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ORIGINAL PAPER

Romania the Cairo negotiations in SOE documents from Spring and Summer 1944

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Abstract:
From the summer of 1943 until the following spring, on the Eastern Front, the German armies were constantly pushed back towards the borders of Romania. The futile grinding of Romanian troops made more politicians in Romania think about actions to take the country out of the war. The key figure was Iuliu Maniu, the leader of the democratic opposition. At the end of 1943, the Western Allies had accepted Maniu's proposal to send a representative for negotiations. He had proposed prince Barbu Ştirbei, who, in February 1944, was sent to Cairo, where the headquarters of the Allied Command for the Middle East was located. He was to be followed, in May, by the diplomat Constantin Vişoianu. The prince's departure was made with the approval of Ion Antonescu, with whom he had discussed the matter before the trip. This article seeks to shed light on some of the lesser-known aspects of Vișoianu's trip to Cairo, as well as the discussions he held with SOE representatives in Cairo.

Keywords: *SOE, Iuliu Maniu, Barbu Ştirbei, Constantin Vişoianu, Mihai Antonescu, Auschnitt, Tozan, Gardyne de Chastelain, Cairo, negotiations*

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Mihai Antonescu asked Alexandru Cretzianu, ex-general secretary of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, who had connections with Maniu, to accept the post of Ambassador in Ankara, to probe the Anglo-American ambassadors in Turkey with an offer of truce. Before accepting, Cretzianu asked Gafencu to get from the British government reassurances that the acceptance of this position would not be seen as a proof of collaborationism. SOE in Switzerland, who had Gafencu in contact, sent the request to London. After analyzing the situation Foreign Office gave the insurance requested by Cretzianu.

Cretzianu contacted Maniu who told him: "we urgently need a trustworthy connection with the allies and probably you will have greater changes of communication in Romania, if you accept an official position."[3] Maniu asked him to inform the allies that everything is ready for disembarkation in the Balkans and that the public opinion in Romania restlessly waits for the event. Before his departure Cretzianu contacted Grigore Niculescu-Buzești to whom he requested a secret code because some telegrams could have an unofficial and unorthodox character and could not be seen by any other then Maniu. Buzești accepted under the condition that was to be allowed to show them to the king. In SOE's opinion "in this manner the King became a direct part of the conspiracy." Grigore Niculescu-Buzești gave Cretzianu a secret code, one different than the one used by the Foreign Affairs Ministry which was to be used only in the messages sent to Maniu. Cretzianu quickly settled contacts with the British representatives in Turkey and became informed about the collaboration possibilities with the allies. The British government answered that nay contact of Romania with the allies must take the form of an offer of an unconditioned truce. "No other solution appeals to us"[4] stated the message from the British government.

On October 17, 1943, Allen Dulles, OSS' resident in Switzerland answering an exploratory attempt of the Anglo-Americans coming from Romanian opposition told Gafencu that "Romania's position is the subject of the United States government" in the "consultations" with the governments of the key allies.[5] Well informed after the contacts with the allies, the ex-Foreign Affairs Romanian minister, warned the minister of Romania in Berne, Vespasian Pella, that it was "useless and dangerous to play directly the English card against the Russian one." He was to confront with some narrow-minded Romanian political figures. Thus, on December 15, 1943, Grigore Gafencu wrote in his diary: "I have asked Maniu to reveal to me his policy towards Russia: I have not received an answer. (…) We must know what we want (…) We cannot save ourselves unless we look reality in the face: we must make up our minds to discuss with the Russians."

On October 19, 1943, Masterson reported two meetings with Cătălin Vlădescu-Olt with whom he discussed the possibility of a coup d'état in Romania, because of the information he had supplied to the British. Vlădescu enjoyed the highest consideration

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[3] Alexandru Cretzianu, *Ocazia pierdută*. Ediția a doua. Prefață de V.Fl. Dobrinescu. Postfață de Sherman David Spector, Institutul European (Colecția *Istorie și diplomație* 14), Iași, 1998, p. 110. [Original Edition – The Lost Opportunity (Cape, Londra: 1957).]

[4] Reuben H. Markham, *Romania sub jugul sovietic*. În românește de George Achim, Fundația Academia Civică ([Colecția] *Biblioteca Sighet* 2), București 1996, p. 89. [Original Edition – *Rumania under the Soviet Yoke* (Boston, 1949: 608 pp.).]

[5] A. Simion, *Preliminarii politico-diplomatice ale insurecției române din august 1944* [Political and Diplomatic Preliminaries to the Romanian Insurrection of August 1944], Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1979, p. 343.

from the British and the information furnished by him was considered to have a high rank of credibility. Also, Colonel Black's scheme was considered by Masterson as being very credible.

General Sănătescu had been placed at the Palace at the insistences of the group, and his rank was higher the normal for the function he had. To accelerate the negotiations the *Autonomous* mission was sent to Romania, formed by Gardyne de Chastelain, Ivor Porter, and Silviu Metzianu.

From a letter, addressed on May 9, 1944, by Colonel Talbot Rice from SOE to Howard, from Foreign Office, results that although initially this mission was to be a sabotage operation, finally as a result of the way the events played it turned into a mission of sending recommendations to Maniu[6]. The reason for which Chastelain claimed that he asked for this mission was that two years of trying to convince Maniu to take act have passed, and he got nothing. It became clear to Chastelain that the tactic of postponing which characterized Maniu's last twenty years of his political carrier, was to lose for the effort of war ally that pro-British sympathies of the Romanian people.

This mission failed, due to an air navigation error, being captured after a few hours after parachute. The three have been incarcerated in a three-room apartment from the headquarters of the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie, were they got a special treatment being attributed a salary equivalent to the grades from the Romanian army and they were given proper food and medical care. With Mihai Antonescu's approval they were arranged by Eugen Cristescu with a credible story which was to be told to the Germans in case of their taking part in the enquiry. Today, it is known that the British used the contacts with the opposition and with the Romanian government to confuse the German army. The operation was given the code name "Bodyguard" and managed to determine the Germans to maintain the troops in the Balkans to allow the allies to debark in Normandy.[7]

Maniu tried several times to contact Chastelain without any luck. In March 1944 Maniu had to send his emissary to Cairo, prince Stirbei without Chastelain's instructions. As it is known the arrival of Știrbei was compromised by the main British news agency "Reuters", in March 1944. This was not due to a slip but was a deliberate action which fitted in the "Bodyguard" plan, established by the allies to misinform the Germans.[8] The Germans asked once again the arrest of Maniu. According to a British document, Antonescu refused preferring to sacrifice himself with Maniu's memoirs then to sacrifice him. We will not take on the problem of the talks in Cairo which were treated in other works. We remind the fact that Știrbei had several meetings with Colonel Ted Masterson. During the meeting on March 16, 1944, the prince told the British Officer that: "after his opinion a solution could be easily found if it was discussed directly with Marshal

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[6] Ion Ardeleanu, Vasile Arimia, Mircea Mușat (eds.), *23 August 1944. Documente: 1944* [August 23, 1944. Documents: 1944] (Centrul de Studii și Cercetări de Istorie și Teorie Militară. Direcția Generală a Arhivelor Statului), Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1984, vol. II.

[7] Cristian Troncotă, *Eugen Cristescu, asul serviciilor secrete românești*. Memorii, mărturii, documente 1916-1944 [Eugen Cristescu, The Ace of the Romanian Secret Services. Memoirs, Testimonies, Documents 1916–1944], Editura Roza Vânturilor (Colecția *Fața nevăzută a istoriei*), București, 1994, p. 98.

[8] Eugen Preda, *„Săritura de pisică"* ["The Cat's Leap"], Editura Militară, București, 1976, p. 198.

Antonescu, rather than Maniu, given the fact that the first being in control of all of the army and administration, could meet his assumed obligations, doubting at the same time of Maniu's possibilities of doing the exact same thing."

On February 24,1944, Maniu wrote to Masterson a letter in which he recommended Constantin Visoianu who was leaving for Cairo with the mission to "inform and discuss the whole action of Romania in the shortest time." Maniu presented him as "our trustworthy man, a democrat and a convinced nationalist, a fine connoisseur of all the problems related with the South-Eastern Europe and of the whole international action of the past couple of decades." Maniu asked Masterson to help Vișoianu in his mission, underlining that "it is o great interest for me and our cause that he arrives in London."

On April 2, 1944, Chastelain was allowed to meet with Maniu in Andronache forest, near Bucharest. Here the British Officer tried to convince the PNȚ leader to act and put him in theme with the aim of his mission which according to Porter was "to inform Iuliu Maniu, the leader of the Romanian opposition, that Romania had become a spring issue of the Soviets and that the only remaining way was the unconditional capitulation in front of the Red Army." Maniu's answer was evasive and unconvincing for Chastelain. In a report dated November 18, 1944, Chastelain said that alongside Maniu's proverbial indecision, another of the causes of postponing the action was the start of the ally bombings of Bucharest which hardened the conditions of the development of the action. Also, in this report the British Officer states that everything coming from Maniu's circles was known by the Marshal in a few hours. Thus, in one of the meetings he had with Cristescu, he showed to him the materials regarding the coup d'état developed by Maniu's men. The SSI leader told him that he is aware of the way the British and ally services gather their information from Romania. He stated that he allowed them to carry on easing the work of the opposition. Cristescu listed some means of transmitting the information, but Chastelain ignored him although he knew they were correct.

Reginald W/T Traffic

Masterson found that Vișoianu (*nick-name Ianos*) was extraordinary ignorant about how Țurcanu (*nick-name Reginald*) worked, his contacts, etc. Masterson told Vișoianu that Țurcanu that he had complained that he had no help from Maniu (*nick-name Alecu*) or his men. Vișoianu stated that due to the danger in which taxis found himself on two occasions Maniu's people had found him a safe dwelling. Masterson is hardly inclined to believe this as in point of fact. Janos spoke most unconvingsilly on this subject. They found Turcanu a very difficult men and a man of moods. He leaves town and disappears for days on end is what Janos told SOE. Masterson ask Visoianu if Antonescu's regime knew about 's w/t link. Janos said they did. Maniu did in fact show Ion Antonescu (*nick-name Mitică*), a number of the signal received especially at the time when it looked as if Antonescu himself could be won to the Allied cause. As far as Janos as aware the person changed by Maniu with looking after Reginald was MIMI. Vișoianu was told before his departure from Romania that MIMI had found a suitable landing ground and that a signal had been send to CAIRO to that effect.

This property belongs to General Vârtejan a friend of Max Auschnitt. This property is near Constanta. General Vârtejan had told Janos at the time of his departure if he was contemplating leaving by plan the machine could take off from this property. Vârtejan was on the active list when Ion Antonescu first came to power but was later placed on the retired list.

From signal received from MIMI this is in fact the case, but the Mimi is finding Tzurcanu a difficult man to handle. Vișoianu further stated that Alecu's people had told Reginald One-Two or three occasion to keep off the air because of warnings had received from general Diaconescu (assistant to Christescu) that the Germans were on Reginald tracks.

On several occasions Masterson asked Vișoianu, why despite repeated requests, none of those around Maniu have ever done anything, what soever about finding suitable dropping grounds for the parties we had wished to infilter.

Masterson questions on these subjects have remained always unanswered in the same way as all the questions he put to Vișoianu regarding SOE failure to comprehend Alecu's (and his parties') inability to find a suitable and devoted W/T operator which would have enable them to have permanent contact with SOE.

Vișoianu arival in Istanbul

Masterson asked Vișoianu why he had not caried out the orders he had sent to Alecu regarding the method by which he was contact SOE people in Turkey, and secondly, whether at first contact with the latter he had referred to the name Dupont as stated in one DH5 letter.

Vișoianu denied that Maniu has told him to ring D/H5 s telephone number after his arrival in Istanbul and that he was to give the name Dupont. He stated that he knew this arrangement had been made at the time he was to have come out by plane, but he thought that in the meantime GANE had made other arrangements. I pointed out how ridiculous his remarks were as it would have been quite out of the question for him to have used D/H5 phone number as by that method of infiltration he would not see Istanbul.

He did not recollect whether referred the name *Dupont* (Masterson) believe that Janos did, in fact, have instructions call up D/H,5 upon his arrival, but that he neglected this as a result of unexpected meeting with Romanian press attaché Solacolu.

On 19th May 1944, an SOE telegram sent from Cairo to Istanbul contained the following instructions:

A To avoid confusions all arrangements for Vișoianu exfiltration's from Turkey must be to you and we request that you issue that your necessary instructions to Smyrna and repeating theme to SOE.

B We would again point out that maintenance of the secrecy is essential that SOE want Vișoianu in Cairo as soon as possible.

C We repeat that we don't consider TAXIARCHIS suitable for these operations.

D We again point out that Navy is willing to help and agrees to send M.T.B. (MOTOR TORPEDO BOAT) in order that transshipment may be affected at sea at dusk off EGRILLAR.

E In order that an MTB may be available on night of 25th May we must have confirmation by 20th May. Vișoianu must be in CATINIA when she leaves for IKARIA on 25th May.

F Recognition signal from CATINIA to MTB will be one green and one red flash,

G Will be one pinpoint for transshipment as soon as we receive your confirmation as of date of confirmation.[9]

[9] PRO KEW GARDENS, HS5/ 838, SOE. *Telegram* from Cairo to Istanbul, 19th May 1944.

On 27th May 1944 an SOE telegram[10] contained the following questions:

A. Has Vișoianu any news about Chastelain and doors he thinks he will be able to escape assuming plan brought by Janos;

B. If you see no objections from security angle ask Vișoianu if he knows anything about Tozan (*nick-name Tozan* and his activities). Has Tozan contacts with Ion Antonescu, Mihai Antonescu, and Maniu?

C If the answer at para-A is negative and in vieux of your para-B would you still consider sending A/H 89 or would you rely more on PANTS. A/H89 might be used for other purposes in connection with JANOS visit, therefore should not be compromised in any D/H 13 projects,

Tom Masterson (*nick name D/HY*) considers PANTS to be better versed in such affairs. Certainly, PANTS larger projects of assisting to get Romania out of war is out of question and is not one in which we could not assign a role to him. To enable PANTS (*nick-name Tozan*) to carry out exfiltration of D/H13 and party, presume further sum of about 6,500. Pounding sterling referred to in Istanbul. S 1036/628 is necessary. We cannot however put forward proposal until answer to above received question especially to the para-B. Vișoianu himself met Tozan two or three occasion the last time at the luncheon given at Mr. Tabacovici's house.

Vișoianu was not impressed and in fact considered Tozan as rather a suspicious character. Visoianu agreed that Tozan had connections with Maniu and Mihai Popovici one of the vice-presidents of the National Peasant Party. He was also a close friend of Atta Costantinescu. The latter was also minister of the public works, verry pro-German. On one occasion Vișoianu remembers that Tozan denied the veracity of certain information sent to Maniu by Gane in connection with the changes in the Turkish General Staff. Tozan was against Inönü regime in Turkey. Vișoianu did not know if Tozan had contacts with Ion and Mihai Antonescu, but he was so friendly with Atta Constantinescu he no doubt can get Mihai Antonescu through this channel.

On 25th May 1944, at meeting between Stirbei, Vișoianu and delegates at which D/H 311 was present VODA as spokesmen stated as a result of an increased number of German troops in Romania and the location of the Romanian Army including Bitter's Corps on the Russian corps, a coup d'etat in the interior of the country was not possible.

He therefore stated that Maniu proposed and Alfred that a coup d'état and a volte face should be caried out at the front.

The Russian delegate insisted that to carry out this plan Alecu should sent a military envoy to the Russian to fix details of the operation. A message for Maniu was prepared by Voda, in agreement with Novikov asking Maniu to send an emissary and asking him at the same time to indicate the place the emissary would wish to cross the lines so that Russians could make reception arrangements. This message was sent via CANE and repeated via Reginald if he comes up again:

Stirbei stated that Maniu agreed to the armistice terms but had certain armistice to make and certain explanations.

Novikov stated that such discussions must be postponed until after the military emissary had come out and the final plan of action established. The lack of communication with Maniu was stressed by Știrbei and NOVIKOV was asked by LORD MOYNE if the Russian could help in this matter.

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[10] PRO KEW GARDENS, HS5/ 838, SOE. *Telegram* from Force 133 to Cairo, 27th May 1944.

News about SOE collaborators

a) GICA

Although GICA is not often to be seen in Alecu's house, Maniu is of the opinion that he is very well informed about what is going on. Maniu could not give SOE any news.

b) DAN

To SOE great disappointment JANOS told Masterson that DAN no longer took a great interest in Maniu's work and in fact appear to have a little interest In Romania's plight. He was anxious to leave the country and with this aim in view he had arranged matters with NAE. He was expected to lease shortly after Visoianu. His destination was Sweden.

c) Mihail Ralea (*nick-nameA/H88*)

Mihail Ralea was in Bucharest at the time of Vișoianu departure. It was uncertain if he returned Sofia.

d) A/H 185

A/H185 did not know this man. Regarding Vania. He could give no details. He knows him considered as intelligent man, but did not he was in any way active at the present time.

e) BITTER

BITTER and the army corps under his command had been until recently, in the interior of the country.

Now he and his troops had been moved to the front.

Just prior Janos 'departure, General Sănătescu, military chief of the King, palace and latterly Marshall of the palace had been sent to the front with a view to discuss the position to the BITTER and to examine the possibilities of a volte-face at the front.

Since Janos arrived in the M.E., we have heard that Sănătescu returned with negative report.

DINU

Masterson asked Ianos if he knew anything about Dinu. He wanted to check up if this men in view of the fact he had brought into SOE scheme by Țurcanu and not by Maniu's men. VIȘOIANU knew about Dinu as Vișoianu himself was the person who accompany DINU last February when the latter was planning to fly out of Romania, the story about this Vișoianu told was the following:

Sometime about February 15 Maniu mentioned to Vișoianu that he should leave the country immediately and that he hoped a plane could be made available for this purpose. A day or two after that Ionescu (probably FARO) JOCKEY's secretary came to Vișoianu and told him that the plane was available and that the date of departure would be notified later, On the 24th Ionescu advised Vișoianu that the departure had been fixed Sunday 27th February.

The plane was to start from Buzau and Janos was to proceed to Buzau on the night of the 26th. He was told that apart from the pilot there would be two of the passengers – one the pilot's wife who was disguised as a man and would be in uniform, and the second Țurcanu himself.

In connection with Reginald, Ionescu had told Vișoianu that Maniu expected another operator from the Dobrudja to replace Reginald. He did not know anything further

about the new operator. Vișoianu bought the new railway ticket for Focsani and made all the preparations for leaving Bucharest at 4 o'clock.

The negotiations led by Cretzianu and Știrbei, to which Vișoianu joined later, were known and approved by the Marshal. To misinform the Germans and protect the secret of the negotiations, at the beginning of 1944, Borcescu created in SSI, the Inter-Mar group, formed from 8 to 10 officers who had to signal all the visits made by the Germans at the SSI offices. The Germans were sent some information with a different interpretation then the real one[11]. SOE state that according to a document signed by Major Boxshall, Vișoianu's role was the send to the allies from Maniu the latest information regarding the internal situation in Romania and to accelerate the negotiations. Also, Maniu hoped that Vișoianu's presence was seen in the ally circles of Cairo as a sign of his good intentions. Chastelain told Attlee that General Tobescu confessed, on August 22, 1944, that Antonescu rejected the truce propositions of the allies because he was advised by Gafencu who explained to him that if he resisted, he will get better conditions. Chastelain alluded to the Polish influence because Dianu, Pangal, Gafencu, and Franasovici were known as having close links with the Polish and used Polish links of communication. Chastelain considered that a secondary influence in Antonescu's decision of rejecting the terms of the truce was the information provided by the Romanian information service that the Americans secretly procured important quantities of Romanian oil shares.

Kremlin was very unsatisfied with the tone used by Chastelain (who did not know that his telegrams were shown by the SOE to the Soviets) in his telegram from April 19, 1944, through which he informed his superiors in Cairo on the motives of Antonescu's government on rejecting the conditions of the truce. The effects of this incident have been considerable. Many of the SOE operations in the Balkans were suspended.

The British government informed on April 22 the Soviet government, specifying that it had instructed the British minister in Berne to communicate that a contact link had been established with Maniu and Antonescu and that opening a new contact link was not wanted.

On June 1, Lord Moyne, Novikov and MacVeagh met and agreed to hand a declaration to the Romanian emissaries through which they declared that the prolonging of the negotiations had no goal and that the negotiations were considered stopped. If Maniu wanted to take advantage of the conditions offered by the truce he had to send an officer on the front to contact the Red Army. On June 10, Maniu telegraphed to the allies that he agreed to their conditions.[12] Regarding the means of applying the truce, the tzaranist leader informed that these were to be settled with the responsible factors and will be communicated to the allies. Maniu finished his telegram in an optimistic note: *"keeping in mind the fact that the conditions of the truce have been accepted, we are convinced that we will get an ease of these conditions when they will be applied, as the Allies have said in numerous times"* . Ambassador MacVeagh had a different opinion: *"the allies' representatives do not know what to understand from the last proposition from above, because they have not promised an ease of the conditions of the truce, but on the contrary*

[11] Cristian Troncotă, Traian Borcescu, *Riscul jocului dublu* [The Risk of a Double Game], in „Magazin istoric", no. 7, July 1993, p. 31.

[12] Paul D. Quilan, *Ciocnire deasupra României. Politica Anglo-Americană faţă de România, 1938-1947*. Traducere: Gheorghe Onișoru, Centrul de Studii Româneşti, Fundaţia Culturală Română, Iaşi, 1995, p. 94. [Original Editions – *Clash over Romania: British and American Policies Toward Romania* (Los Angeles: 1977).]

they underlined numerous of times that these could be changed worse if Romania will not accept the sooner."

On 3rd June 1944 in the document SOE work in Romania Masterson wrote that He had some meetings with Janos since his arrival in Cairo on 24th May. He gave some information about political situation. The following notes deal with the subjects covered during their talks:

D/H13 and Autonomous Party

Janos information on this matter was verry scanty. Knowing how interested we should be in any reliable information he could be given SOE about D/H 13 it is surprising that Alecu did not make a point to find out as much as possible about party such news to send SOE through Vișoianu. Masterson can only surmise that the surmise Autonomous Party are very well guarded.

It was interesting to note that Janos made the statement that Alecu had not seen D/H13 despite his repeated attempts to do so. This is strange because it is a contradiction in statements contained in one of DH 13's own messages

There are two possibilities. Firstly, that Maniu did in fact see D\H13 and had orders from Ion or Mihai Antonescu to keep the matter absolutely to itself and for this reason he had not confided in Vișoianu and secondly, D/H 13s message was written under duress and in fact D/H13 didn't see Maniu.

As far as Vișoianu knows Chastelain still held in Bucharest in the house adjoining the Gendarmerie Palace and usually inhabited by officer of i/g of Gendarmes. Both Voda and Janos that every attempt should be made to arrange to escape the party. Janos considers that any attempts to have the party moved from Bucharest (on account of the bombing) into one of the nearby villages. Escape should be easier than from their present location. Masterson` discussed the question of the arranging of the escape of the Autonomous party during the period of confusion which was bound to exist at the time of the proposed Alecu's proposed coup d'etat. Vișoianu agreed that as the coup was to take place as the front setting the Autonomous party free would present very considerable difficulties Maniu would probably be able only hold Bucharest for a short time.

Both Voda and Janos thought that Alecu should be asked at this stage to nominate somebody for the task of getting the Autonomous party free at the right time. They thought that the best person for this is the general Barbu who was 2nd person i/g of the Corps of the Gendarmes and who was removed from this post by Ion Antonescu. He has since then been collaborator of Alecu's and has probably assigned an important role in connection with winning over of the Gendarmerie at the time of the coup. In the last time Maniu appears to have reverted the idea of a coup in Bucharest. This should make this escape operation easier. Mention should also be made of the intervention by Gane who in a personal message to Mihai Antonescu asked the latter.

MATEI GHICA a friend of D/H 13 and D/H311 is also going out. He was the pilot who was going tring out Janos. The operation of exfiltration of Vișoianu by plane failed. Matei Ghica was moved to Ianca aerodrome.

JOCKEY (*nick-name Rica Georgescu*)

With the regard of the Vișoianu stated that he had been moved from Malmaison following upon certain requests which had been made to Mihai Antonescu to send the Rica Georgescu out of BUCHAREST on account of the Allied bombing. CHISTESCU must have received order in this sense from Mihai Antonescu (*nick-name NAE*) as the jockey was recently moved into a house in a village near to BUCHAREST. In this case

Janos was rather vague regarding the information he could give to SOE to the Rica Georgescu contacted and whom he can see. FARO is apparently, secretary and visit him regularly. So does his wife. Janos could say very litle.

A/H25

Regarding A/H25 and his collaborator Soreanu (the jewish journalist), Janos had quite a lot to say. It was Janos itself who took A/H25 to see Alecu after A/H 25's first visit to Istanbul where he had had discussion with Chastelain. At that time Janos considered A/H25 as an honorable man but he has subsequently become convinced that both he and more and especially SOREANU are doble agents. Through Eugen Christescu the head of (the Romanian Secret Service) Soreanu had pass all the information he got from MANIU circles to Mihai Antonescu. To convince himself of this Janos purposely told Soreanu a lie and was able to check that within a matter of days the story had reached NAE. Furthermore, as the story concerned Alfred, Janos was also able to confirm also that Mihai Antonescu also spoke to Alfred about this matter.

Janos referred to A/H25's arrest last year and stated that this was definitely a put-up job just before this arrest Mitica just returned from a visit to HITLER and during a meeting with a Alecu's collaborators ravel at this interviewer stated he had had a great deal of trouble during his visit to GERMANY, because Hitler had accused him that closing an eye to Alecu's contacts with the British. During his rage he stated that he knew that A/H25 was ALEC contact with the British. A/H25 subsequently arranged for his own arrest with his friend Christescu. Nothing of a compromising nature was found during house search which was instituted and AH25 was soon released.

In this period Christescu called about ten people to his office and gave them a warning that they must stop all forms of activity in the favor of the Allies. Christescu then turned to four of the ten among whom was Sorean saying that he gave them a last warning and that at the first sign of agitation they would be interned. The next day Soreanu was around Maniu house as usual. Janos asked if we considered such a thing possible unless Soreanu was, in fact, an agent of police. As he is a Jew Soreanu would have been locked up long ago had he was not Cristescu's agent.

Janos warned Maniu about all this and had asked him to be very carefully what he told Soreanu. Asked by Masterson why Maniu had to see Soreanu at all. Janos stated that Alecu was indebted to Soreanu for establishing the contact between himself and de Weck, the Swiss minister in Bucharest. And that it was through this channel that Maniu arranged the sending the messages to his Romanian political friends in Western Europe.

On June 20, 1944, in Cairo, on El Gekira Street number 10, took place a meeting with: Steel, the political counselor of the Foreign Office, the American counselor Smante, the Soviet counselor Solod, Lieutenant Colonel Masterson, prince Stirbei, C. Vișoianu and the Romanian businessman Max Auschnitt, latter recently came from Romania. Auschnitt was questioned about Maniu's plans to overthrow Marshal Ion Antonescu. He answered that, lately, he visited Maniu quite often, the last visit being made on the evening of June 16, 1944. Auschnitt showed that the politic opposition forces, especially the communists, need funds, and he gave them the money: about 15 million lei. Many people had heard about the financial help he offered the communists and now his life was in danger. Maniu himself advised him to leave the country. He managed to escape at the board of a military plane, after Maniu warned the British that a plane carrying a friend of his will leave the country, via Turkey.

Auschnitt gave precious information to the British regarding targets of the ally bombings in Romania and valuable information from the politic and economic domain.

The Romanian businessman proposed that General Vârtejan be sent as the link officer to coordinate with the allies the coup d'état. Maniu did not accept because he was not ready with the plans. The tzaranist leader also told Auschnitt to organize a resistance in the Apuseni Mountains; there was also a reception area there. Maniu insisted also on two other problems. The communication problem showed that the device he had was out of order for three weeks. Therefore, another device was necessary with an operator. The second issue was the German propaganda which spread rumors about the deportations in occupied Moldavia, especially in Botoşani and Dorohoi. The news had been believed by the population. Auschnitt suggested that the mayors of the localities should deny the rumors, but not on radio in Moscow but on BBC. He also talked about an audience with Doctor Filderman with the King in which he asked the Sovereign to keep him posted with the preparations for the coup d'état so that the Jews could take their own security measures. Filderman reminded Auschnitt that they found the King in a good mood and that he looked stronger than he did in the past. He was visited by some high rank Officers in the days after the second front was opened and these Officers assured the king of their loyalty in any kind of action he intended to undertake. Asked if Maniu had decided the time and place of the coup d'état, Auschnitt answered that it had to be coordinated with a Soviet offensive. Solod asked Auschnitt how Maniu intended to coordinate the coup d'état with the Soviet offensive. The answer was received through a contact officer.

In the Romanian industrialist opinion, the departure from Romania was an easy problem because it was impossible to survey all the departure points. He had left the country during daytime from a military airport. Auschnitt answered that Luca, the manager of his company in Galati reported that important German troops and equipment's had passed through the city onto the front. Marshal Antonescu said to a friend of his that on the front were in that moment 50 divisions: 30 German and 20 Romanian. General Vârtejan, a friend of Auschnitt's who had just returned from Bacau before his escape from Romania, informed him that the German troops were poorly equipped mostly regarding the clothes. According to Vârtejan, there were 150.000 German soldiers on the front and a corresponding number in reserve. The movement of the German troops in Romania was done without the knowing of the Romanian Commandment. There were no Romanian commandments on the front and neither were two Romanian divisions on the front fighting next to each other; they were all interspersed with the Germans. The Romanian recruits seen in different villages were not armed. Although from routine Auschnitt's activity was under surveillance, his pro-British feelings have never been questioned by the SOE. Nevertheless, the transcript of the meeting in El Gekira proves the fact that Auschnitt was not completely honest, tending to exaggerate his activity.

So, he stated that that he helped a lot at the organization of the Patriotic Block formed from the tour opposition parties and that the creation agreement of BND was signed ten days ago, i.e. on June 10, 1944, and that the parties delegated four members to form the work committee of the Patriotic Front. This is false; the creation agreement was signed on June 20, in the same day as Auschnitt's leave for Cairo to take part in the meeting on El Gekira Street with the representatives of the allies. Likewise, he stated that he organizes several 15-20.000 workers from the plants in Resita regarding the resistance after the coup d'état and that important stacks of arms and grenades were made, and that they were available in plants. The number was undoubtedly exaggerated. The total of the workers of the plants in Resita was smaller, and it would have been necessary to organize such many people – the equivalent of an infantry division – a major state formed of men who should have had military training.

On June 23, 1944, in an SSI note was shown that Maniu appreciated that the German front was expected to crash and Antonescu to retire from power. *"Maniu, was showed in that document, often contacts his informers and his military experts, who give him documents permanently."*[13] This febrile activity is explained by the fact that on June 20 the tzaranist leader sent to Ankara a message which contained detailed plans of the coup d'état which was to lead Romania in the camp of the United Nations. For this action to work Maniu requested to the USSR to undertake a vigorous offensive of the Romanian front and to the Anglo-Americans to send three air born brigades, in some vital points around Bucharest. The message was resolved in Cairo, to the Allies on June 29, 1944, by Știrbei and Vișoianu.

On July 14, 1944, the radio telegrapher Tzurcanu was captured. Thus, the last radio links which served Maniu directly with Cairo was cut. An inquiry started by the British after the War highlighted serious deficiencies of security. Regarding Tzurcanu's capture, Cristescu's declarations proved that not only Tzurcanu was guilty of disobeying the security rules but also some members of Maniu's network who have not respected some elementary rules of conspiracy. An example in this matter was Reginald being brought into Știrbei's house, objective which was under the observation of the Romanian and German information services. The high radio traffic (Cristescu speaks of approximately 600 messages. and keeping the hour of the transmission were other mistakes that could have brought the downfall of the entire SOE network in Romania including Maniu if it wasn't for Cristescu. Besides a British document showed that the purpose of Reginald's mission had become known to almost 40 persons and stated that without the protection and guidance of Eugen Cristescu the network would have easily been captured by the Germans. Another radio-emission device was sent to the country with Cretzianu's help. For safety measures its location was settled in Snagov and not in the capital. Also, Masterson managed to deliver two devices, one to Alexandru Ștefănescu and the other to Niculescu Buzești.

When Tozan escaped from the arrest in Budapest, he was in Bucharest since December 1, 1943. He resumed his contact with Maniu with the purpose of assisting the allied cause. Later, he realized that the Opposition was impotent, so he contacted Mihai Antonescu. The latter regarding him as a British agent and knowing him to be a Turks of standing charged him with a peace feeler HS5/827 SOE report dated 7th August 1944. He left Romania in a boat put at his disposal by the Romanian Government, and under the command of a Romanian Naval Officer. On July 25, 1944, Tozan arrived in Istanbul where he immediately contacted Lieutenant Colonel Harris-Burland. During their meeting, he declared himself disappointed by Maniu's lack of action. Tozan said that Maniu's party was not likely to take any action to overthrow the existing Regime in Romania. They were content to have numerous meetings and discussions and apparently think that the coup d'etat in Romania can be carried out by political means only and without bloodsheds.

Maniu stated on several occasions that his coup d'etat was to take place on a certain day, or at a certain hour, but on each occasion an excuse has been found for not acting. Alecu's activities are closely watched and he was followed everywhere. The impression gained from what Tozan said was that Maniu and his party were insecure, and one member pf the Party who reported to Maniu about Mihai Antonescu's activities pose

[13] Nicolae Ciachir, *Marile Puteri și Romania 1856-1947* [The Great Powers and Romania 1856–1947], Editura Albatros (Seria *Historia*), București, 1996, p. 311.

the same thing for Mihai Antonescu. Generally, Allecu's movement was well known and was not considered dangerous HS5/825, SOE report dated 29th Jully 1944. Tozan stated that he had with him a plan from Mihai Antonescu to get the Germans out of Romania, which bore the agreement of Marshal Antonescu. The Marshal wanted to send a qualified officer to discuss the details of the plan with the allies. Tozan gave his word to Mihai Antonescu that he will come back to Romania after he shows the plan. He did not trust Cretzianu or Barbu Știrbei. He brought with him letter from colonel Chastelain to Masterson, and from Ivor Porter. Tozan asked to be sent to London with Violeta Stârcea as his private secretary. Tozan's propositions have not been acted because the British officers in Istanbul regarded them as a new attempt of Mihai Antonescu to secure immunity after the War from the Allies part. In Istanbul Tozan contacted Constantin Giurescu, Mihai Antonescu's personal representative, and cooperated with him. HS5/827 SOE report dated 7th August 1944.

After Tzurcanu's fall, Maniu depended on Niculescu-Buzești to secure the links with the outside. He decided that General Aldea passed the front line and consulted with the Soviets technical aspects of the truce. It was suggested that he should be accompanied by Colonel Chastelain, but the British wanted to get him out of Romania because they were afraid that the Romanians would not last the German pressure and they will give him to the Gestapo. Mihai Antonescu sent information through Cretzianu that Chastelain was safe and that he will resist the German pressure. The Romanians had strong reasons not the give the British officer who could disclose information to the Germans, which could compromise them, for example the Marshal's correspondence with the British General Wilson and especially with Maniu.

On August 20, when the Soviet pressure on the front increased, Maniu sent a message to Cairo which informed him that he decided to act without waiting for an answer from the allies. Mihai Antonescu also asked Turkey to act as an intermediary/mediator between Romania and the allies to finish the truce, having in this case the King's consent, the Marshal and of every member of the opposition. He wanted to know which of the three alternatives was favorable to the Anglo-Americans: sending a Romanian representative to Moscow to finish the truce; simultaneously being in connection/contact with the British, Americans and the Soviets to settle the conditions of a truce; or discussing the conditions of the truce with the Allies in Cairo[14]. He did not have the chance to finalize the action. On the afternoon of August 23, the Marshal and his main collaborators were arrested.[15]

Conclusions

In the second half of 1943, the defeats suffered on the Eastern Front prompted both the Antonescu government and the opposition to step up discussions with the Allies in search for a solution to bring the country out of the war. With the government's consent, two emissaries were sent: Barbu Știrbei and Constantin Vișoianu. This article analyses the SOE operation to extract Vișoianu from Istanbul and the discussions they held with SOE

[14] Florin Constantiniu, *Însemnările unui agent britanic din ajunul insurecţiei române din August 1994* [Notes of a British Agent on the Eve of the Romanian Insurrection of August 1944], in „Revista de istorie", 35, no. 5-6, 1982, p. 737.

[15] Christopher Andrew, Oleg Gordievschi, *KGB. Istoria secretă a operațiunilor sale externe de la Lenin la Gorbaciov*. Traducere din limba engleză de Doina Mihalcea-Știucă, Editura All, București, 1994, p. 229. [Original Edition – KGB: The Inside Story of Its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev (London: 1990).]

representatives in Cairo. Documents relating to this operation indicate that the SOE appeared interested in the situation of the *Autonomus* team and the possibility of exfiltrating this team, which had been arrested by the Romanian authorities. Furthermore, the SOE were interested in the activities of their agents, which were verified through Barbu Stirbei, Vișoianu and, subsequently, Max Auschnitt. The British officers appeared less interested in Maniu's role in organizing the coup. The British document analyzing the activity of SOE in Romania concludes that if the connections with the opposition would not have been settled since 1939 it is doubtable that the coup d'état in August 23, 1944, would not have been prepared and executed successfully. Thus, SOE attributed itself merits for the success of the coup d'état on August 23, 1944, in Romania. In our opinion these merits are not wholly justified and an argument regarding this is given by the British document which talk about the fact that SOE gave a small importance to Colonel Black's Scheme presented by Vlădescu-Olt, about which the British officers themselves admit was the basis of the coup d'état in August 1944.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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