

The Soviet-British Correspondence in Regard to Romanian Political Crisis (January-March 1945)

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Keywords: *Yalta Conference, Communism, Cold War, International Relations, Propaganda*

The return of Romanian Communist leaders from Moscow in mid-January 1945 marked not only the beginning of a political struggle for power with then-political partners in the Rădescu Government (although the Government was sworn into office on December 6th, 1944), but also the Soviet direct intervention in the Romanian political affairs. The Soviets ruled the (Inter-)Allied Control Commission on Romania, composed also of the British and United States representatives; this Commission dealt with the Romanian Armistice with the United Nations, as required by the Armistice Convention on Romania of September 12(13), 1944.

Although Winston Churchill, Prime Minister, insisted for British representatives to not interfere with the Soviets due to the "Percentages Agreement" of October 9, 1944¹, Anthony Eden, Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had different views and even in January 1945 he did not forget about the 10% British in Romania and tried to keep it by supporting the maintenance of the (real) Coalition Government.² Before the Yalta Conference (from February 4 to 11). The Foreign Office and the State Department did not convince United States President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to propose the establishment of the European High Commission, which had to deal with the armistice in the defeated countries, to the Soviets.³

Due to Soviets's hard line, Churchill decided on March 4th to concentrate British interest on Poland. Consequently, the British Government hoped the Romanian affairs would become a permanent issue of the United States and provided diplomatic support.⁴ Eden's benevolent attitude on Romania in early 1945 came to an end as the

¹ See Winston S. Churchill, *Al Doilea Război Mondial [Second World War]*, Vol. II, Translated by Any and Virgil Florea. București. 1996. 380-387.

² Mark Percival, "British Policy from the *Percentages Agreement* of October 1944 to the Moscow Agreement of December 1945. When was the reality of Soviet Control Effectively Conceded?," *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Contemporană*, 2/2003, p. 102.

³ Paul D. Quinlan, *Clash over Romania. British and American policies toward Romania: 1938-1947*, Los Angeles, 1977, 121-122.

⁴ Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, Adrian Pop, *Sovietizarea României. Percepții anglo-americane (1944-1947) [Sovietization of Romania. Anglo-American Perspectives (1944-1947)]*, București, 1993, p. 122-123 and 144-145.

British, nor the more energetic Americans, had no influence over the Groza Government, backed up by the occupying Soviets.⁵

Document No. 1. Foreign Office's Telegram No. 845 of 23.02.1945 to Archibald Clark-Kerr, British Ambassador in the Soviet Union, Instructing Him to Propose the Soviets the Maintenance of a Coalition Government in Romania.

[THIS TELEGRAM IS OF PARTICULAR SECRECY AND SHOULD BE RETAINED BY THE AUTHORIZED RECIPIENT AND NOT PASSED ON].

R. 3653/10/G.

[CYPHER]

WAR CABINET DISTRIBUTION
FROM FOREIGN OFFICE⁶ TO MOSCOW⁷

No. 845

D. 5,25 p.m. February 23rd, 1945.

February 23rd, 1945.

Repeated to Washington No. 1733 (IMMEDIATE).

Bucharest No. 232 (IMMEDIATE).

MOST IMMEDIATE

Bucharest telegrams⁸ Nos. 173 and. 174 [of February 23rd: Political situation in Roumania].

The situations disclosed in Bucharest telegrams under reference is dangerous and appears to be rapidly deteriorating.

2. In these circumstances I should be glad if you would see M. Molotov⁹ urgently and express to him my concern at the turn of events in Roumania and my hope that he will take urgent measures to prevent the situation occurring in which a minority rule will have been established over the Roumanian people by force of arms.

3. You should point out that whilst we fully admit the Soviet Government's predominating interest in Roumania as agreed at the Moscow Conference¹⁰ there is an Inter Allied Control Commission in that country and that we should be placed in an impossible position if we had to condone decisions or action taken in the name of that Commission but to which we had the strongest objection. If such decisions were in fact taken by His Majesty's Government would be obliged dissociate themselves publicly from them. His Majesty's Government would clearly be most reluctant to take this step which would betray a rift in the policy of the Great Powers, trust therefore that the Soviet Government will take such mea[sures] as they consider advisable to prevent the overthrow of the Coalition Government until the Romanian people are able to express their views by free elections.

O.T.P.

⁵ Apud *Cartea albă a Securității [White Book of Securitate]*, Volume I, 23 august 1944–30 august 1948, Edited by Serviciul Român de Informații. Editors: Mihai Pelin (coordinator), Constantin Aioanei, Neviian Tunăreanu and Florin Pintilie (București. 1997), Gheorghe Tătărescu's Declaration in Romanian on 01.11.1953 about How He Sabotaged the Groza Government, 414.

⁶ The British Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

⁷ The British Embassy in the Soviet Union.

⁸ Delivered by the Office of the British Political Representative in Romania.

⁹ Soviet People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs.

¹⁰ Churchill-Stalin's "Percentages Agreement" of 09.10.1944.

The Microfiches of Great Britain, Public Record Office, Foreign Office (henceforth PRO FO), 371/48536, microfiche 195; Central National Historical Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Anglia [England] 1940-1945 Microfiche Collection (henceforth CNHAR, BMC), Envelope No. 80.

**Document No. 2. Clark Kerr's Telegram No. 569 of 25.02.1945 to Foreign Office
Concerning the Soviet Government's Determination to Overthrow Rădescu
Government due to the Alleged Fascist Remnants**

[This telegram is of particular secrecy and should be retained by the authorized recipient and not passed on].

[CYPHER]

WAR CABINET DISTRIBUTION
FROM MOSCOW TO FOREIGN OFFICE

Sir A. Clark Kerr

No. 569

25th February, 1945

Repeated to Washington

Bucharest

IMMEDIATE

D. 10,14 a.m. (GMT) 25th February, 1945.

R. 11,45 a.m. (BST) 25th February, 1945.

Your telegram No. 845.

Mr. Molotov has replied as follows to my letter based on your telegram:

"I consider it necessary to state that information at the disposal of the British Government about events in Roumania is not in accordance with the facts. On the contrary are the Rădescu's Government, led by the halter by Fascist military and encouraging violence and shooting of peaceful citizens who demand the dissolution of Fascist organizations and conscientious fulfilment of respective conditions of Armistice agreement, has proved incapable of ensuring order and peace in Roumania which is in the rear of the Red Army. This causes grave anxiety for the Soviet Government and fears about the future. The Allied Control Commission must take the necessary measures to end this intolerable situation and to ensure order in the country".

Foreign Office please pass to Bucharest as my telegram No 7.

[Repeated to Bucharest under Foreign Office No. 239].

OTP.

PRO FO 371/48537, Mf. 29; CNHAR, BMC, Envelope No. 81.

**Document No. 3. Clark Kerr's Letter of 01.03.1945 to Molotov about Maintaining
the Coalition Government in Romania**

URGENT

(Dear M. Molotov)

1st March, 1945.

I duly communicated to my Government the message contained in your letter of 24th February about the position in Roumania.

2. My Government have instructed me to say that they received this reply with regret, since in their view does not accurately state the issue. My Government cannot accept the contention that the information supplied by the British Representatives in Roumania is incorrect. The reports which these Representatives have furnished have been carefully checked, and my Government have full confidence in their trustworthiness.

3. But apart from the question whether every detail of the information at the disposal of my Government is correct, my Government's chief preoccupation is to ensure that those principles of Government to which they attach great importance and which have so often been made known to the world, and most recently in the Crimea Declaration¹¹, should not be forgotten or ignored.

4. My Government took firm steps in Greece to prevent the forcible seizure of power by a minority, and that they feel it their duty in view of their public utterances to do their best to ensure that similar dangers are prevented elsewhere. The British Government for their part understand the predominating Soviet interest in Roumania. Nevertheless they feel obliged to make their views known to the Soviet Government in view of the serious situation which in their opinion is developing in Roumania.

5. In these circumstances my Government renew their request that measures shall be taken by the Soviet authorities to ensure the continuance of some form of coalition Government, if necessary under a neutral Prime Minister, and representatives of all political parties in Roumania in accordance with their present strength in the country until such time as the Roumanian people are able to express their views by free elections.

(Yours sincerely),

(Signed): ARCHIBALD CLARK KERR

His Excellency,

Monsieur V.M. Molotov,

People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs,

Moscow.

PRO FO 371/48537, Mf. 41-42; CNHAR, BMC, Envelope No. 81.

Document No. 4. Clark Kerr's Letter of 03.03.1945 to Molotov

BRITISH EMBASSY,

MOSCOW,

3rd March, 1945.

(Dear M. Molotov),

I asked for an interview this afternoon on instructions from my government in order to explain the conclusions they have reached about their position in regard to Roumania in view of the disturbing situation which has developed there. As I understand your time is fully taken up, I am submitting these considerations to you in writing.

¹¹ The Declaration on Liberated Europe, issued at the Yalta Conference on 10.02.1945.

2. My government are in full agreement with the representations of the United States Government contained in Mr. Harriman¹²'s letter to you of 1st March. They too consider that conditions in Roumania have now reached a critical stage which makes it necessary for our three governments immediately to consult together, as provided in the Crimea Declaration on liberated Europe, on the measures necessary for the discharge of the joint responsibilities set forth in this declaration.

3. My government's views are well known to you. They were last set out to you in my letter to you on March 1st on the subject. My government of course do not contest the Soviet right to preponderance in Roumania. But my government consider that the time has come for frank discussion between our three governments on the policy which the Soviet Government intend to pursue there.

4. My government are therefore most anxious that the Soviet Government will also feel able to concur in the proposals set out in Mr. Harriman's letter of 1st March. I should be grateful for an early reply on this point.

5. I also have been instructed to say that recent telegrams received from our representatives in Bucharest suggest that some of the Soviet directives to the Roumanian Government appeared to have been issued in the name of the Soviet Government or the Soviet High Command, and not in the name of the Allied Control Commission. My government appreciate that this may have been done because of the representations conveyed in my letter of 24th February explaining that if measures with which my government could not agree were taken in the name of the Allied Control Commission, on which there is a British Representative, they would have to dissociate themselves publicly from them. You will appreciate that if pressed, for instances in the House of Commons, my government may well be obliged to dissociate themselves likewise from my responsibility for actions taken by the Soviet Government or the Soviet High Command which run counter to their fundamental principles of government, such as actions leading to the forcible imposition of minority government in Roumania.

(Yours sincerely)

(Signed) ARCHIBALD CLARK KERR.

His Excellency

Monsieur V.M. Molotov,

People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs,

Moscow.

PRO FO 371/48537. Mf. 96-97: CNHAR, BMC, Envelope No. 81.

**Document No. 5. Clark Kerr's Telegram No. 685 of 06.03.1945 to Foreign Office
about Molotov's Letter Issued in The Same Day**

[This telegram is of particular secrecy and should be retained by the authorized recipient and not passed on].

[CYPHER]

WAR CABINET DISTRIBUTION
FROM MOSCOW TO FOREIGN OFFICE

¹² The United States of America Ambassador in the Soviet Union.

Sir A. Clark Kerr.

D. 3.00 p.m. GMT 6th March, 1945.

No: 685

R. 4.25 p.m. BST 6th March, 1945.

6th March, 1945

Repeated to Washington,
Bucharest,

IMMEDIATE

My immediately preceding telegram.

"I have to state that as Vyshinski¹³ has already explained to Mr. Marjoribanks¹⁴, Radescu's Government, which has now been dismissed, was unable to ensure order in Roumania and helped to breathe new life into work of pro-Hitler elements represented by the Iron Guard. Radescu organized criminal acts of violence and the shooting of peaceful citizens who demanded dissolution of Fascist organizations and conscientious fulfilment of conditions of the armistice agreement. The blame for the above is entirely confirmed by recent events in Roumania and is evidence of the fact the Radescu's Government did indeed by terrorist [terrorist] acts to enforce its will upon the majority of Roumanian people who had shown their readiness conscientiously to carry out the armistice conditions. This must be taken as a denial of one-sided offer, whitewashing Radescu which was reflected in your letters.

2. Such a situation cannot be tolerated in the rear of the Red Army and must be removed by forming a Government able to ensure order and honest fulfilment of the armistice conditions. At the same time Soviet Government hope that on the part of British representatives necessary co-operation will be given in this question and that no difficulties of any kind will be created in establishing required order in the rear of Soviet troops in Roumania.

3. As regards the question of applying the principles of Crimea Declaration to the situation in Roumania and the need to ensure the formation of a Government from representatives of political parties in Roumania, Soviet Government, who bears in the first instance the responsibility for Roumanian affairs, consider it correct that the new Roumanian Government should be formed from the representatives of democratic parties and non-party politicians who would be ready to co-operate in practice in fulfilment of above mentioned tasks. Such a Government would be in a position to ensure destruction of final remnants of Nazism and Fascism in Roumania, to create a democratic institution according to the people's own choice as required in the Crimea Declaration and to establish in the country which is the rear of the Red Army order and peace in the interests of our common struggle against Hitlerite Germany.

A similar reply is being sent to the Ambassador of United States".

Foreign Office please pass to Bucharest as my telegram No. 13.

[Repeated to Bucharest as telegram No. 280].

O.T.P.

PRO FO 371/48538, Mf. 8-9; CNHAR, BMC, Envelope No. 82.

¹³ Soviet First Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, then in Bucharest.

¹⁴ Acting British Political Representative in Romania, Head of the Office of the British Political Representative.

**Document No. 6¹⁵. Marjoribanks' Telegram No. 244 of 06.03.1945 to Foreign Office
about Vyshinski's Letter Issued in The Same Day**

[This telegram is of particular secrecy and should be retained by the authorized recipient and not passed on].

[CYPHER]

WAR CABINET DISTRIBUTION
FROM BUCHAREST¹⁶ TO FOREIGN OFFICE

Mr. Marjoribanks

D. 1,32 p.m. GMT 6th March, 1945.

No. 244

R. 4,25 p.m. BST 6th March, 1945.

6th March, 1945

Repeated to Moscow,

Washington

MOST IMMEDIATE

Following is translation of reply to my letters of February 28th and March 1st received from M. Vyshinski this morning.

(Begins)

Dear Mr. Marjoribanks,

As you will remember, the question raised by you in your letters of February 28th and March 1st about the situation in Roumania were examined by us in our conversation of March 1st.¹⁷

In this conversation I drew your attention to the fact that Radescu Government, which has now been dismissed, has, as has been shown by most recent events in Roumania, been proved incapable of guaranteeing order in Roumania, which is a back area of the Red Army, and that Radescu helped in intensifying the activities of pro-Hitlerite elements, encouraging violence against and the shooting of peaceful citizens who were demanding the break up of Fascist organizations and honest fulfilment of the terms of armistice agreement. The Government of Radescu concentrated all its forces on imposing its will by terrorist methods on the majority of the Roumanian people. Such a situation cannot be tolerated, particularly in a country which is a back area of the Red Army and must be ended by the formation of a Government capable of guaranteeing order and providing for a honest fulfilment of the terms of the armistice agreement. The Soviet Government expresses its hope that the British Government, for its part, will give the necessary support in this matter and will not put difficulties in the way of establishing order in Roumania in the rear of the Soviet armies.

As regards the question of the application of the principles of the Crimea declaration to the existing situation in Roumania and of the necessity for securing the formation of a Government composed of the representatives of political parties in Roumania, the Soviet

¹⁵ A project of this document, similar but not identical in content, was sent by Vyshinski, then in Bucharest, to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs awaiting approval; the project was published in Romanian in Radu Ciuceanu et alii, eds., *Misiunile lui A.I. Vășinski în România. (Din istoria relațiilor româno-sovietice, 1944-1946). Documente secrete.* București, 1997, 145-146.

¹⁶ The Office of the British Political Representative in Romania.

¹⁷ Vyshinski-Marjoribanks conversation of March 1st was sent to Foreign Office on the following day, and was published in Romanian in Chiper et alii 1993, 114-117.

Government, carrying as it does the primary responsibility for Roumanian affairs, considers it right that the new Roumanian Government should be composed of representatives of really democratic parties and of non-party public men willing to participate in solving the problem [grp. undec: ? in view]. Such a Government would be in a position to ensure the destruction of the last remnants of the Nazi régime and Fascism in Roumania to establish a democratic institution through the people's own choice, as is indicated in the declaration of the heads of the three Allied Powers¹⁸, and to establish in a country forming a back area of the Red Army, order and tranquility in the interests of our common struggle against Hitlerite Germany.

As regards the information about the situation in Roumania contained in the letter of the British Ambassador dated February 24th, in the same conversation I indicated to you a series of facts confirming the one-sidedness and inaccuracy of the information which was at your disposal.

With sincere respect,

A.I. Vyshinski.

(Ends).

Please pass to Washington and Moscow as my telegrams Nos. 50 and 38 respectively.

[Repeated to Moscow and Washington as No. 1081 and 2126 respectively].

O.T.P

PRO FO 371/48538, Mf. 17-18; CNHAR, BMC, Envelope No. 82.

¹⁸ See note 11.