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The Soviet Union, Allies and the beginning of „Sovietization” of Romania 1944–1945*

ABSTRACT: The article analyzes the beginning of the establishment of the socialist system in Romania, focusing on the Soviet and Allied role in setting up the people’s democratic system in this Eastern European country. In addition, the paper examines the dependence of Romanian communism on relations within the victorious, anti-fascist coalition. The aims at analyzing the basic processes and actors in the first months of the establishment of socialism in Romania. Regardless of the fact that in Romanian historiography the topic is solidly researched, in domestic historiography it can be considered necessary for understanding the development of Yugoslav socialism. The work is mainly based on the documents of Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series.

KEYWORDS: USSR, Romania, Yalta, Radescu, Groza

The process of building a post-war system in Romania, as in the case of other Eastern European countries, was determined by a peculiar amalgam of both foreign and domestic political, geographical and cultural factors,¹ in-

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1 On political situation in Romania, see: Dumitru Șandru, *Comunizarea societății românești în anii 1944–1947*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2007); Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism Revisited, The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe*, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009); Dennis Deletant, *Romania under communist rule*,

cluding the traditional Russophobia of the Romanian society,² its important geographical location on the routes to Central Europe and Bosphorus,³ as well as Romanian natural wealth.⁴ During the complex and painful process of con-

(Bucharest: Center for Romanian studies, 2006); Dinu C. Giurescu, *Romania's Communist Takeover: The Rădescu Government*, (New York: Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1994); Ioan Scurtu, *Gheorghe Buzatu, Istoria Românilor în secolul XX (1918–1948)*, (București: Paideia, 1999); *History of Romania. Compendium*, ed. Ioan-Aurel Pop, Ioan Bolovan, (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Cultural Institute, Center for Transylvanian Studies, 2006); Paul D. Quinlan, *Ciocnirea deasupra României. Politica anglo-americană față de România 1938–1947*, (Iași: Centrul de Studii Românești, Fundația Culturală Română, 1995); *Istorija rumunskog naroda*, ed. Andrej Ocetea, (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1979); Овидију Печикан, *Историја Румуна*, (Београд: Clio, 2015); Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, Daniela Bușe, Beatrice Marinescu, *Instaurarea totalitarismului comunist în România*, (București: Cavallioti, 1995); Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa. Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500–2019)*, (București: Polirom, 2010); Oana Ionel, *Un sfert de veac de urmarire: dosarele secrete ale generalului Nicolae Rădescu*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004).

- 2 *Румыния. Истоки и современное состояние внешнеполитического позиционирования государства. Российский институт стратегических исследований*, (Москва: РИСИ, 2013), 9–10; Печикан, *Историја Румуна*, 537–538.
- 3 In early June 1944 the “Democratic Front” led by Iulio Maniu informed the Western Allies that Romania would sign an armistice agreement even if Bessarabia and Bukovina secede from Romania. Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), *The Ambassador to the Yugoslav Government in Exile (Mac Veagh) to the Secretary of the State*, Cairo, Jun 13, 1944, 181; This attitude of Maniu was a consequence of his cooperation with Britain since 1942.- in: Quinlan, *Ciocnirea deasupra României. Politica anglo-americană față de România 1938–1947*, 81; About the administration in Bessarabia from 1940 until the end of the war, and during 1944–1945. in: Ion Șișcanu, “Instaurarea regimului Sovietic în Basarabia 1940, 1944–1945”, *6 Martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), 191; *With the Peace of Paris, the Prut River became the border between the USSR and Romania in: History of Romania. Compendium*, ed. Ioan-Aurel Pop, Ioan Bolovan, (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Cultural Institute, Center for Transylvanian Studies, 2006), 581, 601.
- 4 Chris Harman, *Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe*, (London: Pluto Press, 1974), 26; Милан Ристовић, „Између `жртве у крви` и најважнијег `савезничког доприноса` : Трећи рајх и питање југоисточноевропске нафте у Другом светском рату (с посебним освртом на британске и америчке анализе)”, *Токови историје* 1/2017, 13. On intradependence of oil and capital, see: Vladimir Iljič Lenjin, *Imperijalizam kao najviši stadij kapitalizma*, (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1974); On economic development of Romania, see: Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa. Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500–2019)*, (București: Polirom, 2010); Корнелије Зелea Кодреану, *Мојим Легионарима. Гвозденој гарди*, (Београд: Самиздат, 2002); Румыния. Истоки и современное состояние внешнеполитического позиционирования государства, 9–10; On the importance of Danube, see: Милан Гулић, *Краљевина Југославија и Дунав. Дунавска политика југословенске краљевине 1918–1944*, (Београд: ИСИ, 2014), 13–14; Ричард Џ. Кремптон, *Балкан после Другог светског рата*, (Београд: Clio, 2003), 114; *Istorija rumunskog naroda*, 331; Печикан, *Историја Румуна*, 532.

stitution of the communist structure in Romania the above-mentioned factors proved to be more or less favorable to sovietization of the Yugoslav eastern neighbor. Nevertheless, thanks to the agreements between the Allies and the coalition tactics of the Romanian parties, which resulted from those agreements, socialism in Romania, as in other Eastern European countries, became a state ideology, closely connected for decades with the “headquarters” in Kremlin.

In the final phase of the WWII the Romanian Communist Party represented one of the weakest communist parties in Europe (numbering only about 1,000 members in September 1944).⁵ Two most influential Romanian parties in the interwar period - the People’s Peasant Party led by Iuliu Maniu and the Liberal Party led by Gheorghe Bratianu – had both anti-communist and anti-Soviet orientation. Due to their strength and longevity on the Romanian political scene, these parties have been called “historical parties”. According to some sources, the People’s Peasant Party was indirectly guided by the British intelligence service (and to a lesser extent by the Liberal Party).⁶

Ion Antonescu’s regime was overthrown by a coup d’état on August 23, 1944 following an agreement reached between the Allies, the Romanian king, the above-mentioned “historical parties” and the Romanian communists, which paved the way for the step-by-step metamorphosis of the Romanian state and society.⁷

The first Soviet moves in Romania

The foundations of the Romanian post-war system, which later developed into a socialist system, were laid between the coup d’état on August 23 and the signing of the armistice agreement between Romania and the Allies on September 12, 1944.⁸ They derived from the agreement of the Western Allies and the Soviet Union on the surrender of Romania. As early as in the beginning of January 1944 the victorious coalition defined the Romanian con-

5 Arhiv Jugoslavije (AJ), fond 507, Savez komunista Jugoslavije (SKJ), IX/107/II–29, Neki podaci o komunističkoj partiji Rumunije; According to Richard Crampton, the Party had approximately 800 members: Кремптон, *Балкан после Другог светског рата*, 108.

6 For more details on the influence of the British intelligence service in Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria, see: Marko Pivac, „Rad britanske tajne službe u Jugoslaviji u predvečerje Aprilskog rata 1941, *Istorija 20. veka* 3/2010, 192–212.

7 Кремптон, *Балкан после Другог светског рата*, 111.

8 As stated in Kennan’s report of November 3 1944 “the Soviets had already done everything before the establishment of the Allied Control Commission.” – FRUS, The Acting Secretary of State to the Charge in the Soviet Union (Kennan), Washington, November 3, 1944, 253.

ditions of surrender.⁹ This fact disputes the deep-rooted thesis of the “western historiographies” (and consequently of the historiographies of the former socialist countries) about the exclusive “soviet occupation” of the Eastern Europe at the final stage of the Second World War. The available sources show that the socialist experience of the Eastern European peoples was not shaped exclusively by the Soviets. The historiographical theories that interpretations of establishment of the socialist regimes in Romania and elsewhere as exclusively “Soviet occupation” are aimed at freeing the “western allies” from responsibility for the ideological, political and economic degradation of the East Europe, thus ignoring the nature of the compromises from which these systems arose.

Following the agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union on Romania it was the British turn to reconcile its interests with the Soviets. Consequently, in May 1944 Churchill proposed a strategy which aimed at exchanging of Romania for Greece.¹⁰ The agreement between Churchill and Stalin, reached in May 1944, provided a framework for laying the foundations for the new, socialist system in Romania. The agreements opened the door to a coup d'état led by Maniu, with the consent of the Romanian king and the Western allies. On the other hand, this upheaval was considerably influenced by Red Army's march towards the eastern borders of Romania in April 1944.

On April 4, 1944, the Soviet Union and its army crossed the Prut River in Moldova, disabling Antonescu's “eastern campaign” and depriving Romania of the area it traditionally considered its own. At the end of April 1944, the USA recognized Bessarabia and Bukovina as part of Soviet territory,¹¹ thus creating a framework for the “legal action” of the Soviet army in those provinces.¹² At the same time, in the capital of Romania, Iuliu Maniu (as an exponent of Anglo-American interests) formed a “democratic bloc” (with the knowl-

9 FRUS, The Director of the Office of European Affairs (Dunn) to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant), Provisions for Imposition Upon Rumania at Time of Surrender, Washington, February 2, 1944, 136-142.

10 Quinlan, D. Paul, *Ciocnire deasupra României. Politica anglo-americană față de România 1938-1947*, (Iași: Centrul de Studii Românești, Fundația Culturală Romană, 1995), 93.

11 Ion Șișcanu, “Instaurarea regimului Sovietic în Basarabia 1940, 1944-1945”, *6 Martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), 190-191.

12 In addition, the Soviets sought assurances from the “Western Allies” that if Maniu fail in overthrowing Antonescu's regime, he would be allowed to flee to Moldova, then under Soviet control, and organize a Soviet-loyal regime. FRUS, The Ambassador to the Yugoslav Government in Exile (Mac Veagh) to the Secretary of the State, Cairo, April 16, 1944, 175; FRUS, The Ambassador to the Yugoslav Government in Exile (Mac Veagh) to the Secretary of the State, Cairo, April 18, 1944, 176; FRUS, The Ambassador to the Yugoslav Government in Exile (Mac Veagh) to the Secretary of the State, Cairo, April 24, 1944, 177.

edge of the king), which became the pillar of the new government in Romania after the coup. The Soviet army launched a new offensive on August 20, seizing the capital of Moldova, Iasi as well as the center of Bessarabia and capturing 15 German divisions.¹³ The Soviet invasion surprised Maniu and the king, who consequently accelerated the preparations for the coup.¹⁴ On August 23, Antonescu was arrested, his regime overthrown, and a new government led by Sanatescu was formed. The government consisted of four representatives of the People's Peasant Party, three social democrats and one communist.¹⁵

The Romanian representatives waited in Moscow for the signing of the armistice agreement from August 23 to September 12, 1944. That wait was less related to further harmonization of allied demands regarding Romania, and more to respecting the agreement “Romania for Greece” proposed by the British. As the US ambassador to Turkey noted, it was the British, not the Soviets, who delayed the signing of the armistice with the amendments, providing time for the Soviet army to consolidate its power on the ground i.e. to lay the foundations for its future supremacy in Romania (refraining at the same time from interfering in Greek affairs).¹⁶ In other words, while the Soviets kept their hands off Greece, the British could not demand more than an observer seat on the Allied Control Commission in Romania.¹⁷

In that short period given to Moscow to lay the foundations for the system in Romania much was done: while Romanian representatives sat in Moscow waiting for the signing of the armistice agreement, the Soviet army disarmed Romanian troops and took over their military equipment, being aware that such their actions will be contrary to the provisions of the forthcoming armistice agreement.¹⁸ American reports from Turkey point to Soviet behavior that was inconsistent with Molotov's promises to the “Western Allies” in April 1944: “The Soviet Army in Romania continues its advance with the probable intention of occupying the greatest part, if not all of our territory, under the

13 Quinlan, *Ciocnire deasupra României. Politica anglo-americană față de România 1938–1947*, 96.

14 FRUS, *The Charge Near the Yugoslav Government in Exile (Shantz) to the Secretary of State, Cairo, August 23, 1944*, 190.

15 Кремлтон, *Балкан после Другог светског рата*, 111.

16 FRUS, *The Ambassador in Turkey (Steinhardt) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, September 8, 1944*, 227.

17 Constantin Hlihor, “Rolul armatei sovietice de ocupație în schimbarea regimului politic din România”, *6 martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), 14.

18 FRUS, *The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State, Moscow, September 3, 1944*, 213.

pretext that the armistice has not yet been signed. However, this advance of the Soviet troops in Rumania is not justified in view of fact that the Romanian government had already liquidated entirely through its own means all centers of German resistance.” Moreover, as stated in the document dated 3 September 1944, the representatives of the former regime were being held in custody by the Soviets instead by the new Romanian authorities, the Romanian navy’s oil depots were confiscated from the Romanian possession¹⁹ and the entire Romanian fleet was disarmed. Besides, the fleet was handed over to the Soviets and 166,000 Romanian prisoners in Moldova were transferred across the Prut, although their release had been promised earlier.²⁰

According to American estimations, the truce gave the Soviets complete control over the Romanian economy. Besides, it was expected that the police would be the pillar of the Soviet occupation forces in preventing all attempts to destabilize the Soviet position on the front line and anti-Soviet mobilization.²¹ The final text of the armistice agreement was signed on September 16, 1944. The postponement of the signing of the armistice with the Romanian representatives in Moscow provided the Soviets with the time needed to lay the foundations for the system in eastern Romania, and was part of the Soviet-British agreement “Romania for Greece”. This prolongation was enabled by British constant requests to supplement the text of the armistice agreement and a series of their “amendments”. The Soviets also actively participated in this a diplomatic game. The processes of installing the government in eastern Romania was completed only in December 1944.

During its operations in Romania, the Red Army used so-called “patriotic troops” (Apărării patriotice), the units established by the NKVD and supervised by the Red Army.²² The “Patriotic Troops” distinguished themselves by

19 FRUS, The Ambassador in Turkey (Steinhardt) to the Secretary of State, Ankara, September 3, 1944, 214.

20 Alexandru Oșca, Mircea Chiritoiu, “Considerații privind rezistența organelor militare ale statului român față de ocuparea țării de către armata roșie 23. august 1944–6. martie 1945”, *6 Martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), 264.

21 FRUS, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State, Moscow, September 15, 1944, 34–237; Алексей Юрьевич Тимофеев, Димитар Тасич, Оливера Драгишич, *Война после войны, Движение сопротивления на Балканах 1945—1953*, 22, (Москва: Вече, 2019), 333–344.

22 Claudiu Secășiu, “Serviciul de informații al P.C.R.; secția a II-a informații și contrainformații din cadrul comandamentului formațiunilor de luptă patriotice (F.L.P.) - Penetrarea serviciilor oficiale de informații (23. august 1944–6. martie 1945)”, *6 Martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), 146.

diverse forms of repressive behavior including looting, arresting, confiscation of property and oppressing the local authorities.²³ In addition, they “cleansed” Craiova, a strategic location on the Red Army’s route to Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.²⁴ In early September 1944, the Patriotic Troops took part in the reorganization of the Intelligence Service of the Romanian Communist Party (Serviciul de Informații al PCR), which was thereafter renamed Second Section for Information and Counterinformation (Secția a II-a Informații Contrai Contrainformații), which was directly subordinated to Moscow.²⁵

In a bid to strengthen its position the Communist Party strove for expanding the “Democratic Bloc” by including several non-communist parties into this coalition: the Social Democrats, the Patriotic Union, the Social Peasants’ Party as well as the Ploughmen’s Front.²⁶ Another important innovation of the Romanian domestic politics was the revival of the People’s Party, which was founded and led by General Alexandru Averescu after the First World War and disbanded in 1938. Its prominent member was Nicolae Radescu, Sanatescu’s successor as Romanian prime minister, who played a significant role in establishing the link between the People’s Party and the Romanian communists.²⁷

23 The entry of the Red Army generated reducing the number of Romanian gendarmes from 30,700 to 14,500 members. Besides, the power of the gendarmerie, a potential center of resistance to the new regime, was diminished by sending gendarmerie troops from Bucharest to the front line and Romanian eastern border: Hlihor, “Rolul armatei sovietice de ocupație în schimbarea regimului politic din România”, 6 martie 1945. *Începuturile comunizării României*, 22.

24 In addition to communists, such as Ana Pauker or Vasil Luka, whom Romanians never perceived as their representatives, the network through which the Soviets operated in Romania consisted of NKVD members, including Hungarians, Jews, Russians and Bulgarians. Hlihor, “Rolul armatei sovietice de ocupație în schimbarea regimului politic din România”, 6 martie 1945. *Începuturile comunizării României*, 12; Șandru, *Comunizarea societății românești în anii 1944–1947*, 146–149; On Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca, see: *The diary of Georgi Dimitrov 1933–1949*, ed. Ivo Banac, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 470, 331.

25 Secașiu, “Serviciul de informații al P.C.R.; secția a II-a informații și contrainformații din cadrul comandamentului formațiunilor de luptă patriotice (F.L.P.) – Penetrarea serviciilor oficiale de informații (23. august 1944–6. martie 1945)”, 6 Martie 1945. *Începuturile comunizării României*, 146–148. - The service was under the control of the Red Army, and after Groza’s government came to power, it was “cleansed”.

26 Ion Alexandrescu, “Rolul Tovarășilor de drum din guvernul Petru Groya în viiunea P.C.R.”, 6 Martie 1945. *Începuturile comunizării României*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), 121.

27 Șerban Papacostea, “Generalul Nicolae Rădescu a doua zi după instaurarea guvernului Petru Groza”, 6 Martie 1945. *Începuturile comunizării României*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), 115–119.

The local communists were the key political pillars of Soviet influence in Romania. According to US estimations, at the time of the Red Army's offensive in Romania, round 90% of the population did not support the Communists.²⁸ Such an attitude towards the communists arose partly from the Rus-sophobia of Romanian society and partly from the fear that the Soviet model of socialism could be introduced in Romania and that Romania would be included into a Soviet sphere of influence. Hence, in contemporary Romanian historiography the processes of "communization" (comunizări) and sovietization (sovietizări) are separate concepts.

During the first post-war years the communists in Romania did not succeeded in transforming their exclusive party into a large, mass political entity. At the time of the coup in Bucharest, the party had roughly 1,000 members.²⁹ The party, officially led by Stefan Foris, was divided into 10–12 centers, two of which had solid structure: the first one was led by Teohari Georgescu and Iosif Chişinevschi in Caransebeş Prison, while the other group was led by Gheorghe Dej in Târgu-Jiu. Both groups distanced themselves from Foris blaming him for their arrest during the war.³⁰ After his release from prison, shortly before the coup, Dej formed "military committees", which were used by the Soviets for the purpose of preparing the overthrow of the regime. The preparations for the coup were synchronized with the Soviet operations of the front line near Iasi and their military advance towards the heart of Romania. The weapons were collected and carefully distributed several months before the coup in Bucharest. Besides, in May 1944 the communists began to work on forming of the so-called "United Workers' Front" (FUM), which consisted of the communists and the Social Democratic Party. The alliance was founded for the purpose of mobilizing for the upcoming political struggles.³¹ By the

28 Hlihor, "Rolul armatei sovietice de ocupație în schimbarea regimului politic din România", 6 martie 1945. *Începuturile comunizării României*, 12.

29 Şandru, *Comunizarea societății românești în anii 1944–1947*, 72. According to a report of Ana Pauker, the party grew from 1,000 members at the time of the coup to 100,000 members by the end of the year. According to Yugoslav sources, at the time of coup the Party numbered several hundred members. AJ, SKJ, IX, 107, /II-22, Strogo poverljivo. Izveštaj o KP Rumunije, 1947.

30 This is also confirmed by Yugoslav sources. AJ, SKJ, Rumunija, 1944, 31.8.1947, Strogo poverljivo, Izveštaj o KP Rumunije.

31 According to Yugoslav sources, the king loyally played the role of a communist collaborator and he did not inform the historical parties about the coup. AJ, SKJ, IX, 107, /II-22, Strogo poverljivo. Izveštaj o KP Rumunije, 1947.

end of 1947, the FUM had grown into a mass organization that never worked smoothly because of the rivalry between the two parties.³²

In addition, the Communist Party fought a fierce battle against the peasantry, the lion's share of which was friendly to Maniu. In this campaign the Ploughmen's Front, the party of Petru Groza, played a particularly important role, since they were assigned the task of containing Maniu by incorporating a part of Maniu's adherents. According to available sources, the Ploughmen's Front was fully controlled by the Communist Party.³³

Factional struggles within the Romanian Communist Party continued in September 1944 after the arrival of a prominent Moscow cadre, Ana Pauker, who claimed that Georgi Dimitrov had entrusted her with leadership in the Party.³⁴ Due to tensions and struggles between the local Romanian communists, who were imprisoned during the war, and the Soviet cadres, Moscow insisted that by October 1945³⁵ the leadership of the Party should be collective. At the time of the coup, the Party was officially led by Constantin Pirvulescu.³⁶

*Establishment of the people's democratic system
in Romania by March 1945*

The first disagreements between the Western Allies and Stalin arose from September 1944 to March 1945, when the Soviet Union gradually and cautiously reinforced its positions in Romania, over different interpretations of the inter-Allied agreements. These tensions directly influenced the process of structuring of system in Romania, thus paving the way for the escalation the Cold War in the region.

When Roosevelt approved the above-mentioned agreements between the British and the Soviets - "Romania for Greece" and later „Bulgaria for Greece" - he limited their period of validity to three months, underlining that the arrangements should be rather tactical in character and must not be under-

32 AJ, SKJ, IX, 107, /II-22, Strogo poverljivo. Izveštaj o KP Rumunije 1947.

33 Ibid.

34 Robert Levy, "Power Struggles in the Romanian Communist Party Leadership During the Period of the Formation of the Groza Regime", 6 Martie 1945. *Începuturile comunizării României*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), 80.

35 At that point, the Party Gheorghiu-Dej as its leader: Robert Levy, "Power Struggles in the Romanian Communist Party Leadership During the Period of the Formation of the Groza Regime", 6 Martie 1945. *Începuturile comunizării României*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), 81.

36 Robert Levy, "Power Struggles in the Romanian Communist Party Leadership During the Period of the Formation of the Groza Regime", 6 Martie 1945. *Începuturile comunizării României*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), 81.

stood as a division into “spheres of influence“. The British and Soviets agreed in principle to Roosevelt’s request, but after three months. i.e. in September 1944, the Soviets, with British support, laid the foundations for the future socialist system in Romania. Roosevelt hoped that his idea of a joint, tripartite, participation in European affairs would provide the basis for future allied relations and that all previously reached agreements between London and Moscow would not be valid any more.

Immediately after Yalta, Roosevelt was able to convince himself of his own naivety and high expectations from another two allies. His warnings to the Soviets after Yalta - that the Allies must behave in accordance with the Atlantic Charter, April agreements and agreements reached in Yalta - had no effect on the behavior of his partners in the anti-Hitler alliance.³⁷ His warnings to Stalin against installing Groza’s pro-communist government and monopolizing of military power by one (pro-communist) political group as well as his appeal for free and democratic elections in Romania, sounded more like a cry of despair than an explicit threat. Roosevelt’s despair could possibly be understood as disbelief and an inability to come to terms with *fait accompli* created by the Soviets in Romania. Obviously, by the spring of 1945 the American administration was unable to understand the Soviet tactics despite the intelligence reports of the Wisner group.³⁸

The most important institution in Romania from the armistice agreement to the signing of the peace treaty in Paris was the Allied Control Commission, which was granted considerable power in domestic affairs. With the entry into force of the armistice agreement after September 16, 1944, the Soviets were given the opportunity to control the Romanian administration in eastern and central parts of the country.³⁹

Immediately after the signing of the armistice agreement, the Allied Control Commission, led by Rodion Malinovsky, entrusted Red Army officers with overseeing the implementation of the armistice provisions.⁴⁰ The British participated in the Allied Control Commission through five representatives

37 On insisting on the “April agreements”, in which the Soviets guaranteed that they would not change the system and that they would not violate Romanian sovereignty, see: FRUS, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State, Moscow, September 16, 1944, s244.

38 Mihail E. Ionescu, “6 martie 1945: un test al viitorului război rece?”, *6 Martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), 237–245.

39 AJ, SKJ, IX, 107/I-10, Državni sekretarijat za inostrane poslove, Rumunija, jun 1956.

40 Șandru, *Comunizarea societății românești în anii 1944–1947*, 226.

who arrived in Romania on September 24th.⁴¹ The American delegation to the Allied Control Commission was made up of three military officers, one naval officer and one man in charge of contacts with the church and administrative staff. In addition to this staff, the Americans demanded the presence of a man who would have an informal contact with the Romanian government. It was Burton Y. Berry, the former consul in Istanbul.⁴²

By the fall of 1944 the Romanian communists, under Soviet guidance, created two political organizations: the United Workers' Front (Frontul Uni Muncitoresc - FUM) and the People's Democratic Front (FND).⁴³ The Communist Party managed to purge the Social Democratic Party of unreliable membership through the so called "salami slicing tactics" until the beginning of 1948, which opened the door to merging the two parties – the Romanian Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party - into the Romanian Workers' Party.⁴⁴ The National Democratic Front, founded in September 1944, included communists and other left-wing political parties (Groza's Ploughmen's Front, Social Democrats, United Trade Unions, Patriotic Union).

Nevertheless, the Soviet i. e. communist projects, could not be easily realized in Romania, partially because the first three governments after the fall of Antonescu's regime did not control sufficient number of ministers. For example, in Sanatescu's first government, which was mostly a military administration, the interior minister, Aurel Aldea, was an extreme anti-communist.⁴⁵ Sanatescu's government not only prevented the "cleansing" of the administrative apparatus of "unreliable elements", but in September 1944 Sanatescu demanded the inclusion of representatives of the previous, Antonescu's regime in the new Establishment, which proved to be utterly unacceptable to the communists. Sanatescu ignored Malinovsky's and Vyshinskiy's demands to "cleanse" the Romanian army of "fascists."⁴⁶ These requests were accompanied by the protests against the regime in Bucharest on 8 October. Nevertheless, the protest

41 FRUS, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State, Moscow, September 16, 1944, 239; FRUS, The British Embassy to the Department of State, Memorandum, Washington, October 3, 1944.

42 FRUS, The Secretary of the State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman), Washington, September 29, 1944, 241.

43 AJ, SKJ, IX, 107, /II-22, Strogo poverljivo. Izveštaj o KP Rumunije, 1947.

44 AJ, SKJ, Komisija za međunarodne odnose i veze – Rumunija, Izveštaj iz 1956.

45 Şandru, *Comunizarea societății românești în anii 1944–1947*, 172.

46 *Ibid*, 55.

produced the opposite effect, given that the protesters expressed their sympathy for the “historical parties”.⁴⁷

On November 4, 1944 Sanatescu’s first government was replaced by the new government, led by Sanatescu again, but with a slightly different composition. Sanatescu’s second government showed little enthusiasm for cooperation with the Soviets in Transylvania.⁴⁸ When the Soviet military commander in Bucharest ordered the withdrawal of the Romanian administration from Transylvania on November 11, 1944, Sanatescu complained to Vyshinskiy that the Soviets did not respect the armistice provisions.⁴⁹

Due to the inability to ensure peace and implement the provisions of the armistice, Sanatescu’s government had to be replaced by a more reliable one – Radescu’s government. The installing of the new government was carried out by the Soviets, which took them about a month. The role of kingmaker was assigned to Vyshinskiy who for that purpose came to Bucharest on November 8th. His mission ended on December 6, with the appointment of General Radescu as prime minister.⁵⁰

Radescu’s government was a “step forward” towards a more stable Soviet positions in Romania because the “historical parties” dropped out of that government, whereupon one faction of the Liberals (Tatatrescu) approached the Front. In that government, Radescu was both the interior minister and prime minister, Negulescu was appointed minister of war and Stanescu became minister of national security.⁵¹ Other ministers were members of previous, Sanatescu’s administration. Seeing that he was losing his political influence, Maniu, the leader of the People’s Peasant Party, asked his American protectors if the expulsion of the “historical parties” from the government meant that Romania was left to the Soviets. Americans assured Maniu that this was not the

47 *Ibid*, 50.

48 Ion Alexandrescu, “Rolul Tovarășilor de drum din guvernul Petru Groya în viiunea P.C.R”, 6 *Martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), 121–133.

49 The activities of these units are described in Yugoslav sources as the “Hungarian massacre”: AJ, SKJ, Румунија 1944–51; Șandru, *Comunizarea societății românești în anii 1944–1947*, 37.

50 Vasile Vesa, “Conferința de la Yalta și instaurarea guvernului condus de Petru Groza”, 6 *Martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), 41–48; Maria Hlihor, „Implicatiile convenției de armistițiu asupra evoluției vieții politice Românești”, 6 *Martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995), 25–40.

51 FRUS, The American Representative in Rumania (Berry) to the Secretary of State, Bucharest, November 23, 1944, 277.

case, and that Romania would be a free and politically independent country (although those words had been deliberately ignored in the armistice agreement).⁵² Radescu's government did not sufficiently consolidate the Soviet position in Romania. Consequently, in late December, Gheorghe Dej and Ana Pauker went to Moscow for consultations on installing a credible, pro-communist and pro-Soviet government.

The overthrow of Radescu's government in Romania was a complex, multifaceted operation: by the end of January, the entire opposition press had been banned (the printing firms were induced to refuse to print anti-communist publications)⁵³ and the destabilization of the regime was launched outside the capital.⁵⁴ Finally, on February 25, an incident which broke out in front of the King's Palace in Bucharest escalated into street fighting, after which the Soviet High Representative demanded the establishment of order or, alternatively, the establishment of a Soviet government capable of controlling the situation on the front line.⁵⁵

The riots were provoked by the communists themselves, as indicated by American reports. After Radescu's speech on the radio, in which he blamed the riots on two non-Romanians, Ana Pauker and Luka Magyar (people „without a nation and God”), i.e., the Soviets, the prime minister was taken to the Allied Control Commission. These events were accompanied by the change of staff in the Commission (coopting of Susajkov into the Commission) and the arrival of Vyshinskiy in Bucharest.⁵⁶ At the same time, the US administration persistently and futilely insisted on the „April agreements”,⁵⁷ the Yalta Accords

52 FRUS, The American Representative in Rumania (Berry) to the Secretary of State, Bucharest, November 23, 1944, 279; Hlihor, „Rolul Armatei Sovietice de ocupație în schimbarea regimului politic din România”, 6 *Martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, 16.

53 FRUS, The Chief of the United States Military Representation on the Allied Control Commission for Rumania (Schuyler) to the War Department, Bucharest, 22 February 1945, 472–474; Hlihor, „Rolul Armatei Sovietice de ocupație în schimbarea regimului politic din România”, 6 *Martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, 24.

54 FRUS, The Chief of the United States Military Representation on the Allied Control Commission for Rumania (Schuyler) to the War Department, Bucharest, 22 February 1945, 472–474; Кремптон, *Балкан после Другог светског рата*, 114.

55 Hlihor, „Rolul Armatei Sovietice de ocupație în schimbarea regimului politic din România”, 6 *Martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, 18; FRUS, The American Representative in Rumania (Berry) to the Secretary of State, Bucharest, February 25, 1945, 480.

56 Кремптон, *Балкан после Другог светског рата*, 114–115.

57 FRUS, The Acting Secretary of State to the American Representative in Rumania (Berry), Washington, February 23, 1945, 476.

and the Atlantic Charter⁵⁸, stressing that no political group should be “exclusively in power” nor monopolize the weapons.⁵⁹

Vyshinskiy’s visit to Bucharest practically marked the definite fall of the Romanian capital under Soviet control,⁶⁰ since his mission was accompanied by the arrival of 6.000 Soviet soldiers and 4.000 NKVD members.⁶¹ Nevertheless, Vyshinskiy’s negotiations with the king were anything but easy. Only after the promise that Transylvania would be returned to the Romanian administration if the king confirms Petru Groz as the head of the Romanian government and that the representatives of the “historical parties” in the new government would be equal in numbers to representatives of the People’s Democratic Front, the king appointed Petru Groza as Prime Minister. Nevertheless, this second condition was not met, because fourteen of the eighteen posts in the new government were occupied by the members of the People’s Democratic Front and it was controlled by the communists. Moreover, the communists occupied the crucial posts in Groza’s administration: the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Defense and Communications.⁶²

On March 27, in the cable to the Soviets the US administration signaled its opposition to Groza’s government.⁶³ The Soviets responded that they had only needed a secure situation in Romania in the final phase of the war and that the Groza’s government, unlike the previous three governments, had been able to guarantee that.⁶⁴ However, the US administration continued to demand the presence of representatives of “democratic parties” in Romanian government.⁶⁵ At the same time, former Prime Minister Radescu and parts of his administration, primarily military figures, began to establish contacts with

58 FRUS, The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman), Washington, February 27, 1945, 482–484.

59 FRUS, The Acting Secretary of State to the American Representative in Rumania (Berry), Washington, February, 24, 478.

60 Hlihor, „Rolul Armatei Sovietice de ocupație în schimbarea regimului politic din România”, 6 Martie 1945. *Începuturile comunizării României*, 24.

61 Кремптон, *Балкан после Другог светског рата*, 115; Hlihor mentions six battalions of NKVD members: - Hlihor, „Rolul Armatei Sovietice de ocupație în schimbarea regimului politic din România”, 6 Martie 1945. *Începuturile comunizării României*, 24.

62 FRUS, The American Representative in Rumania (Berry) to the Secretary of State, Bucharest, March 2, 1945, 492; Кремптон, *Балкан после Другог светског рата*, 116.

63 FRUS, The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman), Washington, February 27, 1945, 482–484.

64 FRUS, The People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union (Molotov) to the American Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman), Moscow, February 27, 1945, 484.

65 FRUS, The Acting Secretary of State to the American Representative in Rumania (Berry), Washington, March 2, 1945, 494.

those Legionnaires who were under Hitler's control, which jeopardized positions of the Allies in Romania. Radescu's flirting with Legionnaires facilitated Soviet justification of his removal. In conversation with the US ambassador in Moscow, Soviet Foreign Minister *Vyacheslav Molotov* stressed that it was in the interest of all Allies to install such a government that would not cooperate with the "fascists": "The events which have taken place recently in Rumania show clearly that the former Radescu Government not only was not capable of maintaining peace and order in Rumania but it also, as has been shown by the facts, did not wish to do this and by its actions in every way assisted the pro-Hitlerite elements in the guise of the "Iron Guards" in becoming more active (...) It is absolutely clear that such a situation in the rear of the Soviet army could not be tolerated and must be eliminated by the forming of a government in Rumania which will be able to maintain order in the country and conscientiously fulfill the conditions of the Rumanian Armistice Agreement. This is in the general interest of the Allies."⁶⁶

Conclusion

The socialist system in Romania was set up relatively late and developed through several phases. The March 1945, when the government of Petru Groza was formed, is usually taken as the beginning of the communist rule in Romania. It was the first government to be firmly controlled by the Soviet communists, but it was preceded by three governments through which the communists gradually seized power. The strengthening of Soviet and communist positions in Romania through the structure of government was, on the one hand, a consequence of the Allied agreements from the spring of 1944, according to which Romania belonged to the Soviet sphere of influence.

On the other hand, the solid structure of the (communist) government in Romania was a consequence of the Allied need to maintain order and peace behind the front line. The stability of Romania was threatened in the autumn of 1944 and the early 1945 by contacts that the German intelligence service managed to establish with some political circles in Romania. Hence, the establishment of the Groza's government was not only a step forward towards consolidating Allied agreements and Soviet stabilization in Romania, but also a move by the Soviets to ensure the stability behind the line before the end of the war in Europe. Nevertheless, any analysis of the process of building the socialist system in Romania needs also to focus sharply on the significant role of

66 FRUS, The People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union (Molotov) to the American Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman), Moscow, March 4, 1945, 497.

Western Allies in overthrowing the Antonescu's regime and establishing a socialist structure in Bucharest.

Summary

The foundations of the Romanian post-war regime, which later developed into a socialist system, were laid in the short time between the coup on August 23 and the signing of the armistice agreement between Romania and the Western Allies on September 12, 1944. However, they stemmed from the agreements between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union to hand over Romania to Soviet military control during the war, which paved the way for gradual establishment of socialist-style administration in Romania.

The most important step towards the establishment of a communist-led socialist political structure in Romania was installing the government of Petru Groza in March 1945. The establishment of Groza's administration not only heavily reinforced Soviet positions in Romania, but also stabilized the situation behind the front line in the last months of the Second World War.

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Резиме

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СОВЈЕТСКИ САВЕЗ, САВЕЗНИЦИ И ПОЧЕТАК „СОВЈЕТИЗАЦИЈЕ” РУМУНИЈЕ 1944–1945.

Апстракт: У чланку се анализира почетак успостављања социјалистичког система у Румунији, са фокусом на совјетску и савезничку улогу у успостављању Народне демократије у тој источноевропској земљи. Осим тога, чланак испитује условљеност процеса успоставе румунског социјалистичког система односима у победничкој, антифашистичкој коалицији. Циљ чланка је анализа основних процеса у првим месецима успостављања социјалистичког система у Румунији. Без обзира на чињеницу да је у румунској историографији тема солидно истражена, у домаћој историографији рад може представљати допринос бољем разумевању југословенског контекста. Рад је углавном заснован на америчкој грађи, односно на Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS).

Кључне речи: Совјетски савез, Румунија, Јалта, Радеску, Гроза

Основе румунског послератног система, који се касније развио у социјалистички систем, постављене су у кратком временском интервалу од државног удара 23. августа до потписивања примирја између Румуније и Савезника 12. септембра 1944. године, али су знатно дуже биле припремане. Те основе проистекле су из споразума западних савезника и Совјетског Савеза о препуштању Румуније совјетској војној контроли током рата, из чега се постепено развила администрација социјалистичке Румуније. Још је почетком јануара 1944. године било дефинисано под којим се условима Румунија могла предати савезницима, односно њиховој окупационој власти.

Значајнији корак ка успостављању социјалистичке структуре власти, на челу са комунистима, у Румунији је учињен са успостављањем владе Петра Грозе у марту 1945. године. На организовање те владе не може се гледати само као на процес чвршћег совјетског позиционирања у Румунији, већ као и на неопходан корак у настојању да позадина фронта у завршници рата буде стабилнија него што је била током јесени 1944. године.