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► **To cite this version:**

| Traian Sandu. Antonescu's Regime Revisionism - the Transylvanian Syndrome. 2009. hal-00550733

HAL Id: hal-00550733

<https://hal.science/hal-00550733>

Preprint submitted on 30 Dec 2010

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Antonescu's Regime Revisionism - the Transylvanian Syndrome

The main thesis of this paper is that eastern ideological, military, territory recovering – and even gaining – and genocidal war was not more important, for the Antonescu regime and as the eastern front progressively withdrew, as social, political and diplomatic activities in order to modify the Balkan boundaries and above all to recover northern Transylvania, tacitly considered by most factors as more important for both, national identity and integrity. As a matter of fact, largely russified Bessarabia was a more backward and lesser Romanian elites producing before the annexation by Romania in 1917-1918 as a secondary consequence of defeat on the western front, whereas Transylvanian Romanians had created, in spite of official hungarization, some intellectual and economic elites linked to the more or less weak hope of democratization of the eastern half of the two-headed Empire under Viennese pressure. But if the gellnerian process of nation-building by emerging autochthonous elites was more advanced in Transylvania, the geopolitical situation of contact between powers of the Danubian Principalities permitted them to create earlier a national state after the Crimean War.

Nevertheless, once integrated into mimetic democratic Romania in 1918, these Transylvanian elites, led by Iuliu Maniu, had played the role of a sort of democratic and regionalist Damocles sword above the heads of every more or less authoritarian and/or corrupted Romanian ruler since 1918, call him Brătianu, Carol II or Antonescu, not hesitating to ally with populist fascist Codreanu in order to counter King's calculations¹. Before going

¹ Rebecca Haynes, “Reluctant allies? Iuliu Maniu and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu against King Carol II of Romania” *Slavonic and East European Review*, 2007, n°1, pp.105-34; see also Traian Sandu, “Le conflit entre fascisme et monarchisme en Roumanie: données structurelles et déroulement”, in T. Sandu, ed., *La périphérie du fascisme. Spécification d'un modèle fasciste au sein de sociétés agraires. Le cas de l'Europe centrale entre les deux guerres*, Paris, L'Harmattan, *Cahiers de la nouvelle Europe*, 2006, pp.91-109.

further with this introduction, I would quote an excerpt, in fact the first lines, of a long report written by the Antonescu's cabinet in Mai 1943, which illustrates and legitimizes this approach:

“In the moment when, in Vienna, King Carol's Minister of Foreign Affairs signs the Award, the whole Iuliu Maniu's future policy was fixed. The man who, for 40 years played a decisive role in the life of Transylvania, and for 22 years could realize every error in the public life of Greater Romania, on the ground of the same historical titles, could not but resume his old fight. He would become, once more, before the country's eyes and the foreign world, the representative of the province passed under foreign yoke.”²

Antonescu had given the same arguments to Hitler one month earlier, when the Führer asked him to repress the opposition: he refused to transform Maniu in “a true martyr”.³

So after the Vienna award of August 1940, enforced by Germany and Italy upon Romania without fighting, it is a classical interpretation to say that Antonescu's running forward eastward in company with Hitler was in fact a sort of obtaining an alliance acknowledgment in order to receive back northern Transylvania as much as participate to the remodeling of the Balkans after the war, or gaining by military efforts Bessarabia or rather non-Romanian northern Bucovina, not to mention ambiguously unwanted Transnistrian conquest. Rebecca Haynes newer interpretation argued that after the collapse of the international law-driven post-First World War treaties, the way was opened to ethnic-driven

² *Iuliu Maniu - Ion Antonescu, opinii și confruntări politice, 1940-1944* (Iuliu Maniu – Ion Antonescu, opinions and political confrontations, 1940-1944), Ion Calafeteanu, ed., Cluj, Ed. Dacia, 1994, 218 pp., p.127-210, p.127.

³ Meeting Hitler-Antonescu in Salzburg, Klessheim Castle, on 13 April 1943, in *Antonescu-Hitler, Corespondență și întâlniri inedite (1940-1944)* (Antonescu-Hitler, correspondence and unpublished meetings (1940-1944), eds. Ion Ardeleanu, Vasile Arimia and Ștefan Lache, Bucharest, Ed. Cozia, 1991, 2 vols., vol. 2, 218 pp., p.82.

revisionism because of the hostility of the new masters of Europe towards those treaties and their racist and ultra-nationalist ideology.⁴ As Rebecca Haynes considers mainly the “optimistic” Blitzkrieg phase of 1940-1941, one cannot but agree with this interpretation. Antonescu’s regime appears thus as ideologically close to the fascist European regimes as the military map confirms their domination on the continent.

What could be even less traditional – but not contradictory to the former one – is an overall interpretation of the period as a mainly Transylvania driven policy, from classical military and diplomatic operations to the less obvious ideological frame and genocidal selective policy in time and space, not only because of the progressive withdraw and final defeat of the Axis powers. In fact, as an Antonescu led Romania was certain to receive eastern territories in case of German victory, the true criterion of its successful integration to a German Europe was the territory received at the expenses of another ally, in fact Hungary, in northern Transylvania or in the western Banat. Its territorial revisionism would appear as a consequence of this insertion and would mean a more global favorable status in the after-war period. Hence the stress Antonescu put on the Romanian war effort and on his faith towards Hitler, even on his ideological mimetic regime, and his eagerness to make forget the Romanian alliance with France and Great-Britain during the interwar period, putting the blame on the King's regime – whereas he had been himself an Anglophile during the thirties and Carol has changed his pro-western policy after 1936.⁵ The scale and diversity of the

⁴ See the conclusions of R. Haynes' article, “‘A new Greater Romania?’ Romanian claims to the Serbian Banat in 1941”, in *Central Europe*, vol. 3, nr 2, November 2005, pp.99-120: “Since they had never belonged to the Romanian state, however, the claim to the Serbian Banat and the Timoc region represented the final abandonment of the concept of a Romania based on the legality of the Paris peace treaties. Potential acquisition of these territories was now justified on ethnic grounds ...”

⁵ Valeriu Dobrinescu and Gheorghe Nicolescu, *Plata și răsplata istoriei. Ion Antonescu, militar și diplomat (1914-1940)* (The price and the reward of history. Ion Antonescu, military and diplomat (1914-1940)), Iași, Institutul european Iași, 1994, 191 pp., p.60; for Romania’s increasingly pro-German foreign policy under King Carol II, and the influence of pro-German

efforts Antonescu did on Hitler's side⁶ forbade him to change sides in the war as the fortune of the arms clearly shifted. But at that time, the need the Allies had of the Russian alliance largely jeopardize a revisionism led by the democratic opposition headed by Maniu, who could not push too far his thesis of the superiority of Transylvania upon Bessarabia and leave the latter to the Russians without losing the opinion's support in the Old Kingdom (Moldo-Wallachia) and appearing as a regionalist and not a national political leader, not to say a defeatist towards the eastern war.

I – Framework of revisionism during Antonescu's regime: shift in the external hard constraint, a chronological answer

After the territorial losses, Romanian opinion and elites proved the national consensus upon revisionist sentiment, but with the collective humiliation of not having fought to avoid them, with the fear that even worse fate could have happened if fighting like Poland or Yugoslavia and, at last, not really knowing what kind of territorial future it could expect from the Europe's new masters. And as in critical situations major external references usually legitimated the evolution of the inner form of regime, the territorial integrity debates between the Marshall and the opposition first took the form of immediate alliance possibilities.

elements in Romania, see Rebecca Haynes, *Romanian Policy Towards Germany, 1936-40*, Basingstoke and New York, 2000; for Romania's loosened relation with the Franco-Soviet alliance, see T. Sandu, "La Roumanie sur l'axe Paris Moscou, 1933-1937: sécurité européenne et coopération militaire", in Anne-Claire de Gayffier-Bonneville, ed., *Sécurité et coopération militaire en Europe, 1919-1955*, Paris, L'Harmattan, *Cahiers d'Histoire de Saint Cyr-Coëtquidan* n°1, 2004, pp. 249-267.

⁶ Mark Axworthy, Christian Crăciunoiu and Cornell Scafes, *Third Axis, fourth ally, Romanian Armed Forces in the European War, 1941-1945*, Hailer Publishing, St. Petersburg, Florida, 1995, 368 pp.

A/ Revisionism grounded on both belligerents and its typology: a little power's attitude towards great powers' conflict

The fundamental divergence between the field military and his civil opponents was that the Marshall thought the Axis would win the main war, the only one he was interested in, against the Soviet Slav continental power in order to master the mackinderian “heartland”, whereas the latter, liberal minded people, placing world economy and trade above military power, were persuaded in a mahanian perspective that the naval Anglo-Saxon powers would, at last, win a longer conflict. The arguments Antonescu developed towards Maniu are clear enough about the diverging means they envisaged in order to improve the country’s territorial situation grace to social mobilization, political ruling and alliance making. His answer to Maniu’s memorandums, symbolically sent on 22 June 1941, first displayed their overall divergences:

“From the memorandums you presented, it results that you are till now in favor of a constitutional democratic regime and for “civic freedom” in inner politics, as you are for our old international links, besides the western democratic powers, as far as the external orientation is concerned. Nevertheless, by the coup d’état of the 6 September, I totally and forever broke off with these systems. In the inner politics, I represent a regime of authority, and in the foreign politics I am and remain besides the Axis powers, being convinced that present and permanent Romanian interests can be served only with such an orientation.”⁷

Then he explained the reasons of his total confidence in the Axis’ victory and in its revision capacity:

⁷ Letter from Antonescu to Maniu of 22 June 1941, *Iuliu Maniu - Ion Antonescu, ... op. cit.*, doc. nr 8, pp.41-74, p.41.

“First because I believe in the victory of Axis’ powers and in the new order that will be created by this victory. Second, because the Romanian rights have such a powerful justification, that any arrangement which aims a just work of peace will have to take them into account.”⁸

But Antonescu had already clearly expressed the diplomatic and military pre-condition of this future revision, which were part of an overall ideological and practical faithful collaboration with the powers of the Axis, grounded on ethnically and strategically driven revisionism:

“We cannot integrate successfully and usefully for the fulfillment of our rights in the framework of the new order of Europe without this active collaboration to the work of deep transformations which happens before our eyes and without a sincere belief in the efficiency of this work.”⁹

Maniu’s conceptions in revisionist policy were the opposite, as he wrote to Antonescu in July, during the victorious but not so easy advance through Bessarabia and Bucovina, having also in mind “the day after” the victory and the more serious Romanian involvement in a longer war on Soviet territory:

“It is not admissible to present ourselves as aggressors in front of Russia, today allied to England, the probable winner, with other objectives than Bucovina or Bessarabia – in arms comradeship with Hungary and with the Axis, which have torn away by an arbitrary act, not

⁸ *Ibid*, p.73-74.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.65.

ratified by anyone, an important part of our country, wounding our national territory, pride and honor.”¹⁰

Building on the firm ground of the Allies' victory, Maniu feared that military obtained revision in the east would diminish the revision he considered – in spite of repeated assessments – as the most important one, that of the Transylvanian boundary. Hence also his refusal to take parts of Yugoslav dismantled territory in the western Banat, not only on the shaky ground he developed that Belgrade would have been such a good ally for Romania during the interwar period¹¹ or during the painful 1940 year for Romania¹², but mainly because it tried to remain on England's side.¹³ The fear that there could be some compensation policy between eastern conquests and northern Transylvania explains tacitly much of Maniu's interventions. He had also a very acute awareness of Hitler's manipulation of the two junior allies in the competition for Transylvania, in order to maintain them firmly engaged on the eastern front.¹⁴ So his very early refusal to continue war after the re-annexation of the eastern provinces in July is not motivated by the ignorance of the technical military argument of the pursuit of the enemy to the core of its power in order to destroy it and avoid its return. It is due to the desire not to compromise too much with the Axis and to keep a serious military strength inside Romania to be able to intervene on the Allies' side against Hungary, which geopolitical situation stuck much more to Germany.

¹⁰ Letter from Maniu to Antonescu of the 18 July 1941, *ibid.*, doc. nr 9, pp.75-80, p.79.

¹¹ T. Sandu, "La Roumanie et l'impossible articulation d'un système de sécurité français en Europe centre-orientale, septembre 1920 - décembre 1921", in *La France à la recherche de sécurité, 1920-1922*, ed. Jacques Bariéty, special number of September 1999 of *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*.

¹² See Rebecca Haynes, "A new Greater Romania?..." *op. cit.*, p.102.

¹³ Letter from Maniu to Antonescu of 4 April 1941, *Iuliu Maniu - Ion Antonescu...* *op. cit.*, doc. nr 7, p.39-40.

¹⁴ Martin Broszat, "Deutschland-Ungarn-Rumänien. Entwicklung und Grundfaktoren nationalsozialistischer Hegemonial- und Bündnispolitik, 1938–1941", *Historische Zeitschrift*, nr 206, February 1968, pp. 45–96.

In fact, Maniu's pattern of mind was that of the First World War, when Romania also had to play the pendulum between the two camps and received unexpected gains from both of them, endorsed by the final winner. To a certain extent, Antonescu, in spite of his faithful confidence towards the Axis' victory, tacitly acknowledged the relevance of such an attitude leaving his opponents free to express themselves and, after Stalingrad, to take contacts with the Allies.

Antonescu expressed many times his main argument of the inevitability of the German relation, even, in an attenuated and negative form, during his trial in 1946¹⁵, because Germany had the power to dismantle what was left of Romania after the Vienna Award. In fact, in better times for him, Antonescu had a much more affirmative approach of the German - Romanian relation in order to modify the recent territorial dispositions. We can distinguish four kinds of so-called revisionist policies for four kinds of territories – even if some of them could successively belong to different statuses –: nationalist classical revisionist claims in Transylvania till 1945, but also in Bessarabia and Bucovina till June 1941, grounded on ethnographic, historical and strategic motivations like the 1919 manufacture of the boundaries in the aftermath of the First World War, both directed against the decision of the allies, Germany, Italy and Hungary – hence the public discretion of Antonescu, but not of the democratic opposition to the Marshall –; an also traditional revisionist program in the Balkans in order to integrate to a German led re-edition of the *Mitteleuropa*, which could resemble to

¹⁵ *Procesul Mareșalului Antonescu. Documente* (Marshall Antonescu's trial. Documents), ed. Marcel-Dumitru Ciucă, 4 vols., vol. 2, Bucharest, Ed. Saeculum, 1995, p.164, also quoted in Dennis Deletant, *Aliatul uitat al lui Hitler, Ion Antonescu și regimul său, 1940-1944* (Hitler's forgotten ally, Ion Antonescu and his regime, 1940-1944), Bucharest, Humanitas, 2008, 397 pp., p.64. See also his letter to Maniu of the 22 June, 1941, *Iuliu Maniu - Ion Antonescu, ... op. cit.*, p.64: “in the situation in which we found ourselves in September 1940, when I took over the leading of the state, every other policy than the one besides the Axis powers would have led us automatically to a fate resembling with that of Poland's” (p.64).

the Balkan wars' arrangements of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries; an open and harsh policy of nationalization of the military re-integrated territories of Bessarabia and North Bucovina after June 1941, with minorities cleansing policy; an ideological expansionist driven and right of conquest attitude towards new attributions on the territorial body of the Soviet Union, considered as a “free to conquer” land, like in Transnistria, combining classical social engineering and more discrete minorities cleansing, a policy also highly divisive for Antonescu and the democratic camp.

In fact, these types of revisionisms also evolved with the map of war: at the beginning of Operation Barbarossa, discretion was recommended towards the Hungarian allies' possessions; but as Bessarabia and northern Bucovina returned to the Romanian possession, even with German help, the tension between, on the one hand, traditional “European” revisionism in northern Transylvania turned against Germany's allies and the common effort of war and, on the other hand, modern – not to say fascist¹⁶ – ideological and genocidal adventure eastward in Transnistria and beyond, became more and more acute. The importance of the Romanian war effort with troops and oil, more present on the eastern front than his Hungarian competitor in Transylvania, and the bad turn war took for the Axis, gave Antonescu a huge but ambiguous lever in his discussions with a weakening Hitler, more and more ready to make concessions on territories he wasn't sure to control for a long time.

B/ The evolution in territorial claims: between permanent interests and an evolving map of war

¹⁶ For the relation between Jewish genocide and modernity, see Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989, and more generally, Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, Londres, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Revisionist hopes have been encouraged by the Führer's ambiguous and much commented sentence concluding his meeting with Antonescu on 22 November 1940, that “at the end, the World history does not finish with the year 1940”.¹⁷ Thus, if in 1940 the Romanian part accepted unwillingly the German argument that the Vienna Award was a German response to the risk of Romanian collapse in case of a joint Hungarian - Soviet offensive and total dismantling of Romanian territory, including the oil fields, during the German offensive in France, as soon as Bessarabia and Bucovina were re-annexed in July 1941, Transylvania became an usual chapter of the Romanian - German discussions.

The first allusion Ion Antonescu dared expressing about Transylvania came after the evocation of ideological convergence and common territorial interests against Slav Russia and Balkan reorganization. Antonescu was interested by a Romanian participation to the Axis offensive against Yugoslavia, or at least by the annexation of the western Banat as a consequence of the shares of it already taken by Hungary and Bulgaria.¹⁸ Above all, he would refuse a Hungarian occupation of the western Banat mainly because it would have threatened the southern Transylvania. Thus, German troops had to occupy it in order to avoid a Romanian-Hungarian clash which could jeopardize Operation Barbarossa.¹⁹ In fact, he had written a memorandum to Hitler on 23 April 1941, in which he asked for an overall reconsideration of the Balkans boundaries, the annexation of western Banat, a free Macedonia and the autonomy of the Romanians from the Timoc and Vardar valleys.²⁰ Thus, after the Axis victory in the Balkans and on the eve of Operation Barbarossa, Antonescu took

¹⁷ *Antonescu-Hitler, ... op. cit.*, vol. I, 216 pp., doc nr 4, 23 November 1940, pp.35-45, p.43.

¹⁸ Letter from Antonescu to Maniu of 22 June 1941, *Iuliu Maniu - Ion Antonescu, ... op. cit.*, doc. nr 8, pp.41-74, p.67-73.

¹⁹ R. Haynes, “A new Greater Romania?!”..., *op. cit.*”, pp.105-109.

²⁰ D. Deletant, *op. cit.*, note 9, p.346, referring to Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitler, König Carol und Marschall Antonescu. Die Deutsch-Rumänischen Beziehungen, 1933-1944*, Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1965, p.126. See also R. Haynes, “A new Greater Romania?!”..., *op. cit.*”, p.113ff..

advantage of the anti-Slav ideological trend in Berlin to expose traditional Balkan and Central-European revisionist plans.²¹ In his 11 June 1941 memorandum to Hitler, he proposed an overall reassessment of the territorial question out of ideological considerations:

“... against a race with amorphous civilization and primitive social conceptions – as the Slav race is – one must fight with decisiveness.”

“...”

“... That's why by its 23 April memorandum of the current year it [the Romanian government] has proposed a condominium in the Belgrade-Timoc-Vardar -Salonika region, not only in order to satisfy the legitimate aspiration to autonomy of the Balkans Romanians, but also in order to separate in two the Slav mass: Serbs and Bulgarians.”²²

Antonescu, mixing racist ideological, geopolitical and ethnographic reasons, also adds his good knowledge of the interwar strategic affairs proposing to the Germans to give to Balkan “Macedo-Romanians” (rests of the Roman Latinity in the Balkan Peninsula) populations the control of the strategic railway Belgrade-Salonika.²³ Presenting Romania as a sound pillar to the German control in the eastern Mediterranean on the way to the Middle East, he further asserted its crossroads situation between Europe and the Middle East, on the Baltic-Black Sea axis.²⁴ But no German reaction to these memorandums is to be reported. The

²¹ Ion Antonescu's Memorandum to Hitler, 11 June 1941, *Antonescu-Hitler, ... op. cit.*, vol. I, doc. nr 14, p.89-93.

²² *Ibid.*, p.90.

²³ *Ibid.*; for the French use of this line which could be extended to Lemberg for antigerman purposes in the interwar period, see François Grumel-Jacquignon, “Un exemple d'illusion géostratégique: la route de Salonique (1920-1933)”, *Relations internationales* n°109, Spring 2002, pp.49-68, and T. Sandu, *Le Système de sécurité français en Europe centre-orientale, l'exemple roumain (1919 à 1933)*, Paris, L'Harmattan, coll. *Aujourd'hui l'Europe*, 1999, 495 pp.

²⁴ Ion Antonescu's Memorandum to Hitler, 11 June 1941, *Antonescu-Hitler, ... op. cit.*, vol. I.

need to gather the other little powers – mostly Hungary and Romania –, the lack of confidence in the total Romanian shift from Anglo-French faith to the German one and the proximity of the eastern war made Berlin still skeptical to the hurry of answering to such proposals. Antonescu acknowledged it when he claimed, during the 12 June meeting with Hitler in München – whose main purpose was the imminent Operation Barbarossa – that “the Romanian people would be ready to march till death alongside with the Axis”.²⁵ The Romanian participation to the eastern war “did not mean nevertheless that he [Antonescu] wanted to relinquish any of his rights.”²⁶ Hitler promised that “after the end of the conflict, Romania would receive compensations which, as far as Germany was concerned, would not have limits from a territorial point of view”.²⁷

As a first wartime territorial arrangement, Hitler asked Antonescu to ensure “the security of the territory between Dniester and Dnieper”²⁸, thus sketching a Romanian revisionist expansion eastward in a still undetermined Transnistrian region. This trend, aiming at a releasing of the Transylvanian complaints, never became an overt compensation policy, but could nevertheless, after the war, belong to a general shift eastward of the European boundaries. Thus, Antonescu accepted²⁹, but while negotiating the Transnistrian limits to the north, he “would have Moghilev and Iampol within His holding, because there [were] many Romanians”.³⁰ So the technical military preoccupations were not the only ones, a future annexation being sketched from the start. Thus, if Antonescu has avoided an eastern

²⁵ Record of the Hitler-Antonescu meeting in München in 12 June 1941, *Antonescu-Hitler,...* *op. cit.*, vol. I, doc. nr 15, pp.93-107, p.93.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p95.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p102.

²⁸ Letter from Hitler to Antonescu of 14 August 1941, *ibid.*, doc. nr 23, pp.119-120, p.120.

²⁹ Letter from Antonescu to Hitler of 17 August 1941, *ibid.*, doc. nr 24, pp.121-122, p.122.

³⁰ Letter from general Arthur Hauffe, chief of the German military mission in Romania, to the Romanian staff of 24 August 1941, *ibid.*, doc. nr 26, pp.124-126, p.126.

compensation, this does not mean that he never thought of annexing Transnistria later, or at least transforming it in some sort of buffer province. On 16 December 1941, speaking in the Council of Ministers, he declared that one should work there “as if Romania would be installed in those territories for two million years” and that “Transnistria is destined to be colonized with our Romanians”.³¹

On 15 September 1941, the minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime minister Mihai Antonescu, took the initiative to note the putative unilateral canceling of the Vienna Award by Hungary, because of its non respect of the stipulations protecting the Romanian minority in the annexed northern Transylvania.³² Mihai Antonescu presented the same analysis before Göring during his visit to Berlin at the end of November 1941; Göring's answer contained many of the German arguments about this issue, and was quite encouraging, but also naturally ambiguous, in order to handle with care both allies, Romania and Hungary:

“Hungary behaves badly not only with the Romanians, but also with the Germans on its territory.”

“Hungary exaggerates.”

“ ... ”

“For the moment you have Transnistria.”

Use it as you like it and how long you like it.”

“Its boundaries are for the moment undetermined.”

³¹ *Stenogramele Ședințelor Consiliului de Miniștrii* (Minutes of the Council of Ministers' meetings), ed. Marcel-Dumitru Ciucă and Maria Ignat, *Guvernarea lui Ion Antonescu* (the Ion Antonescu's government), vol. V, Bucharest, Arhivele Naționale ale României, 2001, pp.490-492; also quoted in D. Deletant, *op. cit.*, pp.166 and 184.

³² Letter from Mihai Antonescu to Raoul Bossy, Romanian Minister in Berlin, and to V. Grigorcea, minister in Rome, of 15 September 1941, *ibid.*, doc. nr 27, p126-129.

“ ... ”

“The Transilvanian Corridor must disappear.”

“I agree this is no boundary.”

“Be trustful and patient.”³³

Mihai Antonescu heard the same arguments from Ribbentrop and told him that “the act of Vienna of 1940 is a born dead act”: “cessante causa, cessant effectus”.³⁴ And as the Romanian military efforts went in 1942, Germany became more and more dependent on Romanian troops and oil supplies, thus more and more understanding towards Romanian territorial claims, alongside with promises concerning military material supplies. Another argument frequently repeated by the Romanian side was that of the disproportion between the Romanian war effort on the one hand, and that of Hungary and Bulgaria on the other, thus concluding that Hungary was keeping a strong army on its territory in order to intervene at the end of the war, whoever the winner, and seize southern Transylvania: “that imposes to us, Romanians, the duty to keep a powerful army to react against any aggression and to fulfill our rights”³⁵, which meant withdrawing troops from the eastern front. Ribbentrop could not but repeat Göring’s arguments that, in case of Hungarian aggression in the back of Germany guaranteed Romania, Hungary would pay it harshly.³⁶ The following day, received by Hitler, Mihai Antonescu took a position against the pro-Ukrainian and pro-Bulgarian trend of certain German circles, reminding that the ideological war eastward presented “any formula ... of occupation of Slav territories as legitimate”.³⁷ Hitler could not but approve; nevertheless, he

³³ Note of Mihai Antonescu of 26 November 1941, *ibid.*, doc. nr 30, pp.132-140, pp.138-139.

³⁴ Note of Mihai Antonescu of 26 November 1941, *ibid.*, doc. nr 31, pp.140-147, pp.143 and 144.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.145.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.146.

³⁷ Note of Mihai Antonescu of 27 November 1941, *ibid.*, doc. nr 32, pp.147-154, p.150.

was trapped between ideology and strategic advantages towards Bulgaria and Ukraine; on the Hungarian question, he repeated the already known analysis, opposing the Romanian ethnic arguments to the Hungarian historical ones.³⁸

But Antonescu took also advantage of his approval to resume the war in the spring of 1942 to remind the tensional relations with Hungary.³⁹ At the meeting with Hitler at the German Headquarters on 11 February 1942, Ion Antonescu gave a memorandum written by Mihai Antonescu which suggested the difference between the traditional revisionism by right of conquest against the enemy and the Fascist ideological anti-Bolchevik crusade, to which the Romanian leaders had adhered in the past, but to which they suddenly discovered they were paying a price which was not paid in the same proportions by the competitors neighbors in the traditional revisionism westward:

“Nevertheless, the Romanian people is not a great European power, with a world's civilization historical mission. It has the consciousness of the world, of the civilization, of the religion and of the continent, but also the national consciousness, geographically and realistically limited.”

“...”

“The Romanian people accomplishes today, in the eastern struggle, an anonymous and collective mission to the collapse of the slavism, which is the great mission of the German people.”

“But the Romanian people has also a mission towards itself: Transylvania.”⁴⁰

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.152.

³⁹ Letter from Antonescu to Hitler of December 1941, *Antonescu-Hitler, ... op. cit.*, vol. I, doc. nr 34, pp.158-160, p.160.

⁴⁰ Memorandum of Mihai Antonescu given by Ion Antonescu to Hitler during their 11 February meeting, *ibid.*, doc. nr 39, pp.166-178, pp.170-171.

This distinction would become systematic, and the influence of the memorandums written by the democratic opposition to Ion Antonescu is felt here. On 19 January 1942, Maniu wrote a letter with Constantin Brătianu, the leader of the National liberal party, to Antonescu, mainly to ask him to reduce the Romanian involvement in the spring offensive because the country was exhausted and that Germany would not, even victorious, oblige Hungary to give back northern Transylvania to Romania; Budapest was said to actively prepare a war against Romania.⁴¹ Indignant reminder of that can be found in the Hitler - Antonescu meeting of 11 February 1942.⁴² Antonescu's conclusions were that once more, he failed to obtain the revision of the Vienna Award from Hitler, but that he would continue the war on Germany's side, because “the one who fights, wins”.⁴³

Stalingrad re-launched the reproaches: alongside with the Romanian discontent about the German tactical errors and the behavior towards the Romanian troops, Antonescu reminded to Manstein, then promoted to the command of the Don and Stalingrad front, that Romania was “thus accomplishing an European role, very far away from its national and political ideals”.⁴⁴ The meeting between the two Antonescu and the Germans at their Headquarters on 10 and 11 January 1943 was supposed to calm down the stresses.⁴⁵ The guarantees Hitler could give was that Germany would not tolerate a Hungarian aggression in the back of Romania and that total war would exhaust every belligerent, unable to initiate a

⁴¹ Letter of Iuliu Maniu and Constantin Brătianu to Antonescu of 19 January 1942, in *Iuliu Maniu - Ion Antonescu, op. cit.*, doc. nr 13, pp.114-116.

⁴² Antonescu-Hitler meeting of 11 February 1942, *Antonescu-Hitler, ... op. cit.*, vol. I, pp.181-182.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p184.

⁴⁴ Letter from Ion Antonescu to Erik von Manstein of 9 December 1942, *ibid.*, doc. nr 49, pp.198-211, p.199.

⁴⁵ Memorandum from Antonescu to Hitler given during his visit to the German Headquarters on 10 and 11 January 1943, *ibid.*, vol. II, doc. nr 52, pp.9-20, p.10.

secondary war.⁴⁶ Territorial problems were resumed on September 1943, in terms that could not be clearer:

“we have openly showed that the real and final aim of our struggle, even in the east, remains the recuperation of Romania's rights on northern Transylvania”

“ ... ”

“Great Britain's government has formally declared ... that England does not acknowledge the Vienna Award.”⁴⁷

As the Russian front got nearer, Hitler asked Antonescu to put Transnistria under German administration.⁴⁸ Antonescu tried to resist⁴⁹, because this meant the final collapse of the gains eastward obtained by the Romanian participation to Barbarossa. Hitler's answer was a dramatic call to fight, ensuring Antonescu of the German desire to use Transnistria only from a military efficiency point of view; the conclusion was that if the eastern front collapsed, every other national aspiration would lose its meaning.⁵⁰ Only after the German occupation of Hungary in March 1944 did Hitler accept to denounce secretly the Vienna Award during a meeting with Antonescu; in those dramatic moments, with the Soviet army *ante portas*, Antonescu still had revisionist plans, discretely proposing to Hitler to divide Hungary between Germany and Romania!⁵¹

⁴⁶ Declaration of Mihai Antonescu at the Council of Ministers of 18 January 1943, *ibid.*, doc. nr 53, pp.20-57, p.24.

⁴⁷ Memorandum from Antonescu to Hitler of September 1943, *ibid.*, doc. nr 63, pp.106-119, pp.115 and 116.

⁴⁸ Letter from Hitler to Antonescu of 25 October 1943, *ibid.*, doc. nr 65, p120-121.

⁴⁹ Letter from Antonescu to Hitler of 15 November 1943, *ibid.*, doc. nr 66, p122-128.

⁵⁰ Letter from Hitler to Antonescu of 15 December 1943, *ibid.*, doc. nr 67, pp.129-136.

⁵¹ Notes of Antonescu after the meeting with Hitler, 23 and 24 March 1944, *ibid.*, doc. nr 73, pp.143-149.

II The ideological dimension of authoritarian revisionism

A/ Antonescu's revisionism seen by the opposition: obsession without means

The Maniu - Antonescu debate upon foreign relations as well as upon the political regime represented, to a certain extent, the revival of an old and essential question in the Romanian unification: which province should have taken the initiative of the State building: the more developed, Hapsburg and western directed Transylvania, or the rural, backward, Russian and Ottoman influenced Danubian Principalities? Until 1914, some of the Transylvanian elites in the Belvedere group of the Danubian nationalities gathered by Franz Ferdinand thought at the federalist reorganization of the Empire and even at the Romanian unity done by Vienna annexing the little Kingdom of Romania⁵² and “civilizing” it. After 1918, the shock of the central administration of Transylvania by Romanian civil servants from the Old Kingdom, as well as the corrupted regime from Bucharest incited Maniu to refuse voting the centralized Constitution of 1923. This debate determined heavily the national legitimacy of both men. Here is Maniu’s answer at Antonescu’s reproach about the exclusive interest he displayed only to Transylvanian Romanians:

“For about two centuries, but mostly from the Latinist School of Transylvania [which attributed to Romanians the historical primacy in the Danubian Basin] on, our province has been the birthplace and the propaganda center of the great idea of the national united being of all the Romanians from everywhere and of the aspiration of crystallization into one and alone

⁵² François Bocholier, “Les projets de réforme du statut de la Transylvanie dans le contexte des relations internationales (1890-1920)”, in T. Sandu, ed., *Illusions de puissance, puissance de l'illusion, l'Europe centrale dans les relations internationales entre les deux guerres: historiographies et histoire*, Paris, L'Harmattan, coll. *Cahiers de la Nouvelle Europe*, 2005.

nation – this idea being exactly the foundation of the National Party’s ideology and taken intact by the ideology of the National peasant party.”⁵³

Thus Maniu felt very at ease to speak in the name of the nation and express, once again, its aspirations to unity.

On Antonescu’s side, the personal tone he used sometimes and also the use to speak about himself at the third person are significant of his dedication to the country. His revisionist activism could also be understood as a sort of competition with the democratic regime which had brought Greater Romania in 1918. But one can also find an ideological assertion of how he envisaged his nationalism quite extraordinary for the exponent of an authoritarian regime and a military dictator, more suited in fact to a young revolutionary fascist like Emil Cioran, for example, with his contempt towards traditional nationalism.⁵⁴ On 6 October 1941, during a meeting of the Supplying Council, he declared:

“But my tendency is to do a policy of purification of the Romanian race and I will not get back in front of any trap to realize this historical desiderata of our nation. ... I might bring Bessarabia back, and Transylvania too, if I do not purify the Romanian nation, I have done nothing at all, because there are not the boundaries which do the strength of a nation, but its homogeneity and its race’s purity.”⁵⁵

⁵³ Letter from Maniu to Antonescu of 23 July 1941, *ibid.*, doc. n°10, pp.80-107.

⁵⁴ Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco, L'oubli du fascisme, Trois intellectuels roumains dans la tourmente du siècle*, PUF, 2002, 557 pp.

⁵⁵ *Stenogramele...op. cit.*, vol. V, p.126; also quoted in D. Deletant, *Aliatul uitat al lui Hitler, ... op. cit.*, p.169.

If this ideological and racist approach, treating with strange contempt for a military leader the value of territories and boundaries, can find its origins in the strategic will of cleansing the minorities from the frontiers supposed being favorable to the enemy on the other side, the radical expression of it is supposed to inscribe the project in a long lasting perspective which has not much to do with realistic management of national territory. Most of all, Antonescu expected, as we have already seen, a just settling at the end of the war grace to the justice immanent to the New Europe Hitler and Mussolini were supposed to build. So he had some sort of ideological certitude that the elimination of racial and social evil would permit the rebirth of a better, purified, world.⁵⁶

This racist and radical trend does not modify the common definition of Antonescu as a reactionary militarist dictator rather than a fascist leader, as he had no movement and no revolutionary program to mobilize the masses, and he acknowledged himself that the Legionary movement had both, thus resembling much to Italian Fascism and to German Nazism.⁵⁷ One could also appreciate his “realistic” evolution during the war. Nevertheless, these sentences and his harsh politic towards the Jews reminds much the Anti-Semite ideologue Alexandru C. Cuza and even the fascist leader Codreanu, but with the application to state policy in the name of overall national interest.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ For the theories of Fascism as a rebirth or “palingenetic” ideology, see Roger Griffin, mainly the already quoted *Modernism and Fascism*.

⁵⁷ Letter from Antonescu to Maniu of 22 June 1941, *Iuliu Maniu - Ion Antonescu, ... op. cit.*, doc. nr 8, pp.41-74, p.43; see also p.52: “I have no party, then no 'partisan'”.

⁵⁸ The debate about Romanian Fascism can be apprehended in some new researches as Constantin Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the 'Archangel Michael' in Inter-war Romania*, Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures & Societies, December 2004, 190 pp., and Florin Müller, *Metamorfoze ale politicului românesc, 1938-1944* (metamorphosis of the Romanian politics, 1938-1944), Bucharest, Ed. Universității din București, 2005, 359 pp..

B/ Antonescu, a weak and illegitimate dictator for revisionism in the opposition's revisionist vision and action

If Antonescu had always reminded to Hitler, in secret conversations, the Romanian territorial demands upon northern Transylvania, he was certainly not at ease to let the civil society develop an uncontrolled movement in that direction, fearing a weakening of the Axis solidarity on which he grounded his revisionist projects and also harsh reactions from his major allies. He had nevertheless been wounded by Maniu's reproaches of not having done enough for the refugees.⁵⁹ Then he expressed his position of state-managed revisionist demonstrations, excluding the inner and external perturbations that private or associated uncontrolled propaganda could provoke:

“The problem of our boundaries' reunification, as well as that of the defense of our ethnical rights, everywhere where Romanians can be found, is the most important international problems with which we are preoccupied and cannot be left to be compromised by the particulars' irresponsible action.”⁶⁰

The revisionist discourse was thus omnipresent, but always kept under control by the Chief of State.⁶¹ Then follows a quite impressive list of official occasions during which he had intervened on the part of revisionist state of mind. For example, he reminds the publicized project on the 1st of October 1940 of building a Transylvanian university in Alba-Iulia in order “to witness our fearless presence in Romanian Transylvania”.⁶² Antonescu could also provide a no less impressive list of “publications which specially support the refugees'

⁵⁹ Letter from Antonescu to Maniu of the 22 June 1941, *ibid.*, doc. nr 8, pp.41-74, p.56.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.57-58.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.58.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.58.

interests, inform the public opinion with the situation in the relinquished territories and prepare it spiritually to their recuperation”.⁶³ He could add administrative decisions as “the creation of special sections in the ministry of Propaganda for the preparation of documentary and propaganda material in order to defend the Romanian rights; special broadcast program in Romanian and Hungarian languages for the occupied Transylvania; the defense of the Romanian population of that territory by German-Italian commissions; creation of special commissions to control the rights obtained by the Vienna sentence.”⁶⁴

Maniu’s reproaches were precisely directed against only state propaganda and in favor of a free, civil society managed revisionist action, thus defining the limits between authoritarian and liberal nationalism:

“The first thing to do for a persecuted nation is *the improvement of public morale and of the feeling of national dignity, as well as the rising of the national spirit* to a potential of being prepared to any sacrifice. Now, your Government’s acts regarding these matters not only have realized too few, but also have prevented us, particulars and Romanian independent society, to enforce our initiatives.”⁶⁵

Then, Maniu gave Antonescu a lesson of political sciences, reminding him that the holders of the political power could not mobilize the masses because of the unpopular measures they had to take. Maniu tacitly suggested that Antonescu had no structure of political socialization, and that endless appeals to national unity were of no use.⁶⁶

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.62.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*.

⁶⁵ Letter from Maniu to Antonescu of 23 July 1941, *ibid.*, doc. nr 10, p.83.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.105.

As soon as the second half of September 1940, Maniu tried to create a “Revisionist League” federating all political tendencies in Blaj, his stronghold, but would not succeed; another attempt came on 5 October 1940, with the organization of “Pro-Transylvania”, having legal existence, and gathering from moderate left to far right – because the pro-German A.C. Cuza was part of it⁶⁷, thus depriving Antonescu of his national unity monopoly. One of its sources of recruitment were naturally the North Transylvanian refugees and their rapidly organized “Association of expelled and refugees from North Transylvania”.⁶⁸ Horia Sima dissolved this anti-German association and Maniu provoked a trial on this fact.⁶⁹ One of his main efforts was to show Antonescu that these associations were not mere covers for the National peasant party, but that they truly represented the Romanian opinion.⁷⁰ But as Antonescu imagined no social agitation outside the state managed demonstrations compatible with faith to the Axis, he simply forbade another organization, the refugees’ one.⁷¹

After 18 December 1940, Maniu became the “*spiritus rector*” of the Association of expelled and refugees from North Transylvania whose executives replaced the Pro-Transylvania ones, thus extending his influence to that claimed part of the lost territory and having a good knowledge of the state of the opinion.⁷² One of these indirect aspects of the revisionist policy was the pressure Bucharest could put on Budapest in order to relieve the Romanians’ bad situation in northern Transylvania, and also the good treatment the refugees could find in Romania. Maniu reproached the Government of having done too few for them,

⁶⁷ Report of May 1943, *ibid.* pp.127-210, pp.131-132.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.133.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.136.

⁷⁰ Letter from Maniu to Antonescu of 23 July 1941, *ibid.*, doc. nr 10, p.84.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp.86-87.

⁷² Report of May 1943, *ibid.*, pp.127-210, pp.138-139.

thus compromising their resistance against the Magyarization and, subsequently, the chances of successfully defending the Transylvanian unification at the end of the war.⁷³

The national peasant and national liberal opposition had agreed, in January 1941, on the preeminence of Transylvania upon Bessarabia in the revision policy – even if there still were discussions even in the national peasant camp (for example the supposed left-wing but Wallachian Ion Mihalache and Nicolae Lupu) and if the Romanian masses were still left aside by this elitist propaganda⁷⁴, whose regionalist dimension could not yet match the State propaganda in favor of the national war eastward. But Maniu organized also information centers on the Transylvanian borders and youth discreet “nests” in order to mobilize deeper the society⁷⁵ in the legionary way.

The break off with the Anglo-Americans in December 1941 endangered Romania's position in the Allies' views, as Moscow was reluctant towards Polish and Romanian territorial claims.⁷⁶ In order to return the Romanian opinion against the Germans and placate the Allies, Maniu envisaged a war against Hungary in order to cut the German links to the East or a military collaboration with the Anglo-Americans in case of a landing in the Balkans.⁷⁷ He resumed secretly the activities of Pro-Transylvania in February 1942 and addressed a letter to the Romanians of northern Transylvania, encouraging them to passive resistance.⁷⁸ In July, he created the association “The Friends of Transylvania” a section of the daily *Ardealul* (Transylvania).⁷⁹ On 13 November 1942, Maniu sent a note to the Allies in which he stressed that the Romanians’ “objective ... is to reconquer Transylvania”, but he still made a collaboration conditional to “the clarification of the Bessarabian question and of

⁷³ Letter from Maniu to Antonescu of 23 July 1941, *ibid.*, doc. nr 10, p.85.

⁷⁴ Report of May 1943, *ibid.*, pp.127-210, p.139.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.152.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.168.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.169.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.162-163.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.172-174.

[their] relations with Russia”; on 20 November, another note under-estimated the eastern claims compared to the Transylvanian ones.⁸⁰ But the English answer was that “Romania's boundaries [were to] be drawn accordingly to the principles of the Atlantic Chart and to the Anglo-Russian treaty by the United Nations in a common agreement”.⁸¹

On Antonescu's side, the decline of the Axis war map made the dialogue of deaf with the opposition more permeable to realistic arguments. Mihai Antonescu and several ministers confirmed that the opinion was against continuing the war on the eastern front and favored a war against the Hungarians.⁸² Thus, Maniu could present Antonescu's insistence to withdraw a part of the army for rest as compliance to his positions.⁸³ He was desperately trying to prove the reality of Romania's preference for the Allies, but still made conditional, in February, a concrete Romanian resistance upon the clarification of how the principles of the Atlantic Chart would be harmonized with the Soviet security interests⁸⁴, in fact, if Romania would be sacrificed to the Soviet Union.

B/ Transylvanian influence on the stop of the Romanian participation to the Jewish genocide

Antonescu's adhesion to the harsh elimination of the Jews from the Bessarabia and Bucovina, but also from some boundaries' zone like Iași at the beginning of the war, received a moderating trend from Transylvanian revisionism that one can hardly find in the attitude of

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.179-180.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.184ff.

⁸² Council of Ministers of 18 January 1943, *Antonescu-Hitler...*, *op. cit.*, vol. II, doc. nr 53, pp.20-57, pp.56-57.

⁸³ *Iuliu Maniu - Ion Antonescu...* *op. cit.*, report of May 1943, pp.127-210, p.190.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.193.

the Wallachian or Moldavian opinion or civil servants, less used to criticize the political power and to resist against its iniquitous decisions than the more developed Transylvanians.

At the end of 1941, a group of intellectuals of the Banat, afraid by the rumors of deportation of the Jews from the Banat and the southern Transylvania, wrote a memorandum to Antonescu, reminding him that “as well during the cession of a part of Transylvania as after that, the Jews from the relinquished territories as well as those from the left ones have had an irreproachable behaviour”.⁸⁵ Thus, the reproach of lack of faith of the minorities towards the Romanian state was of no value here. Maniu, in his correspondence with Antonescu, often asked the immediate stopping of the persecutions: on 24 October 1941 he met Dr Wilhelm Filderman, the President of the Federation of the Jewish communities, and promised him to intervene against the persecutions of the Jews; Maniu wrongly presented it as “a German policy” led by a obedient government⁸⁶, in order to avoid any Romanian guilt in front of the allies after the war, whereas the timing of the Romanian excesses against the Jews was quite autonomous of that of the Germans – the climax being the second half of 1941. Beginning with April 1942, Maniu dedicated himself to the intervention on the part of the Romanian and mostly the Transylvanian Jews.⁸⁷

In his memorandum to Antonescu of 14 July 1942, Traian Popovici⁸⁸, the mayor of Cernăuți, Bucovina’s capital, deplores the deportation of the Jews, noticing that at least those of South Bucovina could not be charged with collaboration with the Soviets, as this part of the province had not been occupied by them. He also remarked that the Jews missed to the Romanian economy as they occupied employments Romanians often could not satisfy, thus seriously damaging Romanian war effort! But most of all, Romanian central power risked to loose the local Romanians’ sympathy, thus endangering their attitude during the future

⁸⁵ D. Deletant, *Aliatul uitat al lui Hitler*,... *op. cit.*, p.222.

⁸⁶ *Iuliu Maniu - Ion Antonescu*,... *op. cit.*, report of May 1943, pp.127-210, p.155.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.164.

⁸⁸ D. Deletant, *Aliatul uitat al lui Hitler*,... *op. cit.*, pp.175-179.

territorial arrangements.⁸⁹ Maniu even accused the Germans, in August 1942, to want the elimination of the Transylvanian Jews in order to get rid of their economic concurrence and transform, after the war, the province into a protectorate dominated by the German minority and attributed neither to the Romanians, nor to the Hungarians.⁹⁰ Thus Maniu could stress the link between the Jewish persecutions and the loss of Transylvania! The Anti-Semitic policy endangered the attribution of the northern Transylvania to Romania at the future peace conference after declarations given by the Churchill and Roosevelt to the Jewish Congress in New York.⁹¹ An important intervention in order to avoid the deportation of the Transylvanian Jews was that of the Metropolitane of Transylvania, Nicolae Bălan, alerted by Alexandru Şafran, the Chief rabbi of Romania: “After only a few hours, the Metropolitane Bălan informed me that he had convinced the Marshall to suppress the decision to deport the Jewish population from Transylvania.”⁹² Thus, during the Summer of 1942, the Antonescu regime chose not to participate to the extermination of the Jews in the German camps. In 1943, Hitler recalled Antonescu their disagreement, but Antonescu avoided a direct answer and Hitler would not insist.⁹³

Antonescu and Maniu were the most prominent politicians of the period, both totally involved in revising the 1940 boundaries, but with exactly opposite international links and socio-political options. Nevertheless, both of them seemed to overplay a role, in order to prove their respective faith to the big allies they relied on, that of the authoritarian military

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.176.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.171.

⁹¹ D. Deletant, *Aliatul uitat al lui Hitler, ... op. cit.*, p.223.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.227.

⁹³ Reports of the meetings between Hitler and Antonescu of 12 April 1943 at Klessheim Castle, *Antonescu-Hitler...*, *op. cit.*, vol. II, doc. nr 60, pp.78-84: “the Führer thinks, conversely to Marshall Antonescu, that it is all the better to act radically against the Jews” (p.83).

dictator – but certainly not of the totalitarian regime maker sometimes Antonescu dreamed of and had after all to acknowledge was not – and that of the perfect democrat Maniu thought he was – whereas he was at ease sometimes in collaborating with Fascist legionaries against authoritarian Carol II. But their core role was certainly some sort of *de facto* division of the tasks in order to be, whatever the end of the war, on the good side of the negotiation table at the peace conference with a maximum of territorial advantages: Antonescu fought eastward in order to get western Transylvania back from the Axis powers, Maniu refused the eastern offensive but lastly accepted the “liberation” of Bessarabia and northern Bucovina, hoping the Cold war would come soon enough to save them. Unfortunately for them, the Bratianu – Averescu game of the First world war could not be re-played, as the political culture of the totalitarian states and the total war displayed an awful brutality which left very few space to negotiated revision and spectacular changes of side, a little power long term speciality. The myth of the De Gaulle-Pétain share of roles between the sword and the shield could not either be played in the eastern part of the continent.