

## **Ion Antonescu's regime during September 1940 – June 1941. Measures taken to regain the lost provinces in the summer of 1940**

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**Abstract:** *The impact produced by events occurring in the international arena in 1939 were felt by Romania starting with the summer of 1940 when the country was forced to give up without a fight the Romanian provinces acquired in 1918. Consequences were not only social and economic, but also political, causing King Carol II abdication in favour of his son, Mihai and the investment with full powers to run the Romanian state of General Ion Antonescu. Understanding the impact produced by the summer raptures in 1940 among the Romanian population, Antonescu decided to establish as main objective for both the foreign policy and the domestic one the recovery of these territories. Given his decision to participate in the summer of 1941 in the war against USSR, the present study aims to present different measures taken by his regime during September 1940 – June 1941 to regain the lost provinces.*

**Keywords:** Antonescu's regime, Romanian provinces, territorial losses, administrative measures, Bukovina.

### **Preliminary considerations**

The outbreak of the German aggression against Poland on the first day of September<sup>1</sup> marked the beginning of a new world war based, this time, on the dissatisfaction of both winners and vanquished after the

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<sup>1</sup> *Timpu*, year III, no. 839, 2 September 1939, p. 1.

conclusion of the peace treaties. The evolution of military operations on the European stage during 1939 – 1940, the lightning victories obtained by Germany in the North – western Europe, especially France's capitulation<sup>2</sup> made their mark on Romania starting with 26 June 1940 when the Soviet Union, through ultimatum notes, asked the cession of Bessarabia and northern Bucovina<sup>3</sup>. The collapse of its security system, the total political isolation and the military situation from that time of the Romanian army determined the government from Bucharest to accept the conditions imposed by the Soviets<sup>4</sup>. The acceptance provided by Romania and the way in which the U.S.S.R. acted created a precedent in reaffirming the territorial claims of Hungary and Bulgaria, thereby the series of territorial cedes continued with the Vienna Award (30 August 1940) and the Treaty of Craiova (7 September 1940) through which our country gave up the Romanian provinces acquired at the end of the First World War<sup>5</sup>.

The impact produced by the ceded provinces for which generations of Romanians fought, led to the deepening crisis of the political regime, established by King Carol II in 1938<sup>6</sup>. Alongside the pressure made by Germany over Romania led, eventually, to the abdication of King Carol II<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Constantin Kirişescu, *Romania during the Second World War*, Vol. I, Bucureşti, Universe Enciclopedic, 1996, pp. 114 – 116.

<sup>3</sup> \*\*\*, *Diplomaţia cotropitorilor. Repercusiunile ei asupra Basarabiei şi Bucovinei de Nord*, Chişinău, Universitas, 1992, p. 134.

<sup>4</sup> Mihai – Aurelian Căruntu, *Bukovina in the Second World War*, Iasi, Junimea, 2004, pp. 91 – 102.

<sup>5</sup> Florin Constantiniu, *Crossing the Dniester (1941). A controversial decision*, Bucureşti, Albatros, 1995, p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Dan Vătăman, *Romania and international studies (1939 – 1947)*, Vol. I, Bucureşti, Pro Universitar, 2009, p. 110.

<sup>7</sup> Dan Vătăman, *op.cit.*, p. 124.

in favour of his son, Mihai<sup>8</sup> and the investment of General Ion Antonescu as president of the Council of Ministers on 6 September 1940, with full powers to run the Romanian state<sup>9</sup>.

The crowning of Mihai I as king<sup>10</sup> and the appointment as president of the Council of Ministers of Ion Antonescu<sup>11</sup> represented the first step in establishing a new regime in Bucharest, approved by Germany. However, civil manifestations caused in the country by the Vienna Award<sup>12</sup> determined the general to address the country, immediately after his appointment, asking that all protest be stopped, establishing peace and order among the population<sup>13</sup>. The first measures taken by Antonescu to create a working base for his new regime were: abrogating the Constitution and dissolving the Parliament<sup>14</sup>; the dissolution of the Crown Council (6 September 1940<sup>15</sup>) and the Nations Party (9 September 1940), created by Carol II as a substitute for Frontul Salvării Naționale<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *A collections of documents and materials regarding Romania's history (February 1938 – September 1940)*, București, Universității, 1974, pp. 282 – 283.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 280.

<sup>10</sup> *Curentul*, year XIII, no. 4517, 8 September 1940, p. 1, also see Ion Antonescu, *The foundation of the national – legionnaire state. 6 September 1940 – 6 October 1940*, București, Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului Imprimeria Centrală, 1940.

<sup>11</sup> \*\*\*, *On the brink of disaster. 21 – 23 January 1941*, Vol. I, București, Scripta, 1992, p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> Romanian Central National Archives (hereafter A.N.I.C.), fund Direcția Generală a Poliției, file 41/1940, f. 6.

<sup>13</sup> \*\*\*, *On the brink of disaster. 21 – 23 January 1941*, Vol. I, București, Scripta, 1992, p. 70.

<sup>14</sup> *Universul*, year 57, No. 245, 6 September 1940, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Ion Antonescu, *The foundation of the national – legionnaire state. 6 September 1940 – 6 October 1940*, București, Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului Imprimeria Centrală, 1940, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> Mihai Fătu, *Contributions to studying the political regime in Romania (September 1940 – August 1944)*, București, Politică, 1984, p. 34.

On 11 September, Ion Antonescu launched a new appeal for order and work to the Romanian people<sup>17</sup>. At a closer look, clues concerning the nature of this new regime can be found, the general's purpose being not only the downfall of a system, but the creation of another. A new clean life regime, a harmonious and brotherly regime between the leaders and the subjects<sup>18</sup>. In spite of the actions made during the first days in office, Antonescu's concern was to get together a new government that would receive the consent of the German Legation in Bucharest. His desire for forming a national union government that would represent all the political parties was abandoned with the start of negotiations for the new cabinet. Two major difficulties were experienced during these discussions, one of them was the Iron Guard members, who wanted to obtain a larger number of ministries<sup>19</sup>, and the German Legation, who opposed the idea of co-opting some members of P.N.Ț. and P.N.L., known for their Anglo – French sympathies<sup>20</sup>.

In these circumstances, Antonescu's decision regarding the co-opting of a political party to the government leadership became public, on 12 September 1940, through a call for the Legionnaires showing that 'The country asks to begin together with me, without hesitation and without spare, in unity and love, work for straightening and rebuilding in which we

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<sup>17</sup> \*\*\*, *On the brink of disaster. 21 – 23 January 1941*, vol. I, București, Scripta, 1992, pp. 76 -77.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 76.

<sup>19</sup> Dan Vătăman, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>20</sup> Ion Gheorghe, *A unhappy dictator. Marshal Antonescu (Romania's road towards a satellite State)*, edition and introductive study by Stelian Neagoe, București, Machiavelli, 1996, pp. 132 – 135.

started<sup>21</sup>. In conclusion, a new government was formed on 14 September with key positions occupied by members of the Iron Guard<sup>22</sup>. Even so, the general managed to keep `in his hands` the Minister of Defence, and decided to name in the most important people from his trusted circle, such as: Mihai Antonescu – the Minister of Justice and Dragomir - Economy<sup>23</sup>. Forming a government with the Iron Guard had as consequence the signing, on 16 September 1940, by King Mihai I of decree no. 3151 which stipulated that: the Romanian state became national – legionnaire; the Iron Guard, the only movement recognised by the new state, was charged with lifting morally and material the Romanian people and Ion Antonescu became the leader of the state and the chief of the new regime<sup>24</sup>.

Understanding the impact produced on the public life in Romania by the monarchy, and the potential opposition that would appear in the case of abolishment, general Antonescu decided that it would be in his interest to use it. In this context, King Mihai I was advanced to general of Division at 14 September 1940<sup>25</sup>, and in `Call to the nation`, from 15 September, the general showed that: `The Royal Family from here on, will be an example

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<sup>21</sup> \*\*\*, *On the brink of disaster. 21 – 23 January 1941*, vol. I, București, Scripta, 1992, p. 80.

<sup>22</sup> Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitler, King Carol and Marshal Antonescu: the German – Romanian relationships (1938 – 1944)*, București, Humanitas, 2007, p. 98.

<sup>23</sup> Ion Gheorghe, *op. cit.*, p. 144, also see \*\*\*, *On the brink of disaster. 21 – 23 January 1941*, Vol. I, București, Scripta, 1992.

<sup>24</sup> *Universul*, No. 255, 16 September 1940, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> \*\*\*, *On the brink of disaster. 21 – 23 January 1941*, vol. I, București, Scripta, 1992, pp. 83 – 86.

of morality, sobriety, righteousness, modesty, civic conscience and patriotic behaviour<sup>26</sup>, thus becoming a symbol for the Romanian family<sup>27</sup>.

Like any other new regime that acceded to power, Antonescu tried during the first days not only to consolidate his position, but also to gain popularity among the Romanians. Measures like: controlling the fortunes of former officials<sup>28</sup>; monitoring funds used for equipping the army; decreasing the number of ministers<sup>29</sup>; abolishing the function of Regal advisor<sup>30</sup> made possible promoting the image that Ion Antonescu was an incorruptible person and the defender of law.

### **Ion Antonescu's regime during September 1940 – June 1941 and the national legionnaire state (September – December 1940)**

The instalment of the new regime at Bucharest produced changes not only in the domestic politics, but also in the foreign one. Such was the case of Romanian's decision in getting closer to Germany, initially adopted by Carol II regime, continued by Antonescu<sup>31</sup> with the exception that none of the treaties and agreements signed before his appointment were not

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<sup>26</sup> Ion Antonescu, *To the Romanians... Calls-speeches-documents. At the crossroad of history*, București, SOCEC & Co, S.A.R., 1941, p. 37.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> *Universul*, year 57, No. 251, 11 September 1940, p. 1, also see: Ion Antonescu, *The foundation of the national – legionnaire state. 6 September 1940 – 6 October 1940*, București, Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului Imprimeria Centrală, 1940.

<sup>29</sup> *Universul*, year 57, No. 246, 9 September 1940, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Universul*, year 57, No. 247, 8 September 1940, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Ioan Scurtu, Constantin Hlihor, *Plot against Romania. 1939 – 1947. Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina and Hertza in the whirlpool of the Second World*, București, Academiei de Înalte Studii Militare, 1994, pp. 36 – 38.

considered available<sup>32</sup>. Therefore, putting an end to the lack of sincerity in foreign politics<sup>33</sup>, according to Alexandru Constant<sup>34</sup>. Considered a free country that had its external politics founded on consolidating and developing its connections with the Axis Powers, fact suggested by Antonescu's statement during the Council of Ministers on 21 September 1940, 'Facing the Axis, I told you: we are going 100% together, till death, with the Axis. Either we triumph with the Axis; either we fall with the Axis'<sup>35</sup>.

Taking into consideration this decision together with guaranties offered by Hitler and Mussolini after signing the Vienna Award, we can affirm that this was the first measure taken by the new government from Bucharest to recover its lost provinces from the summer of 1940. This together with the impact produced by the rapture of the Romanian territories on the national military system, more precisely on its capacity to defend its self in case of an attack<sup>36</sup>, determined Antonescu to transmit on 17 September, after a brief consultation with general Kurt von Tippelskirch<sup>37</sup>, to the German authorities from Berlin a request regarding the possibility of sending a German military mission in Romania<sup>38</sup>. This

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<sup>32</sup> *Curentul*, year XIII, No. 4542, 3 October 1940, p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> *Curentul*, year XIII, No. 4538, 29 September 1940, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Alexandru Constant – sub secretary of state at The National Ministry of Propaganda (*Curentul*, year XIII, no. 4538, 29 September 1940, p. 8).

<sup>35</sup> Gh. Buzatu, *Marshal Antonescu facing history*, vol. I, Iasi, 1990, p. 121.

<sup>36</sup> Al. Duțu, M. Retegan (ed.), *The liberation of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina (22 June – 26 July 1941)*, București, Fundației Culturale Române, 1999, p. 52.

<sup>37</sup> Gen. Kurt von Tippelskirch –the 4<sup>th</sup> Headquarters chef of the General State of the German dry Army arrived on 15 September 1940 in București (Aurică Simion, *The political regime in Romania during September 1940 – January 1941*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1976, p. 122).

<sup>38</sup> Dan Vătăman, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

appeal also contained an extensive project regarding reorganising the national army and getting funds to equip its soldieries, materialised after extensive discussions carried out with the German officials from Bucharest which pointed out that raising the level of instruction of the Romanian soldiers and a general reform weren't enough<sup>39</sup>.

A positive response concerning the Romanian request came on 20 September 1940<sup>40</sup>. The order stated that the real mission of these troops, which didn't have to be obvious neither for the Romanian troops, neither for the German ones, was: defending oil fields in case of an attack or its destruction; making the necessary plans, according to Germany's interests, for the Romanian army and, not the less, preparing German and Romanian troops in case of a war with Soviet Russia<sup>41</sup>. Realising the diplomatic implications of sending a military mission in Romania on German's foreign policy, especially with the Balkan countries, on 10 October 1940, the German commanders were informed that they should avoid giving the appearance of military occupation of Romania, and give more the impression that it was 'a transfer of German units in the country'<sup>42</sup>. After this moment, the first German military units occupied their posts on Romanian soil on 10 October 1940<sup>43</sup>. A protocol was signed on 22 October

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<sup>39</sup> Ion Antonescu, *The foundation of the national – legionnaire state. 6 September 1940 – 6 October 1940*, București, Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, Imprimeria Centrală, 1940, pp. 35 – 83.

<sup>40</sup> Gh. Bădescu, Al. Vianu, Zorin Zamfir, Constantin Bușe (ed.), *International relationships in acts and documents (1939 – 1945)*, Vol. II, București, Didactică și Pedagogică, 1976, pp. 65 – 66.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 66.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>43</sup> Aurică Simion, *The political regime in Romania during September 1940 – January 1941*, Cluj–Napoca, Dacia, 1976, p. 127.

regarding the rules for the German troops that were supposed to station and function on the Romanian territory, originally not foreseen in the first orders given by Hitler<sup>44</sup>.

Aligning Romania's policy towards the Axis Powers, the entry of German troops on Romanian ground, together with the signed protocol between the two countries was confirmed officially by the signing, on 23 November 1940, of the protocol of admitting Romania in the Tripartite Pact, also known as the Berlin Pact<sup>45</sup>. On 4 December, a Romanian – German collaboration for reconstructing the Romanian economy was signed<sup>46</sup>. Considering these actions taken by Antonescu immediately after being appointed, we can affirm that entering the Tripartite Pact represented a prime effort in getting back the lost provinces. Fact sustained by Antonescu himself in a letter addressed to Iuliu Maniu on 22 June 1941 in which he showed: 'Our accession to the Tripartite Pact wasn't made for warranting our actual borders, because these were truly guaranteed through the note exchange intervened with the Vienna arbitration. It was made [...] precisely to offer us the possibility of putting in discussion in due time our rightful claims; the present regime doesn't recognise the current crippled borders and understands to present, as it did until now, the legitimacy of the Romanian claims, which contain reuniting its torn borders'<sup>47</sup>. This action marks the debut of military, political and diplomatic arrangements made for

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<sup>44</sup> Dan Vătăman, *op.cit.*, pp. 147 -154.

<sup>45</sup> Gheorghe Tătărăscu, *Confessions for history*, București, Enciclopedică, 1996, p. 418.

<sup>46</sup> Ion Antonescu, *The infernos epistolary*, notes by Mihai Pelin, București, Viitorul Românesc, 1993, pp. 63 – 64.

<sup>47</sup> Ion Calafeteanu (ed.), *Iuliu Maniu, Ion Antonescu. Opinions and political confrontations.1940 – 1941*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1994, pp. 66 – 67.

recovering through war, the only plausible way against the Soviets, the lost territories.

Simultaneously with these events, general Antonescu tried to obtain from the new border lines and the lost territories information necessary in evaluating correctly the consequences made by the evacuation in 1940. Standing as evidence in this case are numerous memoires forwarded to the Prime Minister's Office by different persons regarding the refugee's situation<sup>48</sup> together with various acts and statistics send by institutions, containing information's regarding employees engaged in evacuating these territories<sup>49</sup>.

After analysing petitions sent to the Prime Minister's Office, we can affirm that the first months of Ion Antonescu's governing lacked of real measure for improving the living conditions of refugees from Bessarabia and northern Bucovina fact sustained by `Memoire about the agricultural owner's refugees from Bessarabia, northern Bucovina and Dorohoi`<sup>50</sup>. This document is opened by criticisms made by agricultural owners to the government which in the sixth months after losing the north-eastern provinces suffered `all the shortcomings and all the sufferance`, without seeing any measures taken by the authorities to integrate economically, politically and socially the evacuated persons<sup>51</sup>. The list of compuncions reveals that discrimination was made by the regime concerning the way the evacuation and relocation of people from the ceded territories in June –

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<sup>48</sup> A.N.I.C., fund Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri, file 138 / 1941, ff. 166 -175.

<sup>49</sup> Idem, fund Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, file 10/1940, ff. 30 – 40.

<sup>50</sup> Idem, fund Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri, file 138 / 1941, ff. 166 -175.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 166.

September 1940. Despite the people's disappointment towards the attitude showed the administration, the memoir presents some suggestions and recommendations relevant in helping individuals to integrate in the society becoming a productive element<sup>52</sup>. A rather interesting aspect found in this document is the awareness of these simple people, marched at their turn by a terrible drama, of the impact products by these territorial losses on the internal life of Romania<sup>53</sup>.

Nevertheless, why didn't Antonescu's regime managed to take actions in helping the refugees from the Bessarabia and Bucovina territories? The answer can be found in the relationship between the general and the Iron Guard which from the first days in office started not only a collaboration, but also a fight in seizing the power. Thus, the instalment of the new regime meant on the one hand the care of Antonescu to re-establish order and discipline in the country and on the other hand how the Legionnaires considered their position as a way of getting revenge for all the sufferings caused by different political personalities against them<sup>54</sup>. This `competition` became evident to the public eye starting with 11 September when during a `Call for order` the general mentions the commotion produced by some anarchic movements, as well as the warning that `General Antonescu does not threaten anyone, and does not hesitate`<sup>55</sup>.

Despite Antonescu's requests, the Legionnaires misconduct continued, culminating in the night of 26 to 27 November 1940 with the

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, ff. 170 – 173.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 174.

<sup>54</sup> Dan Vătăman, *op.cit.*, pp. 158 – 159.

<sup>55</sup> Ion Antonescu, *To the Romanians... Calls-speeches-documents. At the crossroad of history*, București, SOCEC & Co, S.A.R., 1941, p. 33.

shooting, in Jilava Penitentiary and in the police post from the capital, of over 70 former officials and functionaries<sup>56</sup>. The series of political assassinations continued with that of Nicolae Iorga and Virgil Madgearu<sup>57</sup>. In spite of Antonescu's declarations during the meetings of the Prime Minister's Office on 27<sup>58</sup> and 28 November<sup>59</sup>, his threats remained only at a theoretical state, the fight between the two being postponed until the perfect moment both internally and externally<sup>60</sup>. Because of this decision, the general tried to obtain during the next month support from Hitler – externally, and from people – internally to impose a new order and discipline in the nation<sup>61</sup>.

### **The beginning of the military dictatorship (January – June 1941)**

The conflict between the general and Legionnaires reached new heights starting with January 1941 when the main goal of everyone was obtaining Hitler's support and eliminating their competition. In this context, the efforts made by Horia Sima and Ion Antonescu concluded with an opened invitation from the German Fuhrer on 12 January, but only one – the general decided to accept it<sup>62</sup>. The effect of this meeting, on 14

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<sup>56</sup> Dan Vătăman, *op.cit.*, p. 162.

<sup>57</sup> \*\*\*, *On the brink of disaster. 21 – 23 January 1941*, Vol. I, București, Scripta, 1992, pp. 186 -188.

<sup>58</sup> Gh. Buzatu, *Marshal Antonescu facing history*, Vol. I, Iași, 1990, pp. 163 -165.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 166 -168.

<sup>60</sup> Dan Vătăman, *op.cit.*, p. 163.

<sup>61</sup> A. Simion, *The political regime in Romania during September 1940 – January 1941*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1976, p. 236.

<sup>62</sup> Dan Vătăman, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

January<sup>63</sup>, was felt upon the internal situation right after his return, on 15 January<sup>64</sup>, when in an open letter to Sima, Antonescu denounces and criticises the abuses, robberies and crimes committed by the Iron Guard<sup>65</sup>. The way he decides to conclude the letter, `Do you want to go ahead, go alone, but not with general Antonescu [...] He entered the political arena to save the nation, not to lead it to an even greater disaster`<sup>66</sup> shows us the final decision made by Antonescu after obtaining Hitler's permission.

Without reactions from the Iron Guard and its leader, Horia Sima, towards Antonescu's letters and declarations, in conjunction with actions taken against them culminated on 21 January with a legionnaire rebellion in the entire state<sup>67</sup>. Antonescu decided to offer 24 hours as a term for re-establishing the order in the nation, affirming that `I was not yesterday and do not want to be until tomorrow an instrument of tyranny, nor a bridge for anarchy`<sup>68</sup>. The acts of violence committed during these days made victims even among the civil population, according to figures published in the newspapers more than 236 citizens from the capital lost their life's, and another 254 were injured<sup>69</sup>. As a result, after gaining military support, on 22

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<sup>63</sup> Gh. Buzatu, *Marshal Antonescu facing history*, Vol. I, Iași, 1990, pp. 174 – 176.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 177 – 180.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 181 – 184.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 184.

<sup>67</sup> Mihai Fătu, Ion Spălățelu, *The Iron Guard – a fascist terrorist organisation*, București, Politică, 1971, p. 349.

<sup>68</sup> Ion Antonescu, *To the Romanians... Calls-speeches-documents. At the crossroad of history*, București, SOCEC & Co, S.A.R., 1941, p. 125.

<sup>69</sup> *Universul*, year 58, no. 43, 12 February 1941, p. 1.

January, from the German troops dislocated in the capital<sup>70</sup> on the night of 22 to 23 January began the military intervention against the legionnaires<sup>71</sup>.

In front of these new circumstances, Horia Sima was constrained to order, in the morning of 23 January 1941, the members of his organisation to cease fire and evacuate the public institutions taken under siege. Published in the pages of the newspaper `Curentul`, the order presents the verdict to stop fights as a consequence of treaty talks started among the state and the Iron Guard<sup>72</sup>. 813 dead and wounded among the army, rebels and civilians was the total of victims fallen in the country during the legionnaire rebellion that took place on 21 – 23 January<sup>73</sup>. The organised rebellion of the legionnaire concluded with their removal from governance and the banning of their organisation. A vast majority of persons that held, during their administration, key functions choose to get shelter at different German functionaries which permitted them later to `pass` in Germany where they could ask for political asylum<sup>74</sup>.

As a consequence of this rebellion, on 27 January 1941 a new military govern was formed by general Antonescu. His decision to co-opt military individuals was argued by the lack of civic courage among men that preferred to limit themselves at protests and critics towards the

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<sup>70</sup> Gh. Buzatu, *Marshal Antonescu facing history*, vol. I, Iași, 1990, pp. 191 -192.

<sup>71</sup> A. Simion, *The political regime in Romania during September 1940 – January 1941*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1976, p. 267.

<sup>72</sup> *Curentul*, year XIV, no. 99, 23 January 1941, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> Ion Calafeteanu, “The Legionnaire rebellion seen by Antonescu’s cabinet”, *Historia*, [http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv\\_web/actualitate/articol/rebeliunea-legionar-v-zut-cabinetul-lui-antonescu](http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/actualitate/articol/rebeliunea-legionar-v-zut-cabinetul-lui-antonescu), (accessed on 13 July 2016).

<sup>74</sup> A. Simion, *The political regime in Romania during September 1940 – January 1941*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1976, pp. 271 – 272.

authorities than taking part in the decisive institutions of the nation<sup>75</sup>. The series of measures taken during this period by Antonescu to re-establish the law and order in the state conclude, on 14 February, with the promulgation of decree no. 314 through which `the national – legionnaire state` was abolished, withal any political actions, indifferent of its nature, until new regulations appeared were forbidden<sup>76</sup>.

Despite the modifications made immediately after the rebellion, Ion Antonescu decided to hold, in March, a plebiscite to get the opinion of the nation regarding the way in which his regime managed the state affairs after 6 September 1940. This referendum was not only an enquiry, but it also tried to see if the promoted policy and the general's action were confused by the Romanian people with the legionary movement<sup>77</sup>. Therefore, when the question `Do you give General Antonescu your complete confidence to rule the State further to lift the Nation and defend your rights?`, addressed on 2 March<sup>78</sup>, 2.960.298 people gave their vote to the general's regime out of 2.963.294 voters<sup>79</sup>. We can affirm that the vote casted by the Romanian people came both as a public confirmation of Antonescu's policy and a debut of a new regime, this time only a personal dictatorship.

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<sup>75</sup> Nicolae Ciachir, *The Great Powers and Romania (1856 – 1947)*, București, Albatros, 1996, p. 168.

<sup>76</sup> *Monitorul Oficial*, No. 39, 15 February 1941, p. 758.

<sup>77</sup> M. Ciucă, A. Teodorescu, B. Popovici (ed.), *Transcripts of the Council of Ministries' meetings. Ion Antonescu's governing*, vol. I (September– December 1940), București, 1997 – 1998, p. 438.

<sup>78</sup> *Curentul*, year XIV, No. 4689, 5 March 1941, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> *Monitorul Oficial*, No. 60, 12 March 1941, p. 1238.

The return of law and order in the country after the legionary rebellion permitted the new government to focus its attention in taking the measurements necessary to regain the lost provinces during the summer rapt in 1940. An important aspect to mention is that regardless of the evolution of events on the internal political arena, the authorities were constantly in the loop with the situation from Bessarabia and northern Bucovina, fact confirmed by the notes and informative bulletins forwarded by different institutions (Direcția Generală de Politie, Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei)<sup>80</sup> to the Prime Minister's Office.

If internally, the months that passed after obtaining the vote of confidence from the Romanians can be characterised by order and peace, according to the countless appeals launched by Antonescu, on the international arena, especially the Balkan peninsula, things weren't as good. We remind Bulgaria's adherence on 1 March 1941 to the Berlin Pact which led to the German troops passing through the Bulgarian territories to reach the Greek frontiers<sup>81</sup>. Germany's plans concerning the campaign from south – eastern Europe suffered modifications on 27 March when the Yugoslavian government was overturned as a consequence of deciding to sign the Accession for the Tripartite Pact (25 March 1941)<sup>82</sup>. The naming of a new regime meant not only a new leader, but also changes in the foreign politics lend until now, in this case the sympathies general Simovici had for the Soviets triumphed on 5 April 1941 with the signing of a nonaggression

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<sup>80</sup> For more information's we recommend seen A.N.I.C., funds: Direcției Generale a Poliției, Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, Inspectoratul Regional al Jandarmeriei.

<sup>81</sup> Platon Chirnoagă, *Political and military history of Romania's war against Soviet Russia. 22 June 1941 – 23 August 1944*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Iași, FIDES, 1997, p. 77.

<sup>82</sup> Platon Chirnoagă, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

and friendship pact with the U.S.S.R.<sup>83</sup>, culminating the following day, 6 April, with a launched attack from Germany, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria against Yugoslavia. This offence concludes on 17 April with the defeat of the Yugoslavian army and the division of its lands between the winners<sup>84</sup>. Ten days later, the same soldiers manage to occupy Athena (27 April), and on 29 Peloponnese<sup>85</sup>.

Although Germany decided to intervene in the Balkan peninsula, Romania did not participate in these military operations against Greece and Yugoslavia, even in this context the simple fact of permitting the passing of German troops on its soil was seen by the western countries as a proof of joining the German politics<sup>86</sup>, confirmed by the English government on 15 February 1941 when diplomatic relationships between the two countries are broken, and the United States Legation become an intermediary state in representing the English interests in our country<sup>87</sup>. A few months later, on 6 May 1941 the American Legation from Bucharest become intermediary, this time, between Romania and Yugoslavia, because of Antonescu's decision to recognise the independence of Croatia<sup>88</sup>.

The striking rapid victories obtained by Hitler in Europe, except England, represented the foundation of his decision to apply the plan regarding a possible invasion of Russia. The hypothesis of a war between

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>84</sup> Dan Vătăman, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>85</sup> Platon Chirnoagă, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>86</sup> Dan Vătăman, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>88</sup> For details regarding the relationship between Romania and Yugoslavia see Sorin Oane, "How the friendship between Romania and Yugoslavia broke", *Historia*, [http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv\\_web/general/articol/cum-s-strictat-prietenia-rom-nia-iugoslavia](http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/general/articol/cum-s-strictat-prietenia-rom-nia-iugoslavia), (accessed on 19 July 2016).

the two countries took shape starting with July 1940 when the articles stipulated in the Ribbentrop – Molotov Pact were exhausted, grounds on which Hitler order the elaboration of a war plan against the soviets<sup>89</sup>. The failure of the German – Russian negotiations in November concerning a possible adherence to the Berlin Pact determined the Fuhrer to sign on 18 December 1940, Direction No. 21, mainly know today as the Barbarossa Plan<sup>90</sup>. This direction became permanent on 31 January 1941 when the day for beginning the operation (Z day) was established on 27 March 1941, however the events from south – eastern Europe led to postponing it to 22 June 1941<sup>91</sup>.

The increased attention given by Hitler to the Barbarossa Plan after the Balkan campaign was felt by Romania in the month of May when the 11<sup>th</sup> German Army headquarters were transferred on Romanian soil<sup>92</sup>. Aware of the significates brought by such a move, Antonescu, through his German contacts, asked that the official date (Z day) for beginning operations to be communicated with at least 2 weeks in advance to correctly mobilise his army<sup>93</sup>. As a result, to his request official details regarding the Barbarossa Plan were brought to the general's attention on 12 June 1941 during his official visit in München<sup>94</sup>. Taking advantage of this meeting, Antonescu transmitted, after long debates and negotiations, the decision to

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<sup>89</sup> Adrian Pandea, "Loyalty towards Hitler or anti-Communist crusade? The Reich's allies on the Eastern", *Dosarele Istoriei*, year IV, No. 7/1999, p. 6.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

<sup>91</sup> Jaques de Launay, *The great decisions of the Second World War*, Vol. I, București, Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1988, pp. 270 – 271.

<sup>92</sup> Adrian Pandea, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>94</sup> *Timpul*, year V, No. 1471, 14 June 1941, p. 1.

fight alongside Germany and start a war against the Soviet Union<sup>95</sup>, therefore representing the most important action taken by Antonescu's regime to regain the lost territories from the summer of 1940.

## Conclusions

King Carol II's abdication in favour of his son, Mihai and the appointment of general Ion Antonescu as president of the Council of Ministers with full power on 6 September had as main consequence the fact that the legionnaires come to power. Understanding the impact produced by the territorial raptures from the summer of 1940 on the Romanian people, Antonescu establishes as main objective both the internal and foreign policy recovering the Romanian provinces. In this regard, the accession of Romania to the Berlin Pact, the administrative reform, the extensive program for reorganising and the modernization of the Romanian army, the decision to fight alongside Germany against the Russians represented only a few measures taken by Antonescu's regime during September 1940 – June 1941 for returning Romania's borders known after World War I. Taking these aspects into consideration, together with the evolution of events in the international arena, we can affirm that the Antonescu's regime during the first months was centred on regaining the lost Romanian territories for which entire generations of Romanians fought.

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<sup>95</sup> Ioan Scurtu, Gh. Buzatu, *Romanian history in the XX Century (1918 – 1945)*, București, Paidea, 1999, p. 402.

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