

SLAMMING THE DOOR IN BUCHAREST: SOVIET STEPS IN IMPOSING THE GROZA GOVERNMENT (MARCH 1ST TO 6TH, 1945)

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the evolution of Romanian political turmoil during the timeframe 1–6 March 1945 in the light of new information from British documents that provides a comprehensive analysis.

As occupying Soviets required the dismissal of the Rădescu Government, King Michael had to accept. The Romanian King and the democratic/historical parties hoped to form a national union Government, excluding as before Antonescu's collaborators and Legionaries, based on the percentage held by each party in the Rădescu Government. With Soviet help, Petru Groza, one of the leading members of the National Democratic Front, dominated by Communists, was nominated Prime Minister by the King. Groza offered only a minimal participation to the historical parties, which rejected the proposal arguing they were representing the political majority of the Romanian people. Warned by the Soviets, King Michael had to accept the installment of the Groza Government. The new Government informally represented the first Communist Government of Romania.

Introduction

The imminent end of the Second World War determined Joseph Stalin, the Soviet dictator, to make steps in imposing Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. The installment of the loyal Communist Governments in Bulgaria, Poland, and Romania became the first major issues of the three Big Allies (the United States and the United Kingdom, on one side, and the Soviet Union, on the other). These frictions, determined by ideological differences, would not be tempered and would later degenerate into the Cold War.

6th March 1945 represents a key moment in Romanian history when, according to Hugh Seton-Watson's theory from 1951, the second step of a Soviet plan to communize an Eastern Europe country began: the fake coalition government was installed to replace the real coalition then in power, and would be later followed by a truly Communist

Government.¹ The phase of the real coalition consisted in three Cabinets: two of Prime-Minister General Constantin Sănătescu (August 23rd-November 3rd, 1944 and November 4th-December 5th, 1944) and the last of General Nicolae Rădescu (December 6th, 1944 – March 6th, 1945). Rădescu resigned on February 28th, 1945 and remained in office until March 6th, 1945, when he was granted sanctuary within British Legation in Bucharest.²

The National Democratic Front (hereafter NDF), political coalition dominated by Communists, organized the demonstration on the 24th February 1945 in order to create the turmoil politically required to overthrow the Rădescu Government. Benefitting from the occupation of Romania, Andrey Januarevich Vyshinski, Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, threatened King Michael to revoke Rădescu, the latter being

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¹ Cfr. Jean François Soulet, *Istoria Europei de est de la al Doilea Război Mondial până în prezent*, Translation by Marius Roman, Iași, Editura Polirom (2008), 52.

² See details to Marian-Alin Dudoi, „Acordarea azilului pentru Generalul Rădescu la Legația Britanică,” *Analele Universității din Craiova. Istorie* 1(17)/(2010), 233–240.

falsely accused by Soviets and NDF of “Fascism” and murders; the Romanian King had to accept. As Vyshinski’s four meetings on 26th, 27th and 28th February and 1st March with the King are known since Vișoianu’s letters from 1949 to Warren Austin, the U.S. Permanent Representative at the United Nations, we would not insist on them.³

After the audience to King on 28th February, 15,30 hours, the furious Vyshinski left the room “slamming the door with such force that the plaster around it cracked”.⁴

The Allied Control Commission for Romania (hereinafter ACC), headed by the Soviet High Command of Romania, supervised that Romania should respect the Convention of Armistice. Marshal Rodion Malinovski had been appointed the Chairman of ACC. Because he was normally front commander, Lieutenant General Vladislav Petrovitch Vinogradov, Deputy Chairman, had been in charge with ACC activity; on February 28th 1945, Colonel-General Ivan Zaharovitch Susaikov replaced Vinogradov. The British and the Americans were only formal members of ACC.⁵ British documents provide a clear insight into the Romanian political turmoil, as the British and the United States Government disagreed with Soviet interferences and protested on the matter not only in Bucharest, but also in Moscow.⁶

³ Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al României*. (București: Editura Humanitas, 1991), Vișoianu’s letter of 25.11.1949 to Warren Austin and His Excellency Mr. A. Y. Vyshinski’s audiences of 27.02, 28.02, and 1.03.1945 to the King, 232–233 and 238–243 (in Romanian); Ion Calafeteanu, “Audiențele lui Vișinschi la rege”, *Magazin istoric* XXXIV, no. 3 (396)/2000: 9–14 (in Romanian); Id., *Politică și exil. Din istoria exilului românesc, 1946–1950* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2000), doc. 57, Vișoianu’s letter of 13.12.1949 to Warren Austin, 241–248 (in English).

⁴ Ibid., 246.

⁵ The British Military Representative was Air Vice Marshal Donald F. Stevenson, the British Foreign Office Representative John Le Rougetel (temporarily out of Romania and replaced by the Acting Political Representative John Marjoribanks), the United States Military Representative Brigadier General Cortlandt Van Rensselaer Schuyler and the State Department Representative Burton Y. Berry – See also Marian-Alin Dudoî, “Situția economică din România reflectată de un document britanic (septembrie 1945),” *Historica. Revistă de cultură istorică și pedagogică*, Editată de filiala Dolj a Societății de Științe Istorice din România, 1 (12–13)/2009–2010: 59–60. For Stevenson’s activity, see Marian-Alin Dudoî, The activity of Air Vice Marshal Donald F. Stevenson, Head of the British Military Mission in Romania (1944–1945), *Analele Banatului, S.N., Arheologie-Istorie*, XX, 2012, 355–360.

⁶ See the Great Britain and the United States Governments disagreement with Soviet interferences on February and March 1945 in Liliana Saiu, *The Great Powers and Rumania, 1944–1946. A Study of the early Cold War Era* (New York/Boulder: East European Monographs, 1992), 93–104.

Under Soviet pressure, Prince Știrbey failed to form the Government and Petru Groza is nominated Prime-Minister

Despite Vyshinski’s interferences, Maniu and Brătianu agreed to support General Rădescu fearing a Communist regime would be imposed.⁷ Their attitude marked the beginning of a fierce opposition to the Communism which later caused them to be prosecuted and to die in prison.

However, on February 28th, 17,30 hours, General Rădescu, as required by King Michael, had to resign from his office. At 22.00 hours, King Michael offered the office to Prince Știrbey, who accepted the nomination; the prince was proposed to Michael by Dinu Brătianu. Știrbey stated that the policy of his Government would be based on the Declaration on Liberated Europe, issued at Yalta, and on preserving order. The new Government would respect the same proportion for political parties; Maniu decided his party should receive the same number of ministers; if not, the National Peasant Party would withdraw.⁸ In Bucharest, Romanian soldiers were disarmed by Soviets, the Soviets took control over the Romanian anti-aircraft batteries, the army headquarters were occupied on the midnight of February 28th – March 1st and the Romanian police force had to be decreased by 50 percent until March 2nd.⁹ No vehicle could leave Bucharest as the Soviets controlled all points of access.¹⁰ On March 1st, Soviet censorship modified the announcement of the Royal Decree concerning the nomination of Prince Știrbey, from a Government of “the representatives of all democratic parties” to a Government

⁷ Marjoribanks’ telegram no. 200 of 28.02.1945 to Foreign Office, The Microfiches of Great Britain, Public Record Office, Foreign Office (hereinafter PRO FO) 371/48537.

⁸ Marjoribanks’ telegram no. 207 of 1.03.1945 to Foreign Office, Ibid.; See also *Misiunile lui A.I. Vișinski în România (Din istoria relațiilor româno-Sovietice, 1944–1946)*. *Documente secrete*, Colegiul de redacție al ediției române: Radu Ciuceanu (responsabil), Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu și Vitalie Văratec, (București, 1997), doc. no. 41, Vyshinski’s telegram to Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov, Soviet People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, of 28.02.1945, 134. Liviu Marian Nicola, “Lovitura de stat”, in *6 Martie 1945. Aseruirea* (Munchen: Jon Dumitru Verlag, 1983), 24.

⁹ Marjoribanks’ telegram no. 210 of 1.03.1945 to Foreign Office, PRO FO 371/48537.

Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944–1947*, Edited by Cornelia Bodea (Iași- Oxford-Portland: The Center for Romanian Studies, 2000), 93.

¹⁰ Constantin Hlihor, “Rolul armatei sovietice de ocupație în schimbarea regimului politic din Romania,” in *6 Martie 1945. Începuturile comunizării României*, București, Editura Enciclopedică (1995), 21.

of “the representatives of certain democratic parties” – unpublished in the press but broadcast at Radio Bucharest upon Romanians’ insistence, still without the knowledge of the Palace –, while Communist Anna Pauker proposed to Romanian Communists the formation of a Government without consulting the King.¹¹ Pauker’s proposal clearly indicated the Soviet decision to impose a loyal Government. At 15,00 hours confronted with NDF refusal to participate, Prince Știrbey waived his mandate.¹²

When Berry, intervened on behalf of the United States Government on March 1st, 18.00 hours, in regard to the formation of a democratic Government, Vyshinski mentioned all parties would be represented but the percentage would be modified (sic!), there was no time limit for the formation of the new Government and the number of newspapers should be decreased in the near future.¹³

On March 1st, 22.00 p.m., the Romanian King received Vyshinski who informed him that Petru Groza had the support of the Soviet Union for becoming Prime-Minister and Gheorghe Tătărescu would be suitable as Deputy Prime-Minister. *The Soviet Deputy People’s Comissar of Foreign Affairs expressed to the King the view of not informing British and Americans about the choice of Groza made by Soviets* (emphasis added)!¹⁴ King Michael told Vyshinski he would complete consultations in the first part of the next day.¹⁵

¹¹ Vișoianu’s letter of 13.12.1949 to Warren Austin, Ion Calafeteanu, *Politică și exil. Din istoria exilului românesc, 1946–1950*, doc. 57, 247.

Berry 2000, 95.

¹² *Ibidem*, 95; Dinu C. Giurescu, *Guvernarea Nicolae Rădescu* (București: Editura All, 1996), 307–308.

Berry’s telegram of 2.03.1945 to U.S.A. Secretary of State, Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, Adrian Pop, *Sovietizarea României. Percepții anglo-americane (1944–1947)* (hereinafter: SRPAA), București, Editura Iconica (1993), doc. no. 22, 121.

¹³ Marjoribanks’ telegram no. 220 of 2.03.1945 to Foreign Office, PRO FO 371/48537.

¹⁴ Marjoribanks’ telegram no. 227 of 3.03.1945 to Foreign Office, *Ibid.*; Berry’s telegrams nos. 154 and 179 of 2 and 7.03.1945 to the Secretary of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers 1945*, Volume 5, *Europe*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1967) (hereinafter FRUS, 5), 493 and 502–503; Berry’s telegram no. 179 of 7.03.1945 to the Secretary of State, SRPAA, doc. no. 28, 130; See the volume to <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1945v05>; Vyshinski’s telegram of 1.03.1945 to Molotov, *Misiunile lui A. I. Vășinski în România. Din istoria relațiilor româno-Sovietice, 1944–1946. Documente secrete*, Colegiul de redacție al ediției române: Radu Ciuceanu (responsabil), Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu și Vitalie Văratec, București (1997), doc. no. 42, 135.

¹⁵ Marjoribanks’ telegram no. 219 of 1.03.1945 to Foreign Office, PRO FO 371/48537; Giurescu 1996, 310.

Marjoribanks sought advice in London in the case of King Michael as the only solutions remained referred to the acceptance of Vyshinski’s demand – the King announcing Marjoribanks he was not going to act without consulting the Three Powers – or the abdication.¹⁶ Eden, British Foreign Secretary, proposed King Michael not to abdicate or to badly upset the Soviets (“not to take any irrevocable step”) and inquired the State Department if any item of advice can be forwarded to the Romanian King.¹⁷

Groza’s consultations with the political parties took place between March 2nd and 6th.¹⁸

According to a NKVD report dated March 5th, on March 2nd the King met with Știrbey, Dinu Brătianu and Maniu and decided to postpone as much as they can a NDF-dominated Government; Maniu, the most reluctant, preferred Soviets appointing a loyal Government then the latter should be appointed by King Michael (Maniu completely opposed to a Groza Government”, Berry noted in his diary).¹⁹ Brătianu also considered the historical parties should remain in opposition in order to dissociate from the very probable undemocratic policy of the Groza Government unless they received the Rădescu Government proportion; Constantin Titel Petrescu, the Social Democrat Party leader, thought also.²⁰ Maniu recommended the nomination of dissident Nicolae Lupu, that time still the Vice-President of the National Peasant Party.²¹

No matter who would become the Prime Minister, the King insisted for the presence of the

¹⁶ Marjoribanks’ telegram no. 207 of 1.03.1945 to Foreign Office and Foreign Office telegram no. 2027 of 2.03.1945 to Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador to the United States, PRO FO 371/48537.

¹⁷ Foreign Office telegram no. 260 of 2.03.1945 to Marjoribanks, *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Constantin Cesianu, “Preliminarii”, in *6 Martie. Aservirea*, 15.

¹⁹ T. A. Pokivailova, “A. Y. Vyshinski, First Deputy Comissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, and the establishment of the Groza Government,” in *6 Martie 1945: Începuturile comunizării României*, București, Editura Enciclopedică (1995), 55; Ion Scurtu, *Iuliu Maniu: Activitatea politică*, București, Editura Enciclopedică (1995), 124; Berry 2000, 95; Berry’s telegram no. 154 of 2.03.1945 to the Secretary of State, FRUS, 5, 492; NKVD report of 5.03.1945 to Beria, *Misiunile lui A.I. Vășinski în România ...*, doc. no. 46, 141–142.

²⁰ *Ibidem*; Berry’s telegram no. 154 of 2.03.1945 to the Secretary of State, FRUS, 5, 492.

²¹ National Peasant Party Communiqué of 9.03.1945, *România. Viața politică în documente 1945*, Editată de Arhivele Statului din România (coordonator Ion Scurtu), București (1994), doc. no. 52, 233; National Peasant Party Communiqué of 9.03.1945, PRO FO 371/48552.

National Peasants and National Liberals in the new Government.²²

On March 2nd, 18,00 hours, King Michael nominated Petru Groza as the next Prime-Minister with the task of “forming a Government of large democratic concentration with the help of all parties in normal proportion so that it might result in a complete understanding and to assure a Government of order and productive labour.”²³ Again, the Soviet censorship modified considerably the Royal Decree when announcing it.²⁴ As a consequence when discussing with the Marshal of the Court, Vyshinski considered the new Government should be based on “really democratic forces” (sic!) because the Soviets pressed for an obedient Government that would exclude National Peasants and National Liberals.²⁵ The King was sent the message from London to avoid abdication and to try to delay the formation of a pro-Soviet Government which he agreed; to postpone the new Government, the King was going to have a series of consultations with the political parties and informally notified the British accordingly.²⁶

Groza failed to convince historical parties to accept a formal participation in his Government

In the morning of March 3rd, Groza failed to be accepted by the National Liberal Party of Dinu Brătianu and the National Peasant Party (those Liberals declared they would participate only if the National Peasant Party would do also), and the Social Democrat Party refused as a consequence of Tătărescu's presence; also the National Peasants' Nicolae Lupu, Emil Ghilezan and Aurel Leucuța declined Groza's offer to become ministers.²⁷ Again, Vyshinski sent word to the King that Moscow had no wish for the presence of the National Peasants and Brătianu's Liberals in the new Government.²⁸

²² Vyshinski's telegram of 2.03.1945 to Molotov, *Misiunile lui A.I. Vășinski în România ...*, doc. no. 43, 136.

²³ Marjoribanks' telegram no. 224 of 3.03.1945 to Foreign Office, PRO FO 371/48537.

Berry 2000, 97.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Marjoribanks' telegram no. 224 of 3.03.1945 to Foreign Office, PRO FO 371/48537.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Marjoribanks' telegram no. 227 of 3.03.1945 to Foreign Office, Ibid. Giurescu 1996, 317–318.

²⁸ Ivor Porter, *Mihai I al României. Regele și Țara*, Ediția a II-a, Traducere de Gabriel Tudor, revizuită de Christian Mititelu, București, Editura Alfa (2008), 133.

According to Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Stalin opposed to any participation of historical parties; however, Groza would try unsuccessfully to grant them a minimal participation –

Also, during that day because of the problems encountered, Groza visited Michael three times that day.²⁹

King Michael's plan was that when Groza informed him of having failed to form the Government by presenting a list of ministers excluding many parties, the King would withdraw Groza's nomination. If Vyshinski pressed the Romanian King again, the latter would withdraw from Bucharest as he had done during Antonescu's regime but the solution of withdrawal from Bucharest, as it was further seen, was impossible due to the Soviet exclusive control of the city.³⁰

ACC issued orders concerning the Red Army units' occupying all Ministries and telephone and broadcasting buildings were also occupied. Soviets offered as explanation a possible coup d'état organized by Maniu and Brătianu.³¹ That day, Soviets forbade any political statements to be published in the press or to be broadcast, including the acting Rădescu Government, and Communists destroyed the press printing of “Dreptatea”, the National Peasant Party's newspaper.³²

In the afternoon of March 3rd, Groza presented a list in which 14 ministers belonged to NDF (3 Social-Democrats included), 3 ministers to Tătărescu's dissident Liberals and 2 National Peasant dissidents. The King refused to accept the list and informed Groza that he would be granted another day to continue consultations.³³ King Michael continued to declare that the Groza Government should have National Peasant and National Liberal ministers as well and thought of withdrawing Groza's mandate.³⁴ In the evening of March 3rd, Vyshinski warned King Michael to appoint the Groza Government as

Robert Levy, “Power Struggles in the Romanian Communist Party Leadership during the Period of the formation of the Groza Regime”, in *6 Martie 1945: Începuturile comunizării României*, 88.

²⁹ Pokivailova 1995, 55.

³⁰ Marjoribanks' telegram no. 227 of 3.03.1945 to Foreign Office, PRO FO 371/48537.

Shortly before the Communist demonstration of February 24th, 1945, Michael had retired two days in Sinaia – Pokivailova 1995, 53.

³¹ Marjoribanks' telegram no. 227 of 3.03.1945 to Foreign Office, PRO FO 371/48537.

³² Hlihor 1995, 22.

Report on the Fulfilment of the Terms of the Rumanian Armistice Convention, PRO FO 371/48546.

³³ Marjoribanks' telegram no. 229 of 3.03.1945 to Foreign Office, Id., 371/48537.

Giurescu 1996, 324.

³⁴ Vyshinski's dispatch of 4.03.1945 to Molotov, *Misiunile lui A.I. Vășinski în România ...*, doc. 45, 140.

Berry's telegram no. 179 of 7.03.1945 to the Secretary of State, FRUS, 5, 503.

another Government should be considered a hostile act towards the Soviet Union; the King thought seriously whether to stay or to abdicate.³⁵ Meeting with difficulties, Groza requested the King's help in dealing with Maniu and Brătianu. However, when Mihalache, Maniu's deputy, negotiated with Groza, the latter considered that he would choose the National Peasant Party ministers and their numbers without the approval of their own party's executive.³⁶

Vyshinski continued to threaten the King in order to assure the imposition of the Groza Government

Beginning with the evening of 4th March, Soviet units occupied the places around the most important public buildings, including the square of the Royal Palace, and Groza himself warned the King that day about the imposition of its Government by the future NDF demonstration.³⁷ Also the Soviets were planning to reinforce Bucharest with four or five divisions, at least two of NKVD.³⁸

The next day, King Michael took the decision of nominating a non-party Prime-Minister and if not possible, to pass his prerogatives to ACC.³⁹ According to other source, the King and leaders of the historical parties were informed that day about the American and British lack of reaction, who considered the Yalta Declaration should come into force only after the war!⁴⁰ Shortly afterwards, the

³⁵ Berry's telegram no. 179 of 7.03.1945 to the Secretary of State, SRPAA, doc. no. 28, 131.

Berry's telegram no. 179 of 7.03.1945 to the Secretary of State, FRUS, 5, 502.

³⁶ Marjoribanks' telegram no. 236 of 5.03.1945 to Foreign Office, PRO FO 371/48537.

³⁷ Nicola 1983, 22.

Porter 2008, 132.

³⁸ Pokivailova 1995, 56–58.

³⁹ Marjoribanks' telegram no. 236 of 5.03.1945 to Foreign Office, PRO FO 371/48537.

See note 7 to Berry's telegram no. 179 of 7.03.1945 to the Secretary of State, FRUS, 5, 504.

⁴⁰ Cesianu 1983, 15.

Molotov wrote nothing to Clark Kerr in the morning of March 6th about the consultations required by the Westerners in the matter of Romania, accused Rădescu of being a Fascist and urged for a new Government to ensure the order in the rear of Red Army, as Vyshinski replied the same to Marjoribanks in the same midday – Clark Kerr's telegrams no. 684 and 685 of 6.03.1945 to Foreign Office and Marjoribanks' telegram no. 244 of 6.03.1945 to Foreign Office, PRO FO 371/48538.

The Americans refused to offer any advice to Michael until Averell Harriman, the United States Ambassador in Moscow, would know the Soviet reaction to the latter's representations in the case of Romania (Foreign Office telegram no. 16 of 5.03.1945 to the British Embassy in Angora, PRO FO 371/48537); on March 7th, Molotov replied to Harriman that the Romanian crisis had lost its "keenness

King changed his mind as Vyshinski warned him about the impossibility to guarantee a Romanian State unless Groza would be appointed Prime-Minister and Groza confirmed the return of North-Eastern Transylvania and a greater tolerance in applying the armistice from the Soviet part.⁴¹ Although, immediately upon returning from the trip to Moscow, Ana Pauker announced in mid-January at the Communist meetings the returning of the Northern and Eastern Transylvania in the case of a NDF Government, this information was no longer met until Groza informed about it on March 5th.⁴² The sudden change of the King's views should be connected to Maniu and Brătianu's agreement to participate in Groza Government with half of the ministries.

Documents proved that Communist Vasile Luca tried to support the keeping of monarchy proposing that if Michael opposed to the imposition of Groza Government, a Regency would have been installed, but not a Republic and advocating to renounce to the forming of Government in a rush. According to Communist Pătrășcanu, the King hoped to gain time by proposing if Groza failed to form the Government with National Peasants and National Liberals, Savel Rădulescu to become the new Prime Minister and, if the latter also failed, Petru Groza should be appointed again.⁴³

In the afternoon, the political situation seemed to improve: some Romanian units received their arms, NDF demonstration for that day was postponed for the second day and Soviet became calmer when dealing with Romanians.⁴⁴

In the evening, new signs of tension appeared: NDF workers were mobilized for a large demonstration the next day, Groza warned the King

by this time inasmuch as the government crisis ... has been overcome by the formation of new government" (Quoted in Paul Quinlan, *Clash over Romania. British and American Policy toward Romania: 1938–1947*, Los Angeles American Romanian Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1977, 128–129).

⁴¹ Berry's telegram no. 179 of 7.03.1945 to the Secretary of State, FRUS, 5, 503.

Berry, 103.

On 4th March, Groza had warned the King about the probability of imposing a NDF-Government by the NDF demonstration the next day (the demonstration was postponed for 6th March) – Porter 2008, 133.

⁴² Marjoribanks' telegram no. 75 of 23.01.1945 to Foreign Office, PRO FO 371/48536.

⁴³ NDF Council Shorthand Report of 5.03.1945, *România. Viața politică în documente 1945*, doc. no. 34, 179–180.

⁴⁴ Marjoribanks' telegram no. 236 of 5.03.1945 to Foreign Office, Id. 371/48537.

Probably, the demonstration was delayed until March 6th in order that Marshal Malinovski, normally a front commander, should certainly arrive to Bucharest.

that he should appoint the new Government with or without Maniu and Brătianu's agreement and Schuyler wrote a letter to General Susaikov, the commanding Soviet of ACC, about the possibility of a NDF coup d'état that would happen that night, during the next day's demonstration or after that demonstration.⁴⁵ Susaikov refused to hold an ACC meeting. According to Schuyler, 15 Communists had the mission to assassinate Maniu, Brătianu and Rădescu.⁴⁶ Schuyler and Stevenson hoped a meeting of ACC should be held next day, at midday, and they would propose that the NDF mass demonstration should be canceled and a process of disarming the civil population would also begin.⁴⁷ When meeting Susaikov, Schuyler also told about the NDF prepared coup d'état and supported his point of view with the fact that Groza had informed the King he would not answer for consequences. On the contrary, Susaikov replied NDF represented the Romanian people because it was a coalition of many democratic parties (sic!).⁴⁸

Schuyler believed the Romanian Government should continue its existence as an all-party Government and requested Susaikov's help that there was no need to be changed by the next day demonstrations. Susaikov replied the new Government was King Michael's decision and the latter had begun to listen to his people's voice since August 23rd, 1944⁴⁹.

In the morning of March 6th, when Marjoribanks, Stevenson, Schuyler and Berry held a meeting, they received information from General Rădescu regarding his proposal to defend Bucharest key buildings with 3 000 veterans as NDF sympathizers would try to seize those buildings after the demonstration; they refused to send him any reply.⁵⁰ It was clear that the Westerners had no real means to support a political or a military movement in Romania, at least for the time being; Mircea Ionnițiu, the King's private secretary, had already passed this information to the Palace in the evening of March 5th.⁵¹

In the evening of 5th March fearing that a Government without historical parties would

mean in time the end of them and of the monarchy because the Cabinet had the law making and judge nomination powers due to the state of war, the King and the Queen-Mother summoned again Maniu and Brătianu at a meeting in order to have them accept half of the ministries (which they did as we have already presented), late in the night Groza informed King Michael that NDF did not accept only half of the ministries.⁵²

Vișoianu, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Rădulescu, President of Romanian Commission for Fulfilling the Armistice, advised the King to abdicate, the Queen-Mother preferred Regency but the Marshal of the Court, Negel, the former Prime Minister, General Constantin Sănătescu, and Patriarch Nicodem opposed to abdication⁵³. Arthur Gould Lee remarked Maniu kept the proposal that the Groza Government should be invested exclusively by the Soviets but the British did not inform accurately upon the date (if it was the evening of March 5th or the day of March 6th although surprisingly he let us think of March 6th); on the contrary, Berry noted Maniu did not send any message to the King on March 6th.⁵⁴ At 17,00 hours (on March 6th), King Michael met Brătianu and inquired which of the two already prepared Royal Decrees – one of abdication and other investing Groza as Prime Minister – he should sign; Brătianu recommended him he should stay on.⁵⁵ Although the King required Maniu's presence as well, the latter could not attend since he was immobilized by a knee injury; the fact that Maniu did not send one of his deputies represented for all Maniu's option for the King's abdication.⁵⁶ Did again the King change his mind? We think he did. At noon (on March 6th), while telling Groza he accepted a new government, the King, knowing Maniu's reluctance towards Groza, allowed to be made an informal demand to be granted sanctuary for him and his mother at the British Mission as he

⁴⁵ Stevenson's RAC no. 559/165 of 5.03.1945 to War Office, PRO FO 371/48538.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Stevenson's RAC no. 593/429 of 7.03.1945 to War Office, Ibid.; Giurescu 1996, 340–342.

⁴⁹ Stevenson's RAC no. 593/429 of 7.03.1945 to War Office, PRO FO 371/48538.

⁵⁰ Stevenson's RAC no. 568/428 of 6.03.1945 to War Office, Ibid.

⁵¹ Porter 2008, 133–134.

⁵² Arthur Gould Lee, *Coroana contra secera și ciocanul. Povestea regelui Mihai al României*, Traducere din limba engleză de Maria Bică, București, Editura Humanitas (1998), 181; Berry 2000, 100; Stevenson's RAC no. 568/428 of 6.03.1945 to War Office, PRO FO 371/48538.

⁵³ Berry's no. 179 of 7.03.1945 to the Secretary of State, FRUS, 5, 504; Apostol Stan, *Iuliu Maniu: naționalism și democrație. Biografia unui mare român*, București, Editura Saeculum I.O. (1997), 457; Berry's telegram no. 179 of 7.03.1945 to the Secretary of State, SRPAA, doc. 28, 132.

⁵⁴ Gould Lee 1998, 182–183.

Berry's report of 17.03.1945 to the Secretary of State, *România. Viața politică în documente 1945*, doc. 47, 212.

⁵⁵ Porter 2008, 134.

⁵⁶ Berry's report of 17.03.1945 to the Secretary of State, *România. Viața politică în documente 1945*, doc. 47, 212.

intended to abdicate (we consider only abdication could make the Soviets to accept to travel from the Palace to British Mission).⁵⁷ We may consider that Michael, between noon and 17,00 hours, decided to not allow the Groza Government, formed without the historic parties, to be sworn in front of him, but Brătianu convinced him that occasion the contrary. At 14,00 hours Groza paid a short visit to Maniu in order to convince him to accept the same minimal participation, without the possibility of the National Peasant Party to choose Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs; Maniu refused the proposal and because Groza was not willing to guarantee other several demands of National Peasants (liberty of press, of labour or of assembly), also National Peasants mentioned that visit was only the second made by Groza to them and Groza informed them National Liberals refused to become members of his Government⁵⁸. The minimal participation did not reach any agreement when Groza visited Brătianu.⁵⁹

To put more pressure on the King, Marshal Malinovski, nominal Chairman of ACC, returned unexpectedly to Bucharest and announced the King in the morning of March 6th he would be arrested if he refused Groza Government.⁶⁰ *Vyshinski phoned to the King that morning and inquired whether he decided to a new Government to be formed while Groza was still during the audience* and, before noon, King Michael accepted the item of news concerning the formation within “the course of the day” (according to Berry) of the new Government to be presented on Radio Bucharest at 14,00 hours (emphasis added).⁶¹ However, the simple announcement was made only at 16,00 still “details would be given later” (according to Berry) by not presenting the ministers’ list, Groza delaying it to have the result of the meetings with Maniu and Brătianu, followed by a new audience to the King for an hour and a half where Groza put the King in the situation to choose between abdication or the immediate installment of his Government.⁶²

⁵⁷ Stevenson RAC no. 570/165 of 6.03.1945 to War Office, PRO FO 371/48538.

⁵⁸ National Peasant Party Communiqué of 9.03.1945, *România. Viața politică în documente 1945*, doc. 52, 233.

National Peasant Party Communiqué of 9.03.1945, PRO FO 371/48552.

⁵⁹ Cortlandt Van Rensselaer Schuyler, *Misiune dificilă. Jurnal (28 ianuarie 1945 – 20 septembrie 1946)*, Ediție îngrijită de Alexandru Oșca și Mircea Chirîțoiu, București, Editura Enciclopedică (1997), 63.

⁶⁰ Gould Lee 1998, 182.

⁶¹ Berry 2000, 100; Cesianu 1983, 16.

⁶² Berry 2000, 100; Schuyler 1997, 62–64; Michael’s refusal to withdraw Groza’s mandate would have had no relevance

During all those meetings, from 15,00 to 17,00 (according to Berry), the NDF demonstration of 50 000 people took place.⁶³ *At the demonstration, as a consequence of Michael’s decision told to Groza before noon, Communist Vasile Luca solicited to speakers not to criticize the King* (emphasis added).⁶⁴

Around 18,00 hours while the King was with Groza, Vyshinski phoned to know if the Government was accepted as Moscow needed to know. Tired, Michael accepted and started to sign the ministers’ nomination decrees.⁶⁵

At 19,00, the new Government were sworn in and around 21,00 hours Vyshinski and Marshal Malinovski were received by the King, the Soviets expressing their satisfaction for the Groza Government.⁶⁶

Few months later, Groza told the King he had the proclamation of a republic in the pocket when his Government were sworn in.⁶⁷

According to Social-Democrate Lothar Rădăceanu, Michael’s dissatisfaction became higher since the office of Under-Secretary for Public Order and State Safety remained in Communist hands, the latter keeping General Virgil Stănescu, who was accused by Rădescu in February of preparing a coup d’état with Groza by hiding large quantities of ammunition and guns.⁶⁸ Also we should not forget the refusal of National Peasants and National Liberals although justified since they were severely mistreated.

While the Soviet delegation was with the King, Stevenson visited ACC headquarters and announced General Vasiliev about the sanctuary already granted to General Rădescu in the British Mission in accordance with the instructions of the

because the Soviets certainly would refuse to announce it in the press or to the radio – “Un conflict inerent de obiective pentru lumea postbelică. Relatarea reprezentantului American în Comisia Aliată de Control în România”, SRPPA, doc. no. 1, 43).

⁶³ Berry 2000, 100; Giurescu 1996, 330; NKVD report of 7.03.1945 to Beria, *Misiunile lui A.I. Vășinski în România. Din istoria relațiilor româno-Sovietice, 1944–1946. Documente secrete*, doc. no. 51, 150.

⁶⁴ Porter 2008, 134.

⁶⁵ Gould Lee 1998, 183.

⁶⁶ Berry 2000, 101; Their Excellencies Mr. A. Y. Vyshinski and Mr. Marshal R. Malinovski’s audience of 6.03.1945 to the King, Ciobanu, 243–244.

⁶⁷ Gould Lee 1998, 184.

⁶⁸ Dominion Office telegram no. 351 of 23.02.1945 to the Governments of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, Id., 371/48536; NDF Council Shorthand Report of 5.03.1945, *România. Viața politică în documente 1945*, doc. no. 34, 179; *Istoria Românilor*, vol. IX, *România în anii 1940–1947*, București, Editura Enciclopedică (2009), 1099–1101.

British Government.⁶⁹ Late in the same evening irritated by the asylum granted to Rădescu, Susaikov made a tremendous blunder when wanted to inform in writing Stevenson that the order and security in Romania was assured by the ACC lead by the Soviet High Command.⁷⁰ The document, found in copy in the former Soviet Foreign Ministry, proved the imposition of the Romanian Government by the Soviets. We could not find the documents in the British Foreign Office (Stevenson's note possibly regarded the Rădescu's sanctuary and the need of protecting the British Mission by the Red Army units and Susaikov's reply) which entitle us to think Susaikov's reply was not delivered to the British. However, the Soviet document relevates Soviets admitting their omnipotence in occupied Romania. A possible answer for not being delivered resided in the fact that immediately upon the installment of Groza Government, the Soviets encouraged the Great Britain and the United States to resume diplomatic and political relations with the Romanian Government in order to admit it was "truly democratic" and not imposed by Soviets; this Soviet policy should have determined the British to demand the protection of their Mission by the Romanian Army acted under Groza Government.

At 23,00 hours (London time) Foreign Office informed the British Mission about the granting of sanctuary to the King and the Queen Mother if they should apply but the British Government was hoping the United States Mission should offer asylum for one or two of them (Rădescu and the two Royals).⁷¹ Even if the telegram had been sent seven hours earlier, we think the Royals could have arrived at the Mission if two conditions had been fulfilled: the abdication and the Soviet agreement that the Royals may be allowed to travel in the occupied Bucharest from the Palace to the British Mission.

The United States Mission remained reluctant in the matter of granting sanctuary and considered the ones that would be offered the asylum should be sent into the Soviets hands if the latter

demanded.⁷² The Americans also believed the sanctuary should be granted "in extreme necessity requiring emergency protection from physical violence"; an usual case of sanctuary should be presented firstly to the ACC and if ACC accepted, including the Soviets, should be granted sanctuary on behalf of ACC.⁷³

Unfortunately the next day, the British officials of Foreign Office had to admit that Vyshinski's threats to Michael during his trip to Bucharest, that the refusal would mean an offense for Stalin, had done the effect.⁷⁴

On March 7th, a NDF press release published in "Scântea" mentioned the refusal of the two historic parties to accept two or three ministries for each. However, historical parties privately distributed leaflets according to which Groza offered some minister positions without portfolios chosen by him!⁷⁵

Historic parties believed Groza should have waived his mandate as he failed to form a "Government of large democratic concentration". Actually for Schuyler, the new Government represented King Michael's first unconstitutional decree because historical parties refused to take part in it (Romania had no Parliament and the presence of all major parties was essential).⁷⁶

Conclusions

The paper analyses the imposition of a loyal Soviet Government in Romania, headed by the puppet Prime-Minister Petru Groza, in the time-frame March 1st–6th, 1945.

Vyshinski, Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, was sent to Bucharest in order to supervise the installment of such a Government upon forcing the dismissal of Rădescu Government by threats. To be sure of success, the Soviets ordered many Romanian units to leave for front, the ones remained in Bucharest were disarmed, the forces of police and gendarmerie were diminished numerically and only King Michael kept the sentries at his Palace during the crisis. Provided with no help from NDF, Prince Știrbey waived his mandate as Prime-Minister. Required by Vyshinski, the King nominated Petru Groza as Prime Minister but his

⁶⁹ Stevenson's RAC no. 576/165 of 6.03.1945, PRO FO 371/48538.

⁷⁰ Copy of Susaikov's dispatch of 6.03.1945 to Stevenson (delivered?), *România și Armistițiul cu Națiunile Unite. Documente*, vol. II, Editată de Arhivele Statului din România (coordonator Marin Radu Mocanu), București (1995), doc. no. 63, 256–257.

⁷¹ Foreign Office telegram no. 282 of 6.03.1945 to Marjoribanks, SRPAA, doc. no. 26, 126–127; Foreign Office telegram no. 282 of 6.03.1945 to Marjoribanks, PRO FO 371/48538.

⁷² Le Rougetel's telegram no. 401 of 9.04.1945 to Foreign Office, Id. 371/48540.

⁷³ Halifax's telegrams no. 1524 and no. 1528 of 8.03.1945 to Foreign Office, Id. 371/48538.

⁷⁴ Outward telegram no. 410 of 7.03.1945 to the Governments of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, Id. 371/48537.

⁷⁵ Berry 2000, 102.

⁷⁶ Schuyler 1997, 63.

Government should have consisted of all parties. Groza offered a minimal participation to the historical parties, although they represented the political majority of the Romanian people. Refusing to become Soviets' puppets, historical parties declined the offer. Normally, the King should have withdrawn Groza's mandate as he failed to form a national union Government, but Vyshinski warned the King to change his mind; if not, the new Government would be installed by the mass demonstration of March 6th. The King urged the historical parties to accept a lesser degree of importance in the new Government, but Brătianu and the more reluctant Maniu refused. In the afternoon of March 6th, the Romanian King inquired Brătianu if he should abdicate; the latter convinced him to stay on, although he had to accept the imposition of a loyal Government to Soviets, but this would grant the return of Northern and Eastern Transylvania.

Should the King have refused to accept the Groza Government? The refusal meant the imposition of the latter by the March 6th demonstration and the end of monarchy, but the British Foreign Office advised him not to abdicate or to badly upset the Soviets. My opinion is that King Michael chose well because Romania was granted the return of Northern and Eastern Transylvania only in the evening of March 5th by the voice of Groza, the Great Britain and the United States could not help Romania since they had to deal with the Soviets in the matter of Polish Governments (pro-Soviet and the London Government) and the war with Japan and the imposition of a Republic would only intensify the process of installing the Communist regime; later, it was proved that only a country unoccupied by Soviets could oppose to the Soviet interferences (the case of Tito in Yugoslavia and of Greece).

Appointing under duress a loyal Government to the Soviets, King Michael still preserved the chance to revoke in a proper time the Government as he remained the head of state (at the Potsdam Conference, the United Kingdom and the United States refused to admit the Groza Government was democratic and representative and encouraged Michael to begin the Royal Strike in the last part of 1945 when the King tried but did not succeed to dismiss the Groza Government due to the everlasting Soviet support manifested by the presence of the Red Army).

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