

THE IMAGE OF THE END OF SECOND WORLD WAR AT EIGHTY YEARS OLD. BETWEEN HISTORICAL ACCURACY AND POLITICAL BIAS.

CONSTANTIN HLIHOR¹

Abstract: Eighty years after the end of the Second World War, all of the warring nations still remember this final tragedy in different ways. Historians from both the West and the Soviet Union/Russia believe that its effects were different. According to Western historians, defeated nations regained their democracy and peace. However, historians from former socialist nations, particularly those in the east, did not and still do not recognise the positive effects of World War II. Both of these evaluations have been impacted over time by political events and the interactions between former World War II combatants, particularly the East-West split. As a result, it is essential to comprehend the motivations behind writing about World War II in the twenty-first century, the political ramifications of historical accounts, and the intricacies of the ideologies of both opponents and how they affect Second World War historiography.

Keywords: image of WWII, biased historiography, truth, ideology, and historical past.

DOI [10.56082/annalsarscihist.2025.1.89](https://doi.org/10.56082/annalsarscihist.2025.1.89)

Introduction

Tens of thousands of studies and books have been written about World War II. Every battle has been analyzed, from the battles on the front to the actions behind enemy lines, the biography of generals and political leaders has been written, the resistance and collaborators, not to mention the Holocaust. But its origins and consequences have had different perceptions over time and in different societies. The historian Göttingen Hermann once wrote that every present begins with the last catastrophe. Eighty years after its end, the memory of this last catastrophe, World War II, is still alive in various ways shaped by the work of historians in all the belligerent countries. The perceptions of most of the great victorious powers, both in the West and in the USSR/Russia, are circumscribed by beneficial consequences for the peoples and the international political scene. Following World War II, democracy and peace were reinstated, and new standards and values were created to direct states' actions in global politics. However, some historians, particularly those from Eastern nations, did not and still do not share the same perspective on the effects of World War II as do historians from the West. These evaluations are based on observations of the effects of World War II and its aftermath in each of the nations that joined the Soviet

¹ Academy of Romanian Scientists

Union as satellite states. Numerous academics from Japan and other countries have also claimed that World War II was a bad thing. These impressions make us question if British historian Richard Overy is correct in stating that both sides of this global conflict were engaged in a struggle for imperialist interests.

Political events and the relationships between the former combatants of World War II, particularly the East-West divide, have impacted these evaluations over time. The political ramifications of historical narratives, the motivations behind writing about World War II in the twenty-first century, and the influence of both adversaries' ideologies on World War II historiography must all be understood.

The need to correct historical taboos and misconceptions surrounding the "Good War" or "Bad War" narrative is emphasised by the majority of historians who have studied WWII, particularly with regard to the post-war fate of the Eastern nations. The majority of historians have adopted these conclusions, which were made by communist leaders for political reasons in certain historical periods. These days, some Western historiographies are beginning to make the same assessment.

The majority of radical Russian historians believe that Romanian and Western interpretations of World War II are a distortion of historical reality. Is this a positive or negative thing? A necessary and inherent aspect of history is historical revisionism; there have always been apologists with ostentatious narratives motivated by political and ideological interests as well as revisionist historians who present a fresh interpretation of the past. It is accurate to say that World War II was no different. We think that all historians must be revisionists in the field of history, but only in certain circumstances. In order to produce a more accurate historiography, an academic form of revision functions as a continuous historiography that challenges the veracity of our historical interpretations. Reinterpreting a historical event or presenting new narratives based on recently found documents and other reliable sources are examples of constructive historical revisionism. The process of updating the past involves closely adhering to the standards of academic research, which include establishing facts that support opposing viewpoints, generating unbiased interpretations, and confirming facts that convey the truth.

1. The UN Coalition's military triumph over the Axis powers did not mean the end of the fight for global hegemony.

The great powers fought multiple wars for hegemony after the Vienna Peace Congress in 1815, with Great Britain emerging victorious². Among other things,

² See, Giovanni Arrighi, *The Three Hegemonies of Historical Capitalism*, in S. Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993; Terry Boswell, Mike Sweat, *Hegemony, Long Waves, and Major Wars: A Time Series Analysis of Systemic Dynamics, 1496-1967*, in *International Studies Quarterly*, June, Vol. 35, No.2, 1991; Andrew Gamble, *Hegemony*

the Industrial Revolution, the British navy, their control over the global market, their financial and monetary leadership—which was formalised by the gold standard—and their military power were the foundations of British hegemony. Beginning at the end of the 19th century, when the USA was becoming a more powerful country every day, it began to show signs of running out of steam. Throughout the 19th century, Britain's monopolistic advantage—which was founded on a technological lead—decreased, which is one of the factors that contributed to its decline. Countries like the United States and Germany established a robust techno-economic foundation that put British leadership to the test. The contest centred on who would take over as the world's dominant power in place of Great Britain, which had lost its place since 1873. This conflict culminated in the Thirty Years' War, which raged from 1914 to 1945³. This conflict, which involved all of the major industrial powers of the world system, physically destroyed the populations of Europe and Asia in its final stage, known as World War II, and also destroyed the majority of their industrial and financial power. The United States of America was the only major industrial power at the end of the war in 1945, although the USSR and Great Britain also emerged victorious, despite suffering severe losses in their positions of power. This feature illustrated how, by producing all major industrial goods far more efficiently than other developed nations, the USA rose to become the world's dominant manufacturing power for the ensuing 50–70 years. The physical devastation in Europe and Asia following the war was so severe that many of these nations desperately needed various forms of economic aid, which they turned to the United States for. Thus the USA was able to easily convert its economic dominance into political and military hegemony, albeit not globally. Gradually, the United States assumed an unprecedented leadership role in the international system⁴. Despite suffering enormous losses during the war, comparable to those of Britain and France, the Soviet Union's military might remained enormous and intact. Hegemonic conflicts thus reappeared on the global political scene. According to Melvyn P. Leffler "Stalin's approach to international affairs at the end of the war was relatively cautious. He wanted a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and control of German and Japanese power, but at the same time he wished to sustain the wartime alliance upon which Soviet security and reconstruction depended"⁵. As a result of each country's desire to organise the post-

and Decline: Britain and the United States, in P. O'Brien and A. Clesse, eds., *Two Hegemonies, Britain 1846-1914 and the United States 1941-2001*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2002.

³ Jay Winter, *The Myth of a 'Second Thirty Years War'*, in **ENRS Articles**, 16 April, 2025, online <https://enrs.eu/article/the-myth-of-a-second-thirty-years-war>; Michael Howard, *A Thirty Years' War? The Two World Wars in Historical Perspective: The Prothero Lecture*, in **Transactions of the Royal Historical Society**, Vol. 3 (1993), pp. 171-184.

⁴ Melvyn P. Leffler, *The specter of communism: the United States and the origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1993, p. viii.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

war political scene in line with its own conception of the world and society, mistrust and suspicion between the Soviet Union and the major Western democracies grew stronger and eventually became state policies⁶. As a result, during the early years of the Cold War, ties between the US and the USSR gradually deteriorated. Apart from the significant conflict between the superpowers' geopolitical and geostrategic objectives, a new element would surface that would impact the relationship between the West and the communist world: the nuclear factor. The Soviet leaders had an unwarranted fear of being attacked by former allies because the United States had the atomic bomb. Even though American President Harry S. Truman did not directly threaten the Soviet Union with nuclear weapons, the nuclear element was present. When Truman dispatched B-29 bombers to Europe during the Berlin Crisis in July 1948, it was the most overt example of Soviet leaders' misperception on US using the atomic bomb to further their foreign policy⁷.

From this perspective, we can say that another consequence of the Second World War was the start of the nuclear race between the main winners. The competition for hegemony was to be conducted under the specter of the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. The US Administration's security strategy, which was adopted at the end of 1953, stated that "In the event of hostilities, the United States will consider nuclear weapons as available for use as other munitions"⁸. These American policy directives were not viewed by the Soviet leaders, particularly Stalin and his successors, as a genuine threat of nuclear war. David Holloway highlights that Stalin's atomic weapons policy was "guided by two principles: the concept of war of nerves and the idea of limits". The premise behind the first of these principles was that the United States would use the threat of the atomic bomb to coerce the Soviet Union into making concessions and to enforce its own postwar international order. Stalin came to the conclusion that, following Hiroshima, the real threat was not atomic war but rather atomic diplomacy. (...) The second principle, that of limits, acted as a brake on the war of nerves. Stalin did not want a war with the

⁶ See Geoffrey Warner, *From 'Ally' to Enemy: Britain's Relations with the Soviet Union, 1941–1948*, in: F. Gori, S. Pons, eds., *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943–1953*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1996, pp. 293–503; Howard F. Stein, *The Indispensable Enemy and American-Soviet Relations*, in *Ethos*, Vol. 17, No. 4, Dec., 1989, pp. 480–503; Constantin Hlihor, *Istoria secolului XX*, Editura Comunicare.ro, București, 2002, pp. 91–99.

⁷ Constantin Hlihor, *Cu mâinile altele. România și războaiele prin intermediari în Africa. 1970–1985*, Editura Corint, 2025, p. 30.

⁸ Thomas Schelling, *An Astonishing Sixty Years: The Legacy of Hiroshima*, Nobel Prize lecture, The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Stockholm, Sweden, December 8, 2005, p. 367, online https://csis-websiteprod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fspublic/legacy_files/files/publication/110111_pauly_containing_atom.pdf accesat la 10 aprilie 2025

West; he did not believe that the Soviet Union was ready for war”⁹. Stalin aimed to avoid giving the impression that the Soviet Union was a weak actor to the West by engaging in this war of nerves and by blunt discourse on the use of nuclear weapons. However, modern Russian historians agree that the Soviet Union was a weak actor in the early years of the Cold War because it had suffered the most in terms of effort and human sacrifice. According to Russian historians Sergey Lavrenov and Igor Popov "The victor's reasonable desire to maximise the benefits of victory evolved into baseless assertions. "Unreasonable because, if military might is not taken into account, the Soviet Union was not a true superpower despite its immense political and moral influence at the time”¹⁰.

Soviet leaders were able to build on the gains they had made after the Second World War by using force to uphold their policy of imposing communism within their sphere of influence. For the most part, however, the Soviets avoided provoking the United States and going to war¹¹. As the US and the USSR expanded their nuclear weapons arsenals in the 1950s, fears of nuclear war dominated both Soviet and American society. One notable catalyst in this regard was the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Following the resolution of this crisis, both superpowers adapted their strategies to the new geopolitical conditions, concentrating on confrontational tactics that would not entail the use of nuclear weapons. The arms race and the spread of nuclear capabilities had a major effect on mutual deterrence.

In order to gain the hearts and minds of both domestic and foreign public opinion, a struggle for domination and hegemony began between the US and the Soviet Union under the specter of new threats. Written and audiovisual media were used as weapons and tools in this new theater of operations. The classical imprint only appeared in the rhetoric of the American and Soviet political and military leadership because the struggle for global hegemony was essentially fought in different theaters of operations than the conventional ones¹². In this new kind of conflict, the two superpowers continued to use their kinetic power—tanks, cannons, aircraft, and warships—through third parties rather than relinquishing their traditional military might. As a result, the fight for hegemony in the global arena gave rise to a new kind of conflict. It has been defined and conceptualized as local wars in socialist historiography and as proxy wars in Western historiography. Despite being a defining feature of the Cold War, this type of conflict persisted in global politics.

⁹ David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939-1956*, Yale University Press, 1994, p. 272.

¹⁰ Sergey Lavrenov, Igor Popov, *Sovetskiy Soyuz v lokal'nykh voynakh i konfliktakh/ Uniunea Sovietică în războaie și conflicte locale*, ACT, Astrel', Moskva, 2003, p. 3.

¹¹ Paul C. Avey, *Tempting Fate: Why Nonnuclear States Confront Nuclear Opponents*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, London, 2019, p. 122.

¹² Constantin Hlihor, Nicolae Melinescu, *TvR. Actor și martor la prăbușirea comunismului și nașterea democrației*, Editura EIKON, București, 2021, p. 16-17.

As long as the United States, the primary Cold War victor, had no rivals to challenge its hegemony, it did not materialize. According to Fareed Zakaria, the rise of the "Rest,"¹³ a metaphorical group, encompasses both states with a remarkable nuclear arsenal and those with an exceptionally dynamic economy. The rise of rivals for world dominance paved the way for the development of nuclear rhetoric¹⁴. Classical warfare is still being waged, as it was in the early years after World War II. But as then, the great powers are not involved. It is being waged "by someone else's hands," that is, by other classical and non-classical actors. A notable examples are the conflict in Ukraine,¹⁵ and Arab Spring, or Israel Gaza War. The wars in Syria and Libya are the most instructive from the perspective of their inclusion in the proxy war¹⁶. From this vantage point, the effects of World War II are still evident.

2. The effects of the struggle for global hegemony in the early years after World War II on Romania

Romania's ruling and opposition political elites have viewed and interpreted the Coalition of Nations' victory since the end of World War II through the ideological frameworks and political doctrines of their respective parties. The well-known leader of the democratic opposition, Iuliu Maniu, believed that Romania could be saved from the communist regime's establishment by appealing to Western leaders' strong democratic solidarity. Numerous documents support this belief, but we will only focus on the conversation Iuliu Maniu had with Mark Ethridge, an American government envoy on an information trip to Bulgaria and Romania, on November 23, 1945: "The Anglo-Americans should realise that they enjoyed great popularity

¹³ Fareed Zakaria, *Lumea postamericană*, Polirom, Iași, 2009; Paul Dobrescu, *Lumea cu două viteze. Puterile emergente și țările dezvoltate*, Comunicare.ro, București, 2013; Dr. Constantin Buchet, *Ordinea mondială à la chinoise. Dimensiuni geopolitice*, in **Paradigme Universitare Băimărene**, nr. 3, 2016, pp. 15-27.

¹⁴ Constantin Hlihor, *Războiul din Ucraina - Între retorica nucleară, riscul depășirii „liniilor roșii” și evitarea unei confruntări directe între marile puteri*, in **Pulsul Geostrategic**, Nr. 291, Iulie-August 2023, <https://www.pulsulgeostrategic.ro/>

¹⁵ A se vedea, Constantin Hlihor, *Criza Ucraineană. De la un război local la o confruntare globală pentru securitate, stabilitate și păstrarea/schimbarea ordinii internaționale*, in Emil Constantinescu, Oana-Elena Brânda, *Lumea Post-Pandemie. Între război și pace. Esecuri*, vol. II, Editura RAO, București, 2022, pp. 337-351; Dr Geraint Hughes, *Is the war in Ukraine a proxy conflict?*, King's College London, 12 October 2022, online <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/is-the-war-in-ukraine-a-proxy-conflict> accesat la 20 iulie 2023; Bilal Karabulut ve Şafak Oğuz, *Proxy Warfare in Ukraine*, in *Savunma Bilimleri Dergisi/The Journal of Defense Sciences*

Mayıs/May 2018, Cilt/Volume 17, Sayı/Issue 1, pp. 75-100; N. V. Starikov. «*Voyna. Chuzhimi rukami*», Izdaniye, oformleniye. «Izdatel'stvo «Eksmo», 2017/ "Război. Ce mâinile altcuiva", Editura Eksmo, 2017, p. 9.

¹⁶ Vladimir Răuță, *Framers, founders, and reformers: three generations of proxy war research*, in **Contemporary Security Policy**, vol. 42, no. 1, p. 113-134, postat în Central Archive at the University of Reading, online <https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/91906/>, p. 4.

in the country." People are on their side, and public opinion supports them. With Russia's assistance, the Petru Groza government was "imposed" on Romania with the primary objective of influencing public opinion by seizing control of the gendarmerie, police, army, and administration. The Romanians wanted to see the principles declared in Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam implemented, so they fought this trend as hard as they could¹⁷. The national-peasant leader's misperception that Westerners would step in România if they were well-informed was largely caused by a lack of knowledge about the spheres of influence that the great powers had agreed upon, which was not founded on political or ideological beliefs. It was established on the basis of each great power interests¹⁸. Iuliu Maniu was unknowing that American President Truman was refusing British Prime Minister Churchill's request to stop the removal of non-communist leaders from Romanian politics. According to the US president, Romania was not a suitable location to evaluate the Russians' intentions within their sphere of influence¹⁹. In fact, during that period, Truman would note in his diary, "I can deal with Stalin. He's honest but smart as hell"²⁰. More than a year after this response to the British Prime Minister, the President would largely correct his perception of the USSR. The Clifford-Elsey Report, a document prepared by the US president's expert apparatus on geopolitical developments in Europe, was delivered to him in September 1946. This document began with the phrase that practically summed up the entire analysis: "The most serious problem facing the United States today is the American relations with the Soviet Union. The resolution of this problem may determine whether or not there will be a Third World War"²¹. This perception of the US president would be supported and reinforced by the installation of the pro-Kremlin government under

*Parte din acest text este un fragment dintr-o analiză mai largă apărută în timpul cercetărilor efectuate pentru această carte. A se vedea, Constantin Hlihor, *Rivalitate și confruntare geostrategică între Est și Vest în timpul Războiului Rece. Comportamentul geopolitic al României*, în **Arhivele Totalitarismului**, Anul XXX, no. 116-117/ 3-4, 2022, pp. 11-44.

¹⁷ *Notă asupra convorbirii dintre dl Mark Ethridge și dl Iuliu Maniu*, în Memorialul Sighet, Centrul de Studii, Dosar documentar 1945, online <https://www.memorialsighet.ro/nota-asupra-convorbirii-dintre-dl-mark-ethridge-si-dl-iuliu-maniu/> accesat la 10 octombrie 2022.

¹⁸ A se vedea, Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, *România și organizarea postbelică a lumii: 1945- 1947*, Editura Academiei, București, 1988; Titu Georgescu, *România între Yalta și Malta*, Editura Șansa, București, 1993; Florin Constantiniu, *Doi ori doi fac șaisprezece. A început războiul rece în România?* Editura Eurosong & Book, București, 1997; 4 Lloyd C. Gardner, *Sferele de influență. împărțirea Europei între marile puteri de la München la Ialta*, Editura Elit, București, f.a;

¹⁹ Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932 – 1945*, With a New Afterword, Oxford University Press, New-York, Oxford, 1995, p. 524.

²⁰ Barton J. Bernstein, *Truman at Potsdam: His Secret Diary*, US National SecurityArchive, online <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/28466-document-47-trumans-potsdam-diary> accesat la 14 octombrie 2022.

²¹ Apud, Bogdan Antoniu, *Raportul Clifford-Elsey și culisele politicii externe americane*, în **Caiete Diplomatice**, Anul I, nr. 1, 2013, p. 104.

Dr. Petru Groza, and particularly by the completely hostile actions of the Bucharest authorities towards US diplomatic staff in Romania.

Romania's pro-Moscow leaders' view of a hostile West was certainly shaped by communist propaganda and their commitment to Marxist ideology, but information travelling through diplomatic channels from ministers of plenipotency also played a role. The letters that Ambassador Mihail Ralea wrote to Gheorghiu-Dej from Washington in April 1947 serve as a pertinent illustration. "America's attitude towards us oscillated between hostility and ignorance when I came here four months ago,"²² Ralea wrote in one of these letters. "The doors were all shut. All around us, ill will is evident. We were viewed as a Soviet branch that should not receive assistance. The Ministry of Commerce has a list where Romania is classified as a "enemy" nation that should not receive aid"²³.

It is important to note that Soviet leaders' propaganda also contributed to Romanian leaders' perception of an antagonistic image of America. Russian historian Vladimir Pechatnov claims that Stalin strategically employed Churchill's speeches to inspire the Soviet people to make new sacrifices and accomplishments in order to enhance the USSR's reputation as a formidable force in the struggle against the imperialist West. "He helped bring the enemy's image back to life after it had been forgotten during the war, and the threat of a new conflict took on a tangible, familiar face that demanded readiness and attention to detail. Soviet propaganda was restructured in a militant anti-Western fashion beginning in March 1946, according to documents from the Soviet party archives. Stalin was forced to take up the challenge. He had established a system that was still too powerful to give up"²⁴.

In fact, one of the most well-known ideologists of the Soviet Communist Party, A. Zhdanov, introduced the idea of two opposing worlds with no chance of understanding one another into international politics. He declared the creation of the Cominform to unite all communist parties against Western imperialism in a speech given in Szklarska-Poręba, Poland²⁵. Thus, through crass and occasionally vulgar propaganda, the Soviet leaders' indoctrination of Owen society was transferred from Soviet society to the satellite nations of Moscow. On the other hand, the Red Scare—a fear of the spread of Soviet communism—was cultivated in American society in perfect symmetry with what transpired in Soviet society.

²² Apud, Rodica Deaconescu, *Aspecte ale relațiilor româno-americane până în anul 1965*, în **Transilvania**, no. 8, 2009, p. 28.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Vladimir Pechatnov, *Vskore posle Fultona. Sotsial'no-psikhologicheskiye osnovy kholodnoy voyny/La scurt timp după Fulton. Fundamentele socio-psihologice ale Războiului Rece*, în **Российское историческое общество**, 20 iulie 2021, online <https://historyrussia.org/tsekh-istorikov/vskore-posle-fultona.html> accesat la 14 octombrie 2022.

²⁵ Cosmin Popa, *Nașterea imperiului. URSS și primele crize intercomuniste. 1945-1953*, Editura Fundației PRO, București, 2002, p. 178.

International events in the following decades did not validate these misconceptions that had been established in the early years of the Cold War. Because the propaganda front consumed the rivalry and the weapons were loaded with images and messages for the public opinion of the enemy's camp, the war between the two camps never broke out. A process of double errors of perception led to a psychosis of fear that dominated society in the early years after World War II.

This equation of the double errors of perception of both U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. leaders also affected political events in Romania. Therefore, during the years when President Truman believed he could get along with Stalin, the Soviet leader made an effort to avoid causing too much trouble for the American government. This fact would account for Stalin's decision not to impose a government comprising only representatives of the Romanian Communist Party in Romania. He took into account the agreements reached with Western governments as well as the unfavourable perception of communism in Romanian society. Dr. Petru Groza has included to alongside of communists other leaders who were well-known in Romanian society during the interwar period, as members of the government. The renowned neurosurgeon Dumitru Bagdasar, a member of the Romanian Academy, served as the Minister of Health; Mihai Ralea, a philosopher, was the Minister of Culture and Arts; and Gheorghe Tătărescu, a former liberal prime minister of Romania from 1934 to 1937 and the leader of Romania's delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1946 and 1947, served as the Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The inclusion of these non-Marxists leaders, shows that the USSR's geopolitical interests were more significant at the time than Stalin's ideological beliefs. Later, some of the communist leaders in Romania would testify to this. "In Moscow, Pătrășcanu thought that he would discuss <<as a communist to other communists>>,"²⁶ wrote latter years Vasile Posteuca* in reference to the alleged diplomatic negotiations of the armistice between Romania and the United Nations in September 1944 and he added "(So did Dej, when he went to Stalin for the first time)"²⁷. Stalin ordered that the talks be conducted as if from victor to vanquished at Moscow, and the terms of the Armistice Convention signed on the evening of September 12/13, 1944, left no room for doubt that the Soviet negotiators acted in accordance with the USSR's geopolitical interests in this region of the world rather than in accordance with the principles of ideological solidarity. It did not matter that Pătrășcanu was one of the leaders of the Romanian communists.²⁸

²⁶ Andrei Șiperco, ed., *Confesiunile elitei comuniste. România 1944-1965. Rivalități, represii, crime...Arhiva Alexandru Șiperco*, Editura Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, București, 2021, p. 156.

²⁷ Ibidem.

* Communist leader whose life story is unclear. According to recent studies, his true name was Mihail Povstanski, who was born in Tighina, in the modern-day Republic of Moldova, on November 8, 1914. See

Even though Dr. Petru Groza's government is almost universally regarded in post-December historiography as the "perfect satellite"²⁹ that gave up its foreign policy "almost entirely to Moscow,"³⁰ we think that political partisanship shouldn't be reflected in value judgments over his all activity. At those time, Romania was a defeated nation under foreign occupation and, this government had to operate within certain geopolitical and geostrategic limits³¹. The government implemented a number of policies and initiatives that did not align with the real interests of Romanian society at those age, but it also found ways to safeguard national interests that were mainly related to Romania's borders in that challenging internal and international environment. After the entire country was liberated in the autumn of 1944, western Transylvania—which Hitler had torn from the nation's body and given to Hungary in August 1940—came under Soviet military occupation instead of returning to Romanian rule as would have been expected³². In order to bring the entire Transylvanian region under the control of the Romanian government, the political leaders in power in Romania had to foresee the Soviet geostrategic interests in this region of the world and utilise them in negotiations with the Soviet occupier. The delegation headed by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej took the first step when they went to Moscow in December 1944 to meet with Stalin. He promised to Dej that he would not consider the communists in Hungary's requests in relate to Transilvania land³³. The next step came on March 8, 1945, when Gheorghe Tătărescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Dr. Petru Groza, President of the

more at Gabriel Stegărescu, *O poveste care a creat confuzie în România anilor '50. Cum a ajuns un spion rus să conducă lucrările de la Canalul Dunăre-Marea Neagră?*, in *Historia.ro*, online <https://historia.ro/sectiune/portret/paradoxurile-istoriei-in-romania-stalinista-un-576279.html> accesat la 9 octombrie 2024.

²⁸ Andrei Șiperco, ed., *Confesiunile elitei comuniste. România 1944-1965. Rivalități, represii, crime...* Arhiva Alexandru Șiperco, Editura Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, București, 2021, p. 156.

²⁹ Mioara Anton, *Ieșirea din cerc. Politica externă a regimului Georghiu-Dej*, Editura Institutului Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, București, 2007, pp. 17-52.

³⁰ Paul Nistor, *Relațiile internaționale ale României în anii '50 ai secolului al XX-lea. Cadrul general, principalele evenimente, relații bilaterale și accesul în organizațiile internaționale*, în *Cercetări Istorice* (serie nouă), XXX-XXXI (2011-2012), Iași, 2012, p. 247.

³¹ See, Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, Adrian Pop, *Sovietizarea României: percepții anglo-americane, 1944-1947*, Iconica, București, 1993; Radu Ciuceanu, Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, Vitalie Văratec, ed., *Misiunile lui A.I. Vișinski în România, Din istoria relațiilor româno-sovietice 1944 – 1946. Documente secrete*, Editura Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, București, 1997; Constantin Hlihor, Ioan Scurtu, *The Red Army in Romania*, Iași, Oxford, Portland, 2000.

³² See, Marcela Sălăgean, *Administrația sovietică în Nordul Transilvaniei (noiembrie 1944-martie 1945)*, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, Cluj-Napoca, 2002; Nicolae Mihu, *De la profesioniști la oamenii Partidului Comunist. Tranziția în administrația și structurile militare din nord-vestul României (jud. Bihor, Sălaj, Satu Mare și Maramureș), 1944-1945*, Editura Primus, Oradea, 2008.

³³ Dan Cătănuș, Vasile Buga, *Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej la Stalin. Stenograme, note de convorbire, memorii 1944-1952*, Editura Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, București, 2012, p. 17.

Council of Ministers, sent a telegram to Stalin asking for the establishment of Romanian rule in North-Western Transylvania. The following day, Stalin and the Soviet government reacted favourably for political and geostrategic reasons rather than ideological ones. The Kremlin leader decorated King Michael with the Order of "Victory" at the same time that Romanian rule was restored in North-Western Transylvania. The Soviet Union wanted to make the government it had forcibly imposed on Romania appear positive in the eyes of the Romanian society.

The fight against the attempts of certain Ukrainian communist leaders to annex a part of Maramureș to Soviet Ukraine was another incident that the government of Dr. Petru Groza had to deal with³⁴. Because there was a risk of violent clashes between Romanians and Ukrainians in Maramureș, the situation became serious, and the government needed to find a solution quickly. In order to address this issue, the communist Vasile Luca* was dispatched to the region. He "proved skillful in negotiations with the Soviet officers as well as with the government in Muncaci, with President Ivan Tureanu, after which the representative of the government in Muncaci received an order to withdraw his *bezpecii* (political police) and all his acolytes. Thus, the reintroduction of the Romanian government marked the end of Vasile Luca's mission in Maramureș on April 9"³⁵.

As with all satellite states, the geopolitical and geostrategic interests of Moscow, which engaged in a diplomacy of intimidation and the threat of nuclear war, had a significant impact on Romania's foreign policy and its conduct in the early years following the end of World War II on the international scene³⁶. Such diplomacy was put into action by Stalin, who ordered "the cleansing of the communist leadership of supporters of an independent course based on the concept of a 'national path' to socialism"³⁷. Even in February 1947, Stalin brought up the subject of "nationalist mistakes within the Romanian Communist Party" in a conversation

* see more at Dr. Sorin Aparaschivei, *Vasile Luca, agent al Siguranței și spion român în Uniunea Sovietică?* In **Historia.ro**, online <https://historia.ro/sectiune/general/vasile-luca-agent-al-siguranței-si-spion-roman-in-564806.html> accesat la 11 octombrie 2024.

³⁴ See, Ilie Gherheș, *Maramureșul între dictatul de la Viena și Conferința de Pace de la Paris (30 august 1940 - 10 februarie 1947)*, Baia Mare, 2002; *Povestea unei lupte despre pământ strămoșesc scrisă cu sânge*, in **Gazeta de Maramureș.ro**, online <http://www.gazetademaramures.ro/images/supplement/maramuresul-si-cel-de-al-doilea-razboi-mondial.pdf> accesat la 11 octombrie 2024.

³⁵ Ioan Boroica, *Două ierni fierbinți în Maramureș: 18 octombrie 1944-9 aprilie 1945 și 18 octombrie 1945-13 martie 1947*, in Dr. Mihai Dăncuș, coord., *Satul maramureșean 1945-1989. Viața socială, economică, politică, culturală și religioasă*. Studii și Documente, Muzeul Maramureșului, Sighetu! Marmăției 2005, p. 49.

³⁶ Volokitina, T. V., Murashko, G. P., Noskova, A. F., Pokivaylova, T. A., *Moskva i Vostochnaya Yevropa: Stanovleniye politicheskikh rezhimov sovetskogo tipa (1949-1953)*. Ocherki istorii. Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2002, pp. 592-613.

³⁷ Ibidem.

with Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej³⁸. It sent a strong message to the Romanian leader that the Soviet hegemon would not tolerate any departure from Moscow's directives, either in domestic affairs or on the international politics. Gheorghiu-Dej sent more strong signals of alignment to persuade the Soviet leadership of his allegiance. The speech delivered at the fifth plenary session of the PMR's CC on January 23–24, 1950, contains one of these: “The resolution of the November 1949 meeting of the Information Bureau on “Defending Peace and Fighting Warmongers” set as the central task of the communist and workers’ parties the mobilization of the broad masses of the people in the struggle to ensure lasting peace. This task must be the central task in the activity of the communist and workers’ parties. As the Resolution of the Information Bureau shows, in the countries of people’s democracy, the party has, “along with the exposure of the imperialist warmongers and their tools, the task of continuously strengthening the camp of peace and socialism, in the name of defending peace and security of the peoples”³⁹. Occasionally, Gheorghiu-Dej attempted to conceal this reality of complete allegiance to the USSR in internal propaganda in an attempt to persuade Romanian citizens that Romania and the other satellite states were free to choose their own foreign policy paths. The Romanian communist leader's claim that “Imperialist propaganda often tries to compare the 'Western bloc,' designed by Anglo-American reaction, with the treaties and agreements concluded between the democratic countries of central and eastern Europe and to blame the latter countries for the division of Europe in two”⁴⁰ raises serious questions about how credible his statement was in Romanian society. Dej showed his allegiance to the Kremlin leaders by completely supporting Moscow's stance in the split between Tito and Stalin⁴¹. He acted in a way that led Soviet delegates Zhdanov, Malenkov, and Suslov to inform Stalin that at the Cominform Conference in 1949 “Dej had already expressed solidarity with the position of the C.P.(b) of the U.S.S.R. and characterised the behaviour of the Yugoslav leaders as traitorous”.⁴² Loyalty of Gheorghiu-Dej to the Soviet hegemon was also demonstrated by avoiding closer

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ Arhivele Nationale ale României, fond C.C. al PCR, Cancelarie, dosar 7, vol. I, f. 139-149.

⁴⁰ Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, *Articole și cuvântări*, ediția aIV-a, București, Editura de stat pentru literatura politică București, 1955 p. 127.

⁴¹ See more, Silviu B. Moldovan, coord, *Problema Iugoslavă. Studii și marginalii*, Editura Meridian 21 Delta, Timișoara, 1998; Florin Constantiniu, Adrian Pop, *Schisma roșie. România și declanșarea conflictului sovieto-iugoslav (1948-1945)*, Editura Compania, București, 2007; Mircea Chirițoiu, *România și Iugoslavia în Balanța războiului rece*, Casa editorială Demiurg, Iași 2005; Silvia Ioniță, *Relațiile româno-iugoslave de la conflict la cooperare (1945-1956)*, Editura CTEA, București, 2018; Mihai Milca: *Eșecul sovietizării totale a Europei. Schisma titoistă*, online <https://www.punctulcritic.ro/mihai-milca-esecul-sovietizarii-totale-a-europei-schisma-titoista.html> ; Constantin Hlihor, Constantin Bușe, *Relațiile româno-iugoslave în primii ani ai războiului rece*, în Constantin Bușe, Ionel Căndea, eds., *Studii de istorie*, vol. I, Editura Istros, Brăila, 2012.

⁴² Florin Constantiniu, Adrian Pop, *op.cit.*, p. 45

ties with Western governments and applying pressure to Western embassies in Bucharest. Rudolf E. Schoenberg, the American ambassador in Bucharest, provided evidence of this in a note that he wrote in early 1950. In this document he stating that the Romanian government's "progressively severe restrictions" on the Legation's cultural and informational activities over the previous three years had already brought them to "the lowest level," with the US Intelligence Service (USIS) "practically confined to the headquarters (of the Legation)."⁴³ Ambassador George Kennan's notes to the US from Moscow and the notes of the American ambassador in Bucharest paint a nearly identical picture⁴⁴. Similar to the Soviet Union, Romania was completely cut off from the outside world in the early years following World War II, and this situation persisted for as long as Stalin was alive.

⁴³ *Telegram from Schoenfeld, Minister in Romania to the Secretary of State*, 2 March, 1950. FRUS, 1950, volume IV, Central and Eastern Europe; Soviet Union, Document 889, p. 1053.

⁴⁴ See, V.A. Raikova, *The Moscow Embassy of George Kennan and American Diplomacy in the Cold War*, in **Вестник СПбГУ. История**. 2022. Т. 67. Вып. 2, pp. 515-531, online <http://vestnik.spbu.ru/html22/s02/s02v2/12.pdf> accesat la 17 octombrie 2024.
