, in a streamlined procedure that made no allowance for evidence. This constituted a flagrant violation of the Constitution. According to a May 1945 estimate by General Schuyler, the number of the "Fascist followers" arrested up to that time ranged between 5,000 and 15,000.¹⁷¹

The army's department of Education, Culture, and Propaganda was restructured and enlarged with "skillful and enlightened people." The overwhelming attitude of

¹⁶⁴ *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 68 bis/1945, 23 March 1945, pp. 2205-2208, in *România. Viața politică...*, pp. 225-229; for more details, see Mihail Rusenescu, "Date privind politica agrară a României (martie 1945-februarie 1949)," in *Studii și materiale de istorie contemporană*, vol. III, 1978.

¹⁶⁵ *Monitorul Oficial* no. 74, 1945, from 31 March 1945, pp. 2433-2437; Claudiu Degeratu, Octavian Roske, "Epurări în administrația de stat. Cazul prefecturii județului Brașov, 1945," in *Arhivele totalitarismului*, An II, nos. 1-2/1944, pp. 206-221.

¹⁶⁶ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 9406, ff. 1-14.

¹⁶⁷ *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 94, 24 April 1945, pp. 3362-3364.

¹⁶⁸ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 8912, ff. 253-254.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, dosar 9406, pp. 1-14.

¹⁷⁰ *Misiunile lui A.I. Vâșinski în România*, pp. 159-162.

¹⁷¹ Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

those in the army during the period between 1 September-20 December 1945 was described as hostile: "for the dough they have to knead involves very many difficulties resulting from an animosity toward the new democratic trend, an elaborate hostility stimulated by the reactionary movement."¹⁷²

Censorship grew harsher to permit only the circulation of those news items favorable to Dr. Petru Groza's government.¹⁷³ Under different pretexts most Romanian newspapers which were not favorable to the new government were closed at the request of the Allied Control Commission.¹⁷⁴

The victorious powers at the end of the World War II were concerned with shaping the postwar world. In Romania, the democratic opposition increased its attempts to make Western political-diplomatic circles aware of the evolution of the political situation in Romania. Iuliu Maniu sent messages to the Potsdam Conference (17 July-2 August 1945) in which he asked for the support of the Great Powers in establishing a representative government in Romania, a government that would consist of all democratic political forces and that would prepare the groundwork for free elections.¹⁷⁵

Molotov Advises the Romanian Prime Minister not to Comply with the King's Request

During the discussions concerning the peace treaties with the countries defeated in the war, the Western Powers concluded that the governments in Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary were not representative and, as a result, they refused to acknowledge these governments or to begin negotiations with them. Iuliu Maniu immediately appealed to King Michael I, asking him to establish a representative government which would be recognized by all three Allies so as to allow Romania to participate at the Peace Conference.¹⁷⁶

Moscow, after the Postdam Conference, decided to reestablish diplomatic relations with Romania, a decision that gave international political support to the Groza Government. In response, the American Government, through its representative in Romania, presented on 18 August 1945 to the Romanian minister of foreign affairs a message in which it was made known that the United States would not "agree to negotiate or sign any final peace treaty with Romania unless it had a

¹⁷² Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M.S.S.I, Army, dosar 1/1945, f. 23.

¹⁷³ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond M.PN.-Presa interna, dosar 142/1946, ff. 7-9, 268.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, dosar 92/1945, ff. 115-117.

¹⁷⁵ Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 433; Alexandra Bolintineanu, "Recunoașterea și consolidarea pe plan internațional a guvernului democratic revoluționar condus de dr. Petru Groza," *Revista de istorie*, vol. 33, no. 2/1980, pp. 271-285; Nicolae Baciu, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187.

¹⁷⁶ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M., S.R.I., Informații speciale, dosar 32/1945, f. 3.

democratic representative government fully recognized by the White House."¹⁷⁷ The British Government sent a note in a similar vein to the Romanian Government.¹⁷⁸ The Romanian Government rejected both messages, considering them null and void, as the governments of both Great Britain and the United States were not supposed to address a government they did not recognize, except through the Allied Control Commission.¹⁷⁹

The diplomatic approaches initiated by London and Washington engendered hopes and illusions among those in the political opposition in Romania. These illusions were also fed by Western press correspondents in Romania who spread information concerning the arrival of American paratroopers who were expected to support the installment of a new government.¹⁸⁰ Against this background, representatives of the historical parties and of the palace, as well as other politicians, gathered together in order to settle the political problem that confronted them by a compromise. On 20 August 1945 the king asked the prime minister, Dr. Petru Groza, to resign from office. Through a note sent on behalf of the Soviet Government, Molotov advised the prime minister not to comply with the king's request,¹⁸¹ although his request was constitutional. The following day the king delivered letters to the American and British governments in which he informed them that: "The Council's president, Groza, refuses to resign," and asked them to intervene.¹⁸² C.V.R. Schuyler, referring to the gesture of the young king, wrote in his diary: "Without giving him any particular piece of advice, we suggested that, as Romania was under Russia's military jurisdiction, it would be better for the king to accept any direct orders he received."¹⁸³

Thus the political crisis in Romania assumed international dimensions and was discussed during the conferences of the ministers of foreign affairs of the Soviet Union, the United States, and Great Britain. The conferences took place in London between 11 September and 2 October 1945 and during Dr. Petru Groza's visit to Moscow.

In the midst of this situation, the Congress of the Romanian Communist Party was held in October 1945, which adopted a plan of action concerning Romania's social, political, and economic life. These initiatives were in accordance with Moscow's political orientation and with the directions imposed on Romania through the Allied Control Commission. That the Soviet authorities requested, and the Romanian Government acceded to their request, that ministers R. Zanoi, General

¹⁷⁷ Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria Partidului National Țărănesc*, p. 434; Idem, *Contribuții privind viața politică...*, p. 574; idem, "Anul 1945 în istoria României," in vol. *România. Viața politică în documente, 1945*, p. 34.

¹⁷⁸ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M., S.S.I., Relații externe, dosar 7/1945, f. 1.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, Stenograme, dosar 8/1945, ff. 42-56.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, S.S.I., Afaceri externe, dosar 7/1945, ff. 5-6.

¹⁸¹ *România. Viața politică în documente, 1945*, p. 337.

¹⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 35.

¹⁸³ C.V.R. Schuyler, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

Parvulescu, and S. Oeriu make reports during the meeting of the Allied Control Commission on 3 September 1945 regarding the situation of the harvest, the measures taken by the government for the autumn sowing, and the distribution of food resources among the population, reveals the way in which Groza's government administered and exerted power.¹⁸⁴

In the period between 19-29 November 1945, Mark Ethridge, the special envoy of the United States secretary of state, after visiting Moscow, came to Romania to obtain information about its political situation.¹⁸⁵ He had interviews with the leaders of the democratic parties,¹⁸⁶ with King Michael I,¹⁸⁷ with a few leading members of Dr. Petru Groza's government, such as Ana Pauker and Gheorghe Apostol,¹⁸⁸ as well as with the diplomatic representatives of the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States in Bucharest. Mark Ethridge's interview with Iuliu Maniu was a memorable one. When a press correspondent wanted to take a picture, Iuliu Maniu said to the American envoy: "You will be photographed with future convicts."¹⁸⁹ The report made by Mark Ethridge and presented to Secretary of State James Byrnes on 7 December 1945 correctly reflected the political situation in Romania. It noted the blatant interference of the occupying Soviet troops in Romania's internal affairs and mentioned the 8 November 1945 demonstration. Unfortunately, contrary to the expectations of the opposition,¹⁹⁰ Ethridge's report did not have a significant impact on the political circles in Washington.¹⁹¹

The Conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States which took place in Moscow between 16 and 26 December 1945 analyzed the evolution of postwar international life, including the situation in Romania. The communique published in the aftermath of the discussions and the solution proposed for resolving Romania's political crisis were highly influential on Romanian public opinion¹⁹² and political circles.¹⁹³

Although the reorganization of Petru Groza's government made at the request of the chief of the Romanian state was approved, the leaders of the political parties saw the Moscow Conference as "a new Munich"¹⁹⁴ for good reasons. This perception

¹⁸⁴ Arh. Isr. Centr, fond P.C.M.-C.R.A.A, dosar 389/1944-1945, ff. 1-40.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, fond P.C.M.-S.S.I., *Politica internă*, dosar 1/1945, ff. 1-40.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, P.N.T., dosar 15/1945, ff. 9-12; fond Casa Regală, Diverse, dosar 54/ 1945, ff. 40-42; C.V.R. Schuyler, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, fond P.C.M.-S.S.I., *Politica internă*, dosar 1/1945, f. 6; C.V.R. Schuyler, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-254.

¹⁸⁸ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M.-S.S.I., *Politica internă*, dosar 1/1945, f. 7.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 40.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 15.

¹⁹¹ Nicolae Baci, *Agonia României*, 1944-1948, Cluj-Napoca, 1990, ff. 201-208; *România. Viața politică...*, p. 38.

¹⁹² Arh. M. Ap. N., fond 948/S.II., dosar 1452, f. 57.

¹⁹³ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M.-S.S.I., dosar 32/1945, f. 3.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 4.

was confirmed by Averell Harriman, the United States representative of the delegation which had arrived in Bucharest on 21 December 1945 for the application of the decisions made in Moscow. Harriman told Maniu: "Do not get your hopes up too high. We did the best we could. Britain and America were forced to make concessions to the Soviet Union in the Balkans."¹⁹⁵

"The enlargement of Dr. Petru Groza's government with two ministers without portfolio, one from the National Peasant Party (Emil Hateganu) and one from the National Liberal Party (Mihai Romniceanu) meant neither its democratization,"¹⁹⁶ nor that individual rights would be respected in Romania, or that the elections would be free from interference by occupying Soviet troops. Convinced that Andrei Vyshinsky was "ruling Romania as if it were a province of the Soviet Union, and the Romanian Government is his instrument,"¹⁹⁷ on 2 January 1946, A. Harriman and A. Clark-Kerr advised "both Maniu and Dinu Bratianu to do their best to draw closer to the Soviets,"¹⁹⁸ to abandon their previous policy, and not to oppose Groza's government. At the beginning of February, the British and American governments officially recognized Groza's government which took upon itself the task of implementing Moscow's decisions.

For several weeks after the commission from Moscow had left, proof of good faith was offered by the Romanian Government. Opposition newspapers reemerged on the political stage,¹⁹⁹ but only for a short time. The National Peasant Party and the National Liberal Party resumed their activities throughout the country, but their situation had not been significantly improved because the government embarked on a policy of intimidation. During the 18 May 1946 ministerial conference, Dr. Petru Groza asserted: "When I say measures, I mean the most suitable means for the cessation, from this moment, of any contentious public display against the Soviet Union and the present regime."²⁰⁰

The central issues of Romanian political life in 1946 were the parliamentary elections and Romania's participation in the Peace Conference which began on 29 June 1946 in Paris. The government, supported by the occupying troops, minutely prepared its victory in the elections. At the end of January,²⁰¹ the representative of the Communist Party in the government, Lucretiu Patraşcanu, drafted two laws — the electoral law and the law for the organization of national representation. The draft of the electoral law, submitted for public discussion at the end of May and ratified on 15 July 1946,²⁰² left loopholes which, in the end, were exploited to the maximum.²⁰³ The

¹⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 8.

¹⁹⁶ Mircea Carp, "Primul guvern comunist din istoria României," in *Memoria*, no. 6/1992, p. 120.

¹⁹⁷ Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

¹⁹⁸ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M.-S.S.I., dosar 32/1945, f. 8.

¹⁹⁹ Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

²⁰⁰ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M. - Stenograme, dosar 1/1944-1946, f. 315.

²⁰¹ *România Liberă*, 18 January 1946.

²⁰² *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 161, 15 July 1946; for more details, see Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, pp. 442-443.

freedom of the elections was compromised from the very start because of the presence of Soviet troops in the large cities, and of Soviet counselors in all the ministries and branches of state life.²⁰⁴

The electoral campaign took place in a climate marked by tension and political intolerance. The electoral strategy of the Communist Party and the political forces subservient to Moscow was to "destroy the opposition."²⁰⁵ According to the 1946 report on Romania sent on 12 March 1947 by the British ambassador in Bucharest, Adrian Holman, to Prime Minister Clement Atlee: "The intimidation campaign of the government has grown in intensity since the electoral law was adopted. A meeting of the Committee of the National Liberal Party in the county of Pitești could not take place because Communist workers attacked the members of the committee with firearms and crowbars, severely wounding the president of the committee, Dr. Penescu, and killing his private secretary."²⁰⁶ In a letter dated 23 August 1946 addressed to Stalin, Iuliu Maniu stated his opinion that Groza's government "resorts to Fascist methods to repress its political adversaries,"²⁰⁷ and asked Stalin to intervene to assure the observance of democratic rights and liberties. Similar addresses were sent to the leaders of the opposition and to the governments in London and Washington, but the answers were all discouraging.

The campaign strategy of both the National Peasant Party and the National Liberal Party was oriented toward the past, overemphasizing their historical merits and overlooking the pressing problems which confronted millions of citizens; thus, contrary to Iuliu Maniu's and Constantin I.C. Bratianu's expectations, their parties' popularity diminished.²⁰⁸ This aspect of the campaigns organized by the historical parties was also noted by foreign political observers. Adrian Holman, in his report sent to London on 12 March 1946, remarked: "A few members of the National Peasant Party thought it was of utmost importance to remove the political regime in power at the time and they surmised that the Romanian people were not interested in any political platform as long as this goal was not achieved."²⁰⁹

Constantin Sanatescu, referring to the election day (19 November 1946), wrote in his diary that: "The date has been especially chosen by the Russians in order to mock us. The government could have decided on a more appropriate date (1, 10, or 20 November) or a Sunday — which is a feast day — a Monday, or a Saturday, rather

²⁰³ Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

²⁰⁴ Titu Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 68; Keith Hitchins, *op. cit.*, pp. 267-563; Gh. Ioniță, *O jumătate de secol de istorie românească sub semnul controversiei*, București, 1997, pp. 82-83.

²⁰⁵ Titu Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

²⁰⁶ "Great Britain," P.R.D., *F.O.*, 371/67233.114052, published in Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-210.

²⁰⁷ Apud *Arhivele totalitarismului*, I, no. 1/1993, p. 101.

²⁰⁸ Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 447; Constantin Hlihor, "Considerații privind evoluția vieții politice românești în anul 1946," in vol. *Anul 1946. Începutul sfârșitului*, București, 1996, pp. 32-33.

²⁰⁹ Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

than today, a Thursday."²¹⁰ The results were those expected by Moscow. The same situation occurred in the other countries which were in Moscow's sphere of influence. According to the ballots which were burned all over the country immediately after they were counted,²¹¹ the Communists and their allies in the Bloc of Democrat Parties won 68.62% of the total number of votes which were cast, the National Peasant Party won 12.62%, and the National Liberal Party received only 4.72%, while the rest of the votes cast went to other political parties.²¹²

The protest of the political leaders addressed to the king and to the Western Powers who were signatories of the Yalta Accord,²¹³ went without response or practical consequences, even though international public opinion knew that the Romanian elections had been manipulated. On 20 November 1946 London and Washington, through their political representatives in Bucharest, stated that they could not accept that the declared election results reflected the wishes of the Romanian people. The king did not respond to Iuliu Maniu's suggestion²¹⁴ that he not participate at the opening session of the Assembly of Deputies and on 1 December 1946 he presented his message before Romania's new parliament. After having fraudulently legitimized its power, which had been seized with Soviet support, Dr. Petru Groza's government now set about to prepare its final attack on Romanian bourgeois democracy.²¹⁵

For a short while after the elections the political tension abated and attention was focused on the famine that was looming because of a drought and because of the depletion of the food supplies by the occupying troops.²¹⁶ After 10 February 1947 — when Romania signed the Peace Treaty and no longer faced any international obstacles — the new government continued to enforce the measures for the supervision of the opposition²¹⁷ and the elimination of political adversaries, especially after Pantelimon Pantiuşa Bodnarenko, a Soviet counsellor and specialist in the annihilation of "class enemies,"²¹⁸ was appointed minister of Internal Affairs. The importance of the occupying troops in this regard was emphasized by Ana Pauker who wondered: "If the liberating troops had not been in Romania, could our working

²¹⁰ Constantin Sanatescu, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

²¹¹ Victor Frunză, *Istoria stalinismului în România*, Bucureşti, 1990, p. 291; Gh. I. Ioniţă, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

²¹² Mihai Fătu, *Un vot decisiv. Noiembrie 1946*, Bucureşti, 1972; *Scânteia*, 23 November 1946; *Dreptatea*, 24 November 1946; Ghiţă Ionescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-155; Keith Hitchins, *op. cit.*, pp. 566-567.

²¹³ Keith Hitchins, *op. cit.*, p. 567.

²¹⁴ Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 202; Ghiţă Ionescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-164.

²¹⁵ Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 448; Nicolae Băciu, *op. cit.*, p. 241; Titu Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

²¹⁶ Arh. S.R.I., fond "D", dosar 8696, f. 215; *Romania. Viaţa politică*, 1947, p. 131.

²¹⁷ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.N., S.S.I.-Partide politice, dosar 26/1947; fond Inspectoratul General al Poliţiei (I.G.P), dosar 76/1947.

²¹⁸ Ion Mihai Pacepa, *Moştenirea Kremlinului*, Bucureşti, 1993, pp. 55-56.

class have dealt the decisive blows to the exploitative classes without falling prey to the military intervention of the imperialists?"²¹⁹

The leaders of the opposition informed international public opinion and appealed to Western political forces to condemn the oppression of those who opposed Romania's colonization.²²⁰ Continuing the political games played in accordance with the Yalta agreements, on 24 and 25 June 1947, the American and British governments sent notes in which they expressed their "concern for the arbitrary arrest, without warrant or indictment, of hundreds of members of the opposition."²²¹ As if he was not aware of the abuses and the interference of the occupying troops in the internal affairs of Romania, Gheorghe Tatarascu, minister of Foreign Affairs, replied to the American and British governments that: "We cannot accept either from the United States Government or from the British Government messages that endanger Romania's independence and sovereignty."²²²

Since effective opposition to Dr. Petru Groza's government and the forces which supported him could no longer be continued in the country, Iuliu Maniu decided that a group of National Peasant Party members, led by Ion Mihalache, should go abroad to organize a resistance movement. On 14 July, informed of this intent, the forces of the Ministry of the Interior, under Soviet control, arrested the group just as they were preparing to board a plane that would take them to Turkey. This was the pretext that sparked the final elimination of the opposition. On 29 July 1947, on the basis of a report presented by the Ministry of Internal Affairs at a meeting of the council of ministers, the National Peasant Party was dissolved.²²³ This measure was followed by a massive wave of arrests of Peasant Party leaders, including Iuliu Maniu,²²⁴ and their being condemned to prison.²²⁵ To escape the terror, some tried to cross the border,²²⁶ while others put up a heroic resistance.²²⁷

The ambassador of the United States in Bucharest, Roy M. Melbourne, reported to the secretary of state on 28 August 1947 the shock of the Romanian public at Iuliu Maniu's arrest: "In its troubled history, Romania has had to face many invasions, but none of them brought the people to such a state of desperation and hopelessness as the actual Soviet occupation."²²⁸ Reuben Henry Baliani, the Balkan

²¹⁹ Apud, Radu Ciuceanu, *Intrarea în tunel*, București, 1991, p. 409.

²²⁰ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond Microfilme, S.U.A., r. 666., c. 281.

²²¹ *Ibidem*, fond P.C.M.-Stenograme, dosar 7/1947, f. 56.

²²² *Ibidem*, f. 57.

²²³ *Ibidem*, f. 110.

²²⁴ Dr. Ion Jovin, "Mărturia mea, medicul lui Iuliu Maniu," in *Memoria*, no. 3/1990, p. 39; Keith Hitchins, *op. cit.*, p. 579.

²²⁵ For more details, see Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, pp. 451-462; Nicolae Baci, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

²²⁶ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M.-S.S.I., dosar 4/1947, ff. 211-217; Gheorghe Onișoru, *Alianțe și confruntări între partidele politice din România. 1944-1947*, Fundația Academia Civică, 1996, pp. 265-267.

²²⁷ Nicolae Baci, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

²²⁸ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond Microfilme, S.U.A., r. 666, cc. 431-432.

correspondent of the American newspaper *Christian Science Monitor* and an eyewitness to political events in Romania in 1946 and 1947, wrote about Iuliu Maniu's disappearance from political life: "When the Communists closed the door to the cell in which Maniu was prisoner, they shattered, on a November day, the last hope of the Romanian people. On that Thursday evening, the sun which went down for Maniu, went down for the whole of Romania as well."²²⁹

The tormented country was proceeding, slowly but surely, along the road of Sovietization. After the dissolution of the National Liberal Party, the role of the Communist Party became dominant in Romanian society. The role of other parties allied to the Communist Party were gradually diminished until they were mere propaganda tools advantageous to the new society foreseen by Moscow.

Moscow's interference in the internal political life of the countries which had come under its sphere of influence and domination became more and more marked and energetic. In September 1947 the Szklanska Poreba Conference took place in Poland and it resulted in the establishment of the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers Parties responsible for coordinating activities. On this occasion, the Communist parties in the countries occupied and controlled by Soviet troops were instructed to accelerate the processes for their transition to Socialism, to eliminate bourgeois representatives from the structures of power, to establish a sole party of the working class, to adopt programs for Socialist changes, and to transfer power to the regime of a proletarian dictatorship.²³⁰

The Communist Party in Romania, a participant at the conference, acted in the spirit of these directives. After the endorsement of a series of social-economic measures which were meant to implement the imposed model — the nationalization of the National Bank (1 January 1947), the reorganization of the Ministry of National Economy (April 1947), the establishment of the Industrial Offices (May 1947), currency reform (August 1947), etc. — the next step was the elimination of other political forces in Romanian society and the establishment of a single party. On 3 November 1947, the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Assembly of Deputies adopted a motion of no confidence in the office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and, on 6 November, all those affiliated with Gheorghe Tatarascu, a Liberal, were dismissed.²³¹ The number of political parties in Romania decreased steadily during the second half of 1947. Apart from the Ploughmen's Front, only the Social-Democratic Party was represented in parliament.

On 27 September 1947 a joint session of the Political Bureau of the Social Democrat Party and of the Romanian Communist Party took place in which it was decided to accelerate the process of achieving political, organizational, and

²²⁹ Reuben H. Markham, *România sub jugul sovietic*, Fundația Academia Civica, 1996, p. 289.

²³⁰ Ioan Scurtu, "Anul 1947 în istoria României," *În România. Viața politică în documente, 1947*, p. 13.

²³¹ Arh. Ist Centr., fond P.C.M.-Stenograme, dosar 11/1947, ff. 4-5.

ideological unity in the workers movement by uniting the two parties.²³² In the platform of the future single party, which was publicized on 13 December 1947, the beginning of a new stage in Romania's historical development with the "heroic assistance of the Red Army" was clearly emphasized. At the beginning of February 1948 Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej made a visit to Moscow,²³³ and at the end of the same month, the absorption of the Social-Democratic Party into the Communist Party was completed. The new party would be called the Romanian Workers Party.

At the beginning of 1948, alongside the Romanian Workers Party (which came into existence after the Unification Congress held from 21 to 23 February), other parties continued to exist for a short period: the Ploughmen's Front, the National Peasant Party under Anton Alexandrescu, the National Popular Party, the National Liberal Party under P. Bejan, the Peasant Party under Dr. Nicolae Lupu, and the Magyar Popular Union.²³⁴ After the elections of March 1948, these parties discontinued their activities, one after the other. The Ploughmen's Front dissolved itself after 20 years of existence on 7 February 1955.²³⁵ Thus, Romanian political life took on the character of Soviet Stalinism.

"I Have No Authority in this Special Case, Go see the Vice-King Susaikov"

Although during the interwar period the Romanian Communist Party expressed in resolutions and programs adopted by various congresses its plan for the organization of the state as a republic,²³⁶ at Moscow's request, they did not take action to remove the monarchy until the end of 1947. Out of strategic considerations, as well as for propaganda purposes, Stalin did not immediately change the political regime or the organization of the states invaded by the Red Army. On 29 November 1945 the Yugoslav Popular Federal Republic was proclaimed by the Constituent Assembly of Yugoslavia, and on 11 February 1946 the Popular Albanian Republic was proclaimed by the Constituent Assembly. Hungary, which had been a kingdom without a king for a long time, proclaimed itself a republic on 1 February 1946. In Bulgaria, as a result of the referendum held on 8 September 1946, the Popular Republic of Bulgaria was proclaimed by the Constituent Assembly on 12 September. Romania remained the only kingdom in the Soviet sphere of influence in 1947.

²³² Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

²³³ Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, *Articole și cuvântări*, București, 1951, p. 105.

²³⁴ *România contemporană*, București, 1988, p. 75; Gheorghe Onișoru, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-289.

²³⁵ Gheorghe I. Ioniță, Gh. Țuțui, *Frontul Plugarilor (1933-1953)*, București, 1970, pp. 288-290; Gheorghe Onișoru, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-292.

²³⁶ For more details, see N. Petreanu, *Republica în conștiința poporului român*, București, 1972; *Gândirea social-politică antimonarhică și republicană din România*, București, 1979; Marin C. Stănescu, *Moscova, Cominternul, filiera comunistă Balcanică și România (1919-1944)*, București, 1994.

The direct involvement of King Michael I in the overthrow of the Antonescu Government on 23 August 1944 increased the king's popularity in Romanian society. It also guaranteed the goodwill of the occupying Soviet troops, as long as he did not openly oppose their plans to turn Romania into a Communist country. During the session of the Council of the National Democratic Front on 5 March 1945, Vasile Luca asserted that: "As far as the monarchy is concerned, it should be clear that we do not intend to do away with it. Romania is not yet ready to become a republic. Even if certain measures were taken in this respect, similar to those in Yugoslavia or Greece, a regency would be established, not under any circumstances a republic, thus we have no need to change our monarchy."²³⁷

The Soviet occupation authorities, through the Allied Control Commission and the government in Moscow represented by A. Vyshinsky, developed a normal relationship with the chief of the Romanian state until the end of 1944. The first interview between King Michael I and Vyshinsky in November 1944 at Sinaia was quite friendly.²³⁸ The king was reassured by Moscow's envoy that: "The Soviet Government is supporting him."²³⁹ Yet, eventually, the active interference of the Kremlin in Romania for the purpose of imposing a government completely subordinate to the Soviet Union led to a significant increase in tensions between King Michael I and the occupying authorities. Deprived of Western support which he had hoped to obtain, the king was unable to exert his constitutional prerogatives, and, already by March 1945, the monarch wanted to abdicate.²⁴⁰ At the request of several politicians, King Michael gave up this idea. "Abdication would provide a solution for the king's problems," Constantin I.C. Bratianu remarked. "He would thus get rid of the difficult burden weighing on his shoulders, but it would not alter the serious problems of this country at all. On the contrary, it would hasten Romania's total transition to Communism."²⁴¹

After the formation of Dr. Groza's government, King Michael's relations with the members of the Communist Party in Romania and its allies worsened considerably.²⁴² Meanwhile, the Allied Control Commission in Romania assumed an inconsistent attitude toward the Romanian monarch. In April 1945, although the treatment of Romanian society by the occupying Soviet authorities became harsher, General Susaikov, the head of the Allied Control Commission, invited the king and his mother, Helen, to visit an airport. "There," according to a report of the American

²³⁷ *România. Viața politică în documente*, 1945, p. 179.

²³⁸ Constantin Sănătescu, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

²³⁹ *Raportul reprezentantului american în România, Burton Berry către Secretarul de Stat, din 12 decembrie 1944*, apud, Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

²⁴⁰ Mircea Ionnițiu, *Amintiri și reflecțiuni*, București, 1939, p. 94; Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, and Adrian Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 132; *România. Viața politică în documente*, 1945, pp. 184-185.

²⁴¹ Mircea Ionnițiu, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

²⁴² *România. Viața politică...*, p. 245.

ambassador addressed to the State Department on 22 April 1945 — "they clinked glasses, had dinner, and toasted each other in a friendly atmosphere."²⁴³

The Soviets were interested in getting the upper hand on the monarchy, hoping that they could destroy the Anglo-American influence on the king. For this reason, on 27 April 1945, A.I. Vyshinsky requested that Stalin agree to send a few Soviet officers to serve as liaisons with the king. A.I. Vyshinsky defended his request by asserting that "access to the king (and his well-trained staff) is indisputably in our interest."²⁴⁴

In August 1945 relations between King Michael I and the occupation authorities again worsened, but they were not so bad as to allow the Soviets to order the Communists to attack and to disparage the king in the mass media. On 10 September 1945 Gheorghe Tatarascu, in a significant meeting with Andrei Vyshinsky concerning the content of a message sent by Stalin to King Michael, suggested that Vyshinsky should take into account the idea that the "Soviet Government conceives of the king as a person who cherishes friendly feelings with the Soviet Union, and, furthermore, that the trust of the Soviet Government in the king was unflinching."²⁴⁵ Vyshinsky agreed with this opinion and asked Tatarascu whether "the king would be willing²⁴⁶ to receive the delegation after its return from Moscow." However, the Soviets participated in the tragic events which took place during the demonstration organized by students on 8 November 1945 (King Michael's birthday), to compromise the prestige of the monarchy in Romania.²⁴⁷

At the end of 1945, according to a note of the Romanian Intelligence Service dated 22 December (although unconfirmed by other documents from Romania or abroad), the Allied Control Commission in Romania intended to establish a regency that would include Gheorghe Tatarascu, Oconel Cirea, the president of the Court of Cassation, and Patriarch Nicodim.²⁴⁸ This intention became known in political circles in Bucharest where it was heard by C.V.R. Schuyler who wrote in his diary: "I found out yesterday about Tatarascu's plans for establishing a kind of agency which would be ready to take control of the country if the Communists deemed it right to remove the king. Tatarascu visited Patriarch Nicodim and proposed to him the idea of establishing a regency council made up of the patriarch, the president of the Court of Cassation, and Tatarascu himself."²⁴⁹

Between 1946-1947 King Michael's authority was undermined more and more by the occupying Soviet authorities. In April 1946 the king responded to a request

²⁴³ Arh. Ist.Centr., fond Microfilme, SUA cc. 667, 304-307.

²⁴⁴ *Misiunile lui A.I. Vâșinski în România*, p. 172.

²⁴⁵ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond Microfilme, SUA cc. 667, 304-307.

²⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 398-420; see also the excerpts published from "Cartea albă a Securității" in *Evenimentul zilei*, 16 January 1995, p. 3.

²⁴⁸ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond PCM., S.S.I., Afaceri Interne, dosar 8/1944, f. 231.

²⁴⁹ C.V.R. Schuyler, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

made by the American representative in Bucharest that: "I have no authority in this special case. Go see the vice-king, Susaikov."²⁵⁰

The position of King Michael, as reflected in public opinion, was a subject of controversy. A part of the population and a few representatives of the Western mass media²⁵¹ perceived the king as the only factor capable of resisting the Communist regime. Another part of Romanian society thought that King Michael had made big mistakes,²⁵² specifically that he should not have acknowledged and legitimized the results of the 1946 elections.²⁵³ This is revealed in a note dated 5 June 1946: "By refusing to free Antonescu, the king has lost the army's love and confidence. Mihai Antonescu was not guilty, for his policy was similar to that of Petru Groza."²⁵⁴

In the course of 1947, the king reluctantly signed several documents with which he certainly did not agree, as they discredited him. He accepted the Liberal ministers' resignations and their replacement by leaders of the Communist Party. Although the king had the right to pardon or to reduce the punishment of convicts, the king did not intervene in the case of Maniu and the other members of the National Peasant Party²⁵⁵ who had been condemned to long prison terms at hard labor. King Michael I considered such an intervention futile because it would have been immediately disputed by the government and any such gesture of independence would have quickened the end of monarchy in Romania.

His cautiousness proved useless because all the events which ultimately undermined the monarchy and which were directly hostile to the king took place during the second half of 1947, after King Michael I had reconciled with Petru Groza's government. Shortly after the condemnation of the National Peasant Party leaders, and approximately two months before his abdication, King Michael I asserted in the royal message addressed on the occasion of the final gathering of the Assembly of Deputies: "The action initiated by my government for fighting the forces opposed to democracy, national independence, and sovereignty found in the unanimous decision of the Romanian Parliament the most vivid expression of our people's will for defending and consolidating the democratic regime."²⁵⁶

Within the domestic and especially the international context of the summer and autumn of 1947, even those most devoted to the king and convinced of the absolute necessity of monarchy in Romania saw King Michael's abdication as impending. A high official at the palace, Dimitrie Negel, in a discussion with Ionel Matak (an oil businessman and a member of the National Peasant Party) asserted that Emil Otulescu (the former governor of the National Bank of Romania) had told him: "I

²⁵⁰ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M., S.S.I., Afaceri Interne, dosar 8/1944, f. 273.

²⁵¹ *Ibidem*, f. 222.

²⁵² *Ibidem*, f. 96.

²⁵³ *Ibidem*, ff. 112; 196-197.

²⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 212.

²⁵⁵ Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 462.

²⁵⁶ *Liberalul*, 16-18 October, 1947.

cannot see the king ruling but a short while and I cannot think of any possible means to help him."²⁵⁷ A similar opinion was expressed by one of the leaders of the National Liberal Party during a discussion with General Petre Bejan at a reception at the Soviet Union Embassy. Asked what he thought about the king's future situation and whether monarchy would still have a place in the new political context, Petre Bejan answered: "Monarchy will make sense in the future, not in the present situation. In a Communist regime, monarchy is without meaning, but in the future it will be useful, for the future situation will not be the same as it is today."²⁵⁸

General Gheorghe Mihail, a subtle analyst of Romania's domestic and international political evolution, was convinced in December 1947 that King Michael I would be allowed to rule for only "a few months, because in a Socialist state of a popular nature there is no place for a monarch."²⁵⁹ The king was isolated and deprived of those forces capable of responding to the Communists' actions designed to remove him from leadership. When asked whether Michael could do something to save his throne, General Mihail in a discussion with General Bejan on 29 December 1947 answered: "With whom do you expect him to act? Who would follow him in this adventure? Don't you understand, don't you realize? At present, when the government has taken the measures it has taken, where is the reasonable, decent man who would embark on a ship that is doomed to sink? The king is expecting the final blow, knowing that this sentence will come and that nothing can be done to stop it. But he is awaiting it, for he believes that his present actions will serve his purposes in the near future, even though he might not be on the throne at that time."²⁶⁰

Michael's attempt to save his throne by finding a solution abroad failed when, in November 1947, he made a trip to England to attend Princess Elizabeth's wedding.²⁶¹ On 21 December the king returned to Romania, and, the following day, had a discussion with Dr. Petru Groza. The prime minister suggested the idea that the monarchy was a passing institution and that a time would come when Romania would not need it anymore²⁶².

On 23 December 1947 the Communist Party took total control over the army and appointed Emil Bodnaraş as the minister of national defence. Then a plan was drawn up which contained organizational and political measures aimed at the elimination of the monarchy.²⁶³ These measures were implemented on 30 December 1947 when Elizabeth Palace in Bucharest was surrounded by troops from the "Tudor Vladimirescu" Division which had been formed and trained in the Soviet Union.

²⁵⁷ Arh. Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M.-S.S.I., Afaceri Interne, dosar 8/1944, f. 105.

²⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 78.

²⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 96.

²⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

²⁶¹ *Ibidem*; Nicolae Baciu, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-265; Mircea Ioaniţiu, *op. cit.*, p. 100 et seq.

²⁶² Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

²⁶³ *România. Viaţa politică în documente, 1947*, pp. 288-289.

Then Petru Groza and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej demanded the king's signature on a document of abdication which had been previously drawn up.²⁶⁴

The protagonists of the events that took place at Elizabeth Palace expressed contradictory accounts of the conditions in which the abdication document was signed. On the evening of 30 December, during the meeting of the council of ministers, Dr. Petru Groza asserted: "History will record a peaceful abolition of the monarchy, without convulsions as our enemies might have wished. Using one of the queen mother's phrases, our people have decently and elegantly divorced from the monarchy today."²⁶⁵

In a television interview on 10 May 1990, former King Michael remarked: "When I arrived in Bucharest, Groza and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej approached me and put under my nose, so to say, this abdication document, against which, of course, I protested, saying that the only way in which I could abdicate was by asking the people. They told me that there wasn't time for that... I tried to discuss the whole problem with them, but they said that if I did not make a decision soon, they would be forced to kill a thousand students and other young people who had already been imprisoned for demonstrating during '45, '46, and '47 for my sake."²⁶⁶

On the same day that the abdication document was submitted to the government and then to the Assembly of Deputies for ratification, Romania was proclaimed a People's Republic, led by a provisional Presidium that included people close to Dr. Petru Groza's government and who were approved of by the Soviet occupation authorities. Thus, the curtain was drawn on the last act of a play that had been scripted outside of Romania, but which altered the essence and the physiognomy of Romanian society.

The Presence of Soviet Troops and the Construction of Stalinist Socialism: The Beginning of the Romanian Resistance

The year 1948 marked the beginning of a dramatic and confusing epoch in the contemporary history of the Romanian people. After 1944-1945, although the Soviets claimed that they did not intend to establish Communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe, "things began to change."²⁶⁷

Jdanov's strategy of increasing the pressure for centralization in the states which had fallen within the Kremlin's sphere of influence was concocted during a secret meeting held at Szklacska Poreha in Poland in September 1947. A long process of

²⁶⁴ For more details, see Mircea Ionițiu, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-106; Eleodor Focșeneanu, *Istoria constituțională a României 1859-1991*, București, 1992, pp. 91-109; Vartan Arachelian, *Cuvântul care zidește*, București, 1993, pp. 84-87; Keith Hitchins, *op. cit.*, p. 581.

²⁶⁵ Arh Ist. Centr., fond P.C.M., Stenograme, dosar 12/1947, f. 56.

²⁶⁶ Vartan Arachelian, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.

²⁶⁷ For more details see Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Reinventarea politicului. Europa Răsăriteană de la Stalin la Havel*, Iași, 1997, pp. 44-45.

revolutionary changes began in Romania, and this process led to the establishment of a Stalinist regime, which was characterized by extremely violent social, economic, and cultural disintegration, the elimination of possible or real enemies of the regime, and the complete subjection of Romanian culture. The new political, administrative, and economic structures duplicated Soviet structures and the economy complied with the Soviet economic model and followed orders from Moscow.²⁶⁸

The means by which the Soviet model was to be applied to Romanian realities was the Communist Party. The Soviet troops stationed in Romania were to guarantee the outcome of the party's activities and its smooth functioning. VM. Molotov, one of the senior Soviet leaders, held to the idea that Socialism in Romania could only be supported by the presence of the Red Army in the country; he believed that three days after the withdrawal of Soviet troops, Socialism would collapse.²⁶⁹

Within the framework of the new political regime — that of the proletariat — the Communist Party played the leading role and its ideas, principles, and programs were to be put into practice. From 21 to 23 February 1948 the congress for the unification of the Communist Party with the Social-Democratic Party took place. The new party was called the Romanian Workers Party (RWP), with the stated objective to develop a Socialist society in Romania. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was appointed as general secretary of the new Romanian Workers Party; he had held the same position within the Romanian Communist Party. Power in the new RWP was divided among the two parties that united to form it as follows:²⁷⁰

Principal structure	Representatives of the Communist Party	Representatives of the Social-Democratic Party	Total
The Political Bureau	10	3	13
The Secretariat of the CC.	4	1	5
The Central Committee	31	10	41

On 13 April 1948, the Grand National Assembly adopted a new Constitution.²⁷¹ Article no. 1 stipulated: "The People's Republic of Romania is a democratic, independent, and sovereign state," while the following chapter held that: "The People's Republic of Romania came into existence as a result of the struggle carried out by the people, led by the working class, against Fascism, reactionary elements, and imperialism." The fundamental law provided three forms of property: state, communal, and private property. Article no. 11 stipulated that when the "general interest is at stake, the means of production, the banks, and the insurance

²⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

²⁶⁹ Paul Niculescu-Mizil, *O istorie trăită*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1997, p. 103.

²⁷⁰ Victor Frunză, *Istoria stalinismului în România*, București, Editura Humanitas, 1990, p. 350.

²⁷¹ *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 87 bis, 13 April 1948.

companies that are private property can become state property." The supreme organ of government was the Grand National Assembly. C.I. Parhon was elected president of the Presidium of the Assembly.

In accordance with article no. 11 of the Constitution, on 11 June 1948 the law for the nationalization of the main means of production was adopted; this included industrial enterprises, mines, banks, means of transportation, and insurance companies. Later, cinemas, pharmacies, and medical cabinets were also nationalized.²⁷² The nationalized industries became "Socialist property" and they functioned on the basis of a plan of production. The annual plans of 1949 and 1950 were replaced with five-year plans, according to the Soviet model. The plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party of 3-5 March 1949 adopted the plan for the Socialist transformation of agriculture. During the next 13 years, up to 1962, the peasants were subjected to horrible pressure — physical aggression, arrests, and many years in prison — to force them to give up their land and to cede it to collective agricultural associations. The administrative reform in September 1950 replaced the traditional division of the country into counties with the Soviet system of regions and districts; the people's councils became the local organs of government.

On 27 September 1952, when Stalinism was in full swing, a new Constitution was adopted²⁷³ which stipulated in the introduction that: "The People's Republic of Romania came into existence as a result of the historic victory of the Soviet Union over German Fascism and of Romania's liberation by the glorious Soviet Army, a liberation which made it possible for the Romanian working people, led by the Communist Party, to overthrow the Fascist dictatorship, to smash the power of the exploitative classes, and to establish the People's Democratic State, in keeping with the needs and interests of the popular masses in Romania... The formation and consolidation of the People's Democratic State, the friendship and alliance with the great Soviet Union, and the unselfish and brotherly support and assistance from the Soviet Union, ensure the state's independence and sovereignty, as well as the development and success of the People's Republic of Romania."

According to the Constitution, Romania was no longer a unitary state because: "In the People's Republic of Romania, the Magyar people in the Szeklers' districts form a compact mass and so have administrative territorial autonomy." Article no. 18 established the administrative-territorial distribution of the country into 18 regions, which included the Autonomous Magyar Region, made up of the following districts: Ciuc, Gheorgheni, Odorhei, Reghin, Sangiorgiu de Padure, Sfântu Gheorghe, Targu Mureș, Targu Secuiesc, and Toplita; the administrative center of the Autonomous Magyar Region was the town of Targu Mureș.

²⁷² *Ibidem*, no. 133 bis, 11 June 1948.

²⁷³ *Buletinul Oficial al Marii Adunări Naționale*, no. 1, September 1952.

As stipulated in the Constitution, the national economy included three social-economic structures: Socialist, small-scale commodity production, and private (capitalist) structures. The Socialist structures held the leading role in the national economy of the People's Republic of Romania and represented the basis for Romania's economic development in the Socialist direction. For the first time in the history of Romania, the Constitution provided that a political party could have the leading role in political life: "The most active and responsible among the working class and among other working people gather together in the Romanian Workers Party, the avant-garde detachment of the working people struggling for the consolidation of the people's democratic regime and for the construction of a Socialist society. The Romanian Workers Party is the leading force of both the labor unions and the organs and institutions of government. All the labor organizations of the Romanian People's Republic are gathered around it" (article no. 86).

Structural changes took place in education, science, and culture as well. Through the Education Law, dated 3 August 1948, the whole educational system became secular and was organized: "exclusively by the state on the basis of structural units." Thus, private as well as religious education were practically abolished, and the politicized school had the task of educating the youth "in the spirit of popular democracy."²⁷⁴ According to the new legislation, the teaching staff was to be examined and those who could not be guaranteed to act in the spirit of the official political doctrine were fired from their positions.

The institutions of art, culture, and science were also reorganized. The dominant features of these fields became their focus on indoctrination, their imitation of the Soviet model, and their promotion of an anti-Western and anti-Romanian spirit. Iosif Chișinevski, Leonte Rautu, Mihail Roller, and Sorin Toma conducted an extremely aggressive campaign against national values, which were considered reactionary, and advocated a menial internationalism towards the Soviet Union. The campaign concentrated on Romanian literature and art, but especially national history — fields with a strong cultural, social, and moral impact.

First among the writers targeted was Tudor Arghezi, who was seen as exemplifying the class enemy. In *Scanteia* of 5 and 10 January 1948, Sorin Toma published an article entitled "Poezia putrefactiei și putrefactk poeziei. Rasfoind volumele lui Tudor Arghezi" ("The Poetry of Decay and the Decay of Poetry. Looking at the Books of Tudor Arghezi"), in which the aesthetic value of the poet's work was defined and assessed in the following terms: "Such an 'aesthetics' cannot claim a greater value of circulation than the value of objects manufactured in a colony of lepers or of ideas conceived in a madhouse. As a matter of fact, this is not an 'aesthetics,' but a pathological phenomenon, an agency of a disease which should be excised from Romanian society." A careful study of the proletariat's culture in Romania stated that: "The unreserved, undignified imitation and exaltation of the

²⁷⁴ *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 177, 3 August 1948.

Soviet Union, its entire history and culture, was often coupled with the defamation and falsification of our national history and culture — a serious offense against our past and national sentiment."²⁷⁵ An example of this attitude is the article "*Dragostea față de URSS — condiție de bază a patriotismului*" ("Love for the Soviet Union — a Prerequisite for Patriotism") published in *Scanteia* on 14 October 1948: "To instill the sentiment of love, gratitude, and solidarity towards the Soviet Union in the hearts of the working people and in the masses at large, means to serve the country's most vital interests; to work to ensure Romania's national independence and its development in the direction of Socialism is to take a patriotic stand." Historical documents were used only to the extent to which they could serve as an argument for a political idea. History was dealt with from the perspective of the class struggle and of the patronage of Russia and then of the Soviet Union. Thus, the heroes of the working class and of the peasantry were ranked first and foremost; the boyars and the great voevods (such as Mircea the Old and Stephen the Great) were presented as feudal lords and exploiters of the people. National conscience and patriotism were "practically eliminated from accepted vocabulary."²⁷⁶ The attack against history and against great personalities was an essential factor in the Soviet plan to annihilate national sentiment and to discourage the Romanian people.

In 1948 Mihai Roller's editorial office published the first edition of *The History of Romania*, which in 1952 became *The History of the Romanian People's Republic*, successive editions were updated and revised until 1956 when it became the standard textbook. This work was written with contributions from the following scholars: Dumitru Tudor and Gheorghe Ștefan (authors of the ancient history section), Barbu Campina (author of the medieval history section), Vasile Maciu, Solomon Știrbu, Victor Chereștesm, and Gh. Georgescu-Buzau (authors of the modern history section), A. Roman (author of the contemporary history section). The manner in which Michael the Brave was presented reveals the basic ideas behind this textbook: "The gentry wanted to use the voievod's struggle for its own purposes. The boyars, as powerful as they were and protected by their elected voievod, suddenly began to seize the land that had been left to the people by force, expropriating it and thus becoming landlords. There are many documents which testify to this exploitation. In this way, their economic power greatly increased, a fact which contributed to the increase in their political power in their relations with their ruler. The gentry's intention became obvious after the conquest of Transylvania by Michael the Brave, when the boyars took possession of the estates which were there. Together with Michael the Brave they decided to keep Transylvania for themselves and not to turn it over to the emperor under the pretext that Transylvania had been conquered by mercenaries

²⁷⁵ M. Nițescu, *Sub zodia proletcultismului. Dialectica puterii*, Edited by M. Ciurdariu, București, Editura Humanitas, 1991, p. 46.

²⁷⁶ Vlad Georgescu, *Politică și Istorie. Cazul comuniștilor români. 1944-1977*, București, Editura Humanitas, 1991, p. 46.

hired by him. As a result of new territorial conquests and of subjecting freeholders to feudal servitude, the gentry's economic and social situation improved considerably under Michael the Brave at the expense of the people and of the ruler's authority."²⁷⁷

The same method of belittling great moments in national history and of distorting the historical truth was used in the presentation of the period 1916-1918, a period which culminated with the unification of Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transylvania with their mother country, Romania. Thus, the chapter entitled "Romania during the Years of World War I" had the following sub-titles: "The Period of Neutrality," "Romania's Participation in the Imperialist War," "The Workers Movement, 1914-1917," while the following chapter, entitled "Romania and the Revolutionary Enthusiasm as a Result of the Russian Revolution," dealt with "The International Historic Importance of the Russian Revolution," "The Imperialist Intervention against the Russian Revolution," "The Economic and Social Reality in Romania after the Imperialist War, 1914-1917," "The Class Struggle between 1917-1920," "The General Strike of October 1920," "The Founding of the Communist Party in Romania," and "The Second Congress of the Communist Party in Romania." Thus, the most important event in the history of the Romanian people, the Union of 1918, was not even mentioned in these titles and subtitles.

Radical changes took place in the Romanian economy as well. Stalinization in this area entailed the transition to a centralized economy and the application of Lenin's formula — "Socialism is the power of the Soviets, plus that of electrification."²⁷⁸ The development of Socialist economic bases brought about the nationalization of industry and of other branches of the national economy.²⁷⁹ The state took over 8,894 industrial units — of which 1,136 were of national importance — on the basis of a law which had been hastily passed on 11 June 1948²⁸⁰ and which sought the abolition of both capitalist property and the market economy.

Nationalization was followed by strict economic planning through excessive centralism. The necessary entities were therefore created, notably the State Commission for Planning, which later became the State Committee for Planning. The Romanian economy developed according to a series of one-year and, later, five-year plans. The period of "economic reconstruction," in Alexandru Barladeanu's opinion, involved large errors of judgement and major mistakes which continued until 1956-1957 when Dej took advantage of both the domestic and international political situation.

²⁷⁷ *Istoria R.P.R. Manual pentru învățământul mediu*, Edited by acad Mihail Roller, București, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1958, p. 445.

²⁷⁸ Lavinia Betea, *Alexandru Bârlădeanu despre Dej, Ceaușescu și Iliescu. Convorbiri*, București, 1997, p. 101.

²⁷⁹ For more details see *A History of Romania*, Edited by Kurt Treptow, The Center for Romanian Studies, Iași, 1997, pp. 520-521; Ghiță Ionescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-196.

²⁸⁰ *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 133 bis, 11 June 1948; Lavinia Betea, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

The party propaganda referred to this aspect by pointing out the "general enthusiasm," "the joy expressed by cable," "congratulations addressed to the superior party leadership and praises for the genius of Stalin." As a protagonist of those events, in 1990 Alexandru Barladeanu stated that "I hadn't seen so much happiness. After nationalization, I was sent together with two other party members to Sfântu-Gheorghe and Miercurea Ciuc, where I made speeches about nationalization. The audience's happiness was beyond any expectations."²⁸¹

Nationalization ended workers' "exploitation" by their employers, but a different kind of exploitation was now under way in Romania.²⁸² Volunteer labor camps, contests, over-fulfillment of quotas, overwork, low wages, and other means of making the work dictated by Soviet advisors more efficient were devised.

In Romanian villages the imposition of the Soviet model took on a tragic aspect. In the 1950s, the peasantry went through a traumatic experience when they were forced to give up the land to which they were bound by so many struggles.²⁸³ In accordance with the decisions of the plenary meeting of the Romanian Workers Party held on 3-5 March 1949, in July of the same year, cooperative farms were set up." The opposition of the Romanian peasants to the policy of forced dispossession made it impossible to implement Soviet style of collectivization as defined by the 15th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1927. At the end of 1950, there were only 1,027 cooperative farms with a mere 288,900 hectares of land,²⁸⁴ while after five years (in 1955), the party had managed to collectivize only 12.4% of the total arable land.²⁸⁵ The process was completed only at the end of the 1970s. During this process of collectivization the resistance movement paid a high price. A number of the former leaders of the Communist Party admitted that: "80,000 peasants were thrown into jail because they had refused to sign the applications for admission into cooperatives."²⁸⁶ In reality, the number of imprisoned peasants was much larger because of the efficiency of the oppressive organ of the security forces.²⁸⁷

In the years 1959 and 1960 a number of errors which had affected the country and its economy were redressed through the dissolution of the "Sovroms," joint Romanian-Soviet enterprises "born" out of the occupation of Romania and of the provisions established by the Armistice Convention of 12-13 September 1944. According to a five-year agreement between the Romanian and Soviet governments, joint corporations, "Sovroms," were established "to make the best use of Romania's

²⁸¹ Lavinia Betea, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

²⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 103.

²⁸³ Titu Georgescu, *România între Yalta și Malta*, București, 1993, p. 105.

²⁸⁴ *Anuarul statistic al Republicii Socialiste România*, 1996, p. 230.

²⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, 1973, p. 251.

²⁸⁶ Lavinia Betea, *op. cit.*, p. 112; Ghiță Ionescu, *op. cit.*, p.233.

²⁸⁷ Octavian Roske, "Colectivizarea agriculturii în România. Mijloace de supraveghere, 1950", in *Arhivele totalitarismului*, An II, no. 3, 1994, pp. 184-202.

valuable resources."²⁸⁸ The Soviet side owned 50% of the stock; its contribution consisted of German and Italian goods on Romania's territory which had been confiscated in accordance with the provisions of the Armistice Convention of September 1944. The Romanian side owned the other half of the stock, and contributed soil, subsoil, technical installations, personnel, and financing.

The first enterprise was Sovrom Petrol, which was of particular interest to the Soviet side. The Romanian side contributed two oil companies, Creditul Minier and Redevenja, including all their unidentified deposits and most of their oil production. The Soviet Union contributed the German and Italian equipment in Romania which was taken as booty. This included five former German and Italian companies, two of which, Concordia and Columbia, had been owned by French, Dutch, and Belgian stockholders before the war. Sixteen more Sovroms were then reorganized into branches such as chemistry, construction, transportation, metallurgy, mining, naval engineering, etc. Practically, the entire economy was organized into Sovroms. This economic experience was labelled by Paul Niculescu-Mizil, a former high official in the Communist regime, as "oppressive, harsh, and bitter."²⁸⁹

On 31 March and 18 September 1954 the Romanian Government obtained permission from the Soviet Government to dissolve the Sovroms by buying the Soviet shares in the so-called joint corporations. The requested sum was not made public, but according to a speech made by the president of the council of ministers concerning the results of the Romanian-Soviet negotiations, this sum was out of proportion to the actual Soviet capital in these corporations.²⁹⁰ As a result of pressure by the Romanian Government, the Soviet authorities agreed to reduce the amount to 4.3 billion lei. Thus, the Sovroms were closed one by one, the last one being the Quartz Sovrom in 1956.

As in any other totalitarian party, in the Romanian Workers Party the struggle for power occupied a central place. Elected secretary general of the Romanian Communist Party in October 1945, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej felt threatened by Lucrețiu Patrascanu, the only authentic intellectual in the party leadership. Dej teamed up with Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca and succeeded in getting rid of Patrascanu in February 1948. He was removed as minister of justice and then arrested.

The relationship between Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Ana Pauker was more complicated. The latter arrived from Moscow in September 1944 and was considered to be Stalin's right hand in Romania. At the congress for the unification of the Romanian Communist Party and the Social-Democratic Party, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was elected secretary general, but Ana Pauker controlled both the Secretary's Office and the Political Bureau, with Vasile Luca and Teohari Georgescu also held

²⁸⁸ Paul Niculescu-Mizil, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

²⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 200.

²⁹⁰ *Scânteia*, 9 December 1956.

their share of responsibility. A slogan from the period went like this: "Ana, Luca, and Dej struck terror into the bourgeoisie."²⁹¹ Within the message of this slogan lies the fact that the party's secretary general was placed third and not only for the sake of the rhyme. Ana Pauker — who had stayed in Moscow for many years and knew many Soviet leaders, particularly Molotov — could make a very serious accusation against Dej, since he advocated "national Communism" at a time when national values were rejected and had negative connotations. In 1946 Dej published a book entitled *O Politică românească de realizări democratice (Romanian Policy for Democratic Accomplishments)*, which included his articles and speeches and which, in Ana Pauker's opinion, minimized Soviet assistance and proletarian internationalism. Clear-sighted as he was, Dej managed to gain the confidence of the Kremlin's envoys in Romania, particularly A.I. Vyshinsky, first-assistant of the people's commissary for foreign affairs, who had a decisive role in the establishment of Groza's government on 6 March 1945; furthermore, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej won the support of the Soviet ambassador in Romania and of Soviet advisors as well, particularly those who worked for the Security Service. He also managed to maintain good relations with those who worked at the Bureau of Information of the Communist Parties headquarters in Bucharest. Through elaborate tactical maneuvers, Gheorghiu-Dej was able to win the confidence of Stalin, the Soviet dictator, upon whom the fate of the Socialist countries and of their leaders depended. By 1950 Stalin had already chosen Dej to the detriment of Ana Pauker. In an interview with Molotov, who supported Ana Pauker, Stalin replied: "Dear Viaceslav Mihailovich, Ana is a good, reliable comrade, but, you see, she is Jewish and of bourgeois extraction, and the Romanian Communist Party needs a leader from among the working class, an authentic Romanian."²⁹² Having received a blank check from Stalin, the secretary general of the Romanian Workers Party undertook to remove Ana Pauker from office. He openly accused Vasile Luca of serious errors in his capacity of minister of finance. He then extended these accusations, directing them against Ana Pauker who was held responsible for the mismanagement of agriculture. These accusations culminated at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party on 29 February 1952, when Dej referred to the "factional, anti-Party, and anti-State activity" of the Ana Pauker-Vasile Luca-Teohari Georgescu trio. A letter written by the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party in March 1952 constituted the basis for the discussions within the party organizations on the condemnation of the three dignitaries. The political stage was therefore set for Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej to succeed, at the plenary session of the Central Committee on 26-27 May 1952, in excluding the "factional, anti-Party, anti-State" group from the party leadership. Although the main target was Ana Pauker, she kept her position in the Organizational

²⁹¹ Titu Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 95; Lavinia Betea, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

²⁹² Silviu Brucan, *Generația irosită... Memorii*, București, Editura Univers and Calistrat Hogaș, 1992, p. 59.

Bureau (after she had been excluded from the Political Bureau) and the position of foreign minister until July 1952, when she was removed from all leadership structures, both at the party and state level. On 2 June 1952 significant changes took place in the state leadership: Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, secretary general of the Romanian Workers Party, became president of the council of ministers, replacing Dr. Petru Groza, who was elected president of the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly (C.I. Parhon had retired).

The death of Stalin on 3 March 1953 eased the tense relations between the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries. The new leadership of the Kremlin, headed by N.S. Khrushchev, who had been elected first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on 7 September 1953, favored an open foreign policy of "peaceful coexistence" that would replace the policy of confrontation under Stalin. Against this background of changes in the political team in Moscow, the Third World Youth Congress was held in Bucharest, followed by the Fourth World Students' Festival (2-14 August). It was an opportunity for the leadership in Bucharest to publicize the achievements of the Socialist years, even if the people in Bucharest were forced for a few weeks to "tighten their belts" in order to give the impression of prosperity. At this time, N.S. Khrushchev undertook a series of actions aimed at changing the leadership structures both in the Soviet Union and in the Socialist satellites. Former dignitaries under Stalin were thus appointed heads of the national Communist parties. In Romania, the person who had the best chance to become leader of the Communist Party was Lucrețiu Patrașcanu. In order to avoid such a move, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej resorted to a radical measure. The legal action brought against Patrașcanu, which had been lagging for years, was brought to an end quickly, and Patrașcanu was sentenced to death and executed on 14 April 1954. Once the sentence in the Patrașcanu trial was announced, the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party was informed of Dej's decision to appoint Gheorghe Apostol as first secretary of the Central Committee. The new first secretary pledged that, "under the leadership of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej," he would strive to carry out the program for building Socialism.

Romania's foreign policy during this period, as well as that of the other Socialist countries, was dictated by the Kremlin. On 25 November 1949 a treaty was concluded and a convention was signed concerning the border between Romania and the Soviet Union. Frontier guards and customs regulations were finally reestablished (their activity had ceased de facto on 23 August 1944). On 26 December 1948 the Romanian and the Soviet governments signed a convention with respect to the quartering of Soviet troops and through which the Romanian Communist Party put at the Red Army's disposal the necessary logistics, including barracks, warehouses, lodgings, airports, training fields, means of communication, etc. The maintenance of buildings, installations, and the payment for rents, services rendered, and for the

deliveries of goods, etc. was the responsibility of the High Command of the Units of the Soviet Army in Romania.²⁹³

Thus, after more than four years since these troops had first been quartered on Romanian territory, a document was finally elaborated by which certain regulations were imposed. This convention was followed by others concerning provisioning and railway transportation required to meet the needs of Soviet troops, including the payment of salaries for Soviet advisors. In February 1950 the Romanian and Soviet governments concluded a convention for transferring Soviet specialists to institutions, organizations, and industrial units in Romania. The Romanian Government guaranteed the Soviet experts' salaries which were equal to those received by Romanian experts. Romania also put at their disposal, free of charge, furnished lodgings and access to electrical power and heating. The provisions of this convention were also applied to those "Soviet experts who had worked in the institutions, organizations, and industrial units of the Romanian People's Republic before this convention was concluded,"²⁹⁴ and thus giving them a retroactive character.

In the period between 20-28 June 1948, the meetings of the Bureau of Information of the Communist and Workers Parties took place in Bucharest during which the "misbehavior" of the Communist Party in Yugoslavia was discussed. At Stalin's suggestion, the report written in Moscow was presented by Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, secretary general of the Romanian Workers Party. In the adopted resolution, the Information Bureau severely criticized the activity of the Communist Party in Yugoslavia and its secretary general, Joseph Broz Tito. On 28 September 1949 the Soviet Union denounced the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance concluded with Yugoslavia in 1945; the other Socialist countries did the same. Romania denounced the treaty with Yugoslavia on 19 December 1949. The entire propaganda apparatus of the Soviet Union and of other Socialist countries was mobilized to expose Tito as an agent of the Anglo-American imperialists, an executioner of the peoples of Yugoslavia, and as a traitor to the great cause of Socialism. As a matter of fact, Tito's greatest fault was that he had not obeyed Stalin's orders unconditionally. Romania's involvement in this conflict had negative consequences for the country; commercial relations stagnated, extremely expensive deportations took place at the frontier with Yugoslavia; approximately 40,000 people of Serbian origin were deported from the Banat to the Baragan.

Immediately after Stalin's death, the Soviet Government began to reevaluate its relations with its satellite countries. The policy of detente, proclaimed by N. Khrushchev, influenced the situation in Romania. In March 1955 the work camps

²⁹³ *România. Retragerea trupelor sovietice. 1958. Culegere de documente*, Coordinator Ioan Scurtu, drawn up by: Mircea Chirițolu, Mariana Conovici, Constantin Hlihor, Maria Ignat, Elena Istrățescu, Ioan Scurtu, Aurelian Teodorescu, București, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1996, pp. 171-174; to be referred to as *România. Retragerea...*

²⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 207-209.

were abolished and several political prisoners were liberated. In April 1956 the council of ministers allowed disgraced persons to return to their original homes and they were given back their confiscated houses and lands. Great attention was paid to the provisioning of the population, and, in December 1954, ration books and rations for staple goods were abolished, since these items could be bought freely.

After the Soviet attacks on Yugoslavia and Tito ceased, Romania sought to revive its old contacts with its neighboring country. On 11 September 1953 an agreement between Romania and Yugoslavia was concluded concerning the formation of a joint commission which would settle conflicts concerning the frontier. On 19 February 1953 diplomatic relations between the two countries were raised to the embassy level (they had been conducted by legations since 1948). These documents were drawn up on 2 June before the Soviet Government reestablished diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia. Romanian-Yugoslav negotiations took place in September 1955 concerning the complex activity on the Danube from Bazias, to the Iron Gates. Romanian citizens of Serbian origin who had been deported to the Baragan were given the right to return to their homes in December 1955. Between 23 and 26 June 1956, Tito paid an official visit to Romania which marked the complete normalization of relations between Romania and Yugoslavia.

The most important and decisive foreign relations were those with the Soviet Union. Khrushchev wanted to demonstrate that he was an advocate of relations based on equality and thus he gave up a number of practices inherited from Stalin. In January 1949, at the initiative of the Soviet Union, the Economic Council for Mutual Assistance had been established. It involved all the Socialist countries of Europe, including Romania, and it was through this organization that the Soviets took control of the economy of the Socialist "bloc." The member countries of the Economic Council for Mutual Assistance did not have any choice but to limit their relations with the West, both at the economic level and at the cultural-political level. In response, the Western states "froze" their relations with the Eastern countries. On 27 June 1951 the United States revoked a commercial agreement signed by Romania in 1930 and ratified in February 1948. On 10 October 1951 the president of the United States signed a law concerning the financing by the American Government of any selected persons who live in the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, or Albania, as well as of persons who had fled these countries.²⁹⁵

The evolution of the Economic Council for Mutual Assistance was inconsistent. In the beginning, according to Alexandru Barladeanu, "it seemed to have a rather formal role."²⁹⁶ Then, it was taken over by Nikita Khrushchev who sought to turn the Economic Council for Mutual Assistance into a mechanism through which the Soviet Union could dominate the other Socialist countries. Romania's attitude and

²⁹⁵ Cristian Popișteanu, *Cronologie politico-diplomatică românească, 1944-1974*, București, Editura Politică, 1976, p. 106.

²⁹⁶ Lavinia Betea, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

position within this forum was influenced by the presence or absence of Soviet troops on its territory. As long as troops of the Red Army were quartered in Romania, Romanian leaders could not oppose the principles which governed this body. One year after the Economic Council for Mutual Assistance was founded, the members of this forum were summoned to Moscow without having been informed of the agenda.²⁹⁷

After the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania, the Communist leaders in Bucharest could express their disagreement with the leaders in Moscow with respect to the debates which took place at the end of the 1950s and at the beginning of the 1960s and which tackled the functioning and organizational principles of the Economic Council for Mutual Assistance. Regarding the reactions of the Romanian Communists to Khrushchev's interference in the domestic affairs of the "brother" countries through the Economic Council for Mutual Assistance, Alexandru Barladeanu asserted that: "The first conflict with Kosygin occurred in 1955, and it concerned the status of the Economic Council for Mutual Assistance. He tried to impose upon us the decisions of the Economic Council for Mutual Assistance which were passed by a majority of votes. And we opposed this treatment. We opposed Kosygin's proposal which would have allowed the Economic Council for Mutual Assistance, through a majority of votes, to impose a policy which was deemed unacceptable by the country which it concerned."²⁹⁸ The Soviet plan, shared by some Socialist countries on the harmonizing and specialization of production in the various Socialist countries was in opposition to the Romanian leaders' ambitions of developing a modern industrial economy in Romania.²⁹⁹ The following years were decisive for the policy of resistance to Moscow and the trump card was to be the lack of occupation troops on Romania's territory.

The leaders in Bucharest categorically rejected the plan to create a "Bureau for Super-National Planning of the Complementary and Synchronized Economies of the Socialist States in their Triumphant March towards Unitary Socialism"³⁰⁰ for fear of losing "oil, methane gas, power potential, cereals, and other resources of Romania."³⁰¹ Alexandru Barladeanu, the Romanian delegate to the Economic Council for Mutual Assistance, reported that, according to the ideas of the Soviet leaders concerning the international division of labor: "We, Romanians, were not supposed to concern ourselves with the development of industry, but, among other things, we were to cultivate maize, while the Germans were to feed their pigs off our maize. It is no joke, but this was what the delegation from the Democratic Republic of Germany proposed. Romania was to have the status of a colony of the great

²⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 744.

²⁹⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹⁹ Paul Niculescu-Mizil, *op. cit.*, p. 205; Ghiță Ionescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 374-375.

³⁰⁰ Titu Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

³⁰¹ Paul Niculescu-Mizil, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

industrialized countries Germany and Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union was to run everything. We had to begin a psychological war so as to ride out the storm."³⁰²

Against the contentious background of the 1950s and 1960s, Romania took important steps toward self-assertion within the Socialist system. Leaders of the Communist Party, such as Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Alexandru Bârlădeanu, Corneliu Mănescu, Ștefan Voitec, and others, prompted by some Communist and non-Communist intellectuals, thought that it was time to adopt a national approach to Socialist construction and to develop economic, scientific, and cultural links with Western countries and with countries from other continents.

³⁰² Lavinia Betea, *op. cit.*, p. 149.