

## SOE IN ROMANIA. PLANS FOR A COUP D'ÉTAT (1943-1944)

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**Abstract:** The British documents reveal the hesitations, the hopes, and especially the tedious negotiations initiated not only by the Romanian opposition, but also by Antonescu's government with the Western Allies in order to sign an armistice and avoid the catastrophe of a German or Soviet occupation. The more than optimistic projections of SOE met with the realities of the Soviet-British negotiations. The Soviets' desire that their territorial acquisitions be recognized was a first point of contention and was the first of the concessions that the Anglo-Americans had to make to them throughout the war. Gradually, the Romanian issue became subordinated to the wider interests that the British held in their relationship with the Soviets. Sending a new mission to Romania in December 1943 was a final attempt by the British to determine the opposition to make a decisive decision. The implications of an „unconditional surrender” were not fully understood by those who wanted Romania to leave the war, and especially by Iuliu Maniu, who demanded firm guarantees to avoid a Soviet occupation until the last moment. But this complicated equation was not only caused by the mistake of the Peasants' Party leader, who had put all his hopes in the armistice negotiations with the Anglo-Americans, but also by the wartime agreements with the Soviets, whose political and territorial agenda regarded the entire Central and Eastern Europe. From December 1943, Britain began to lose ground in its race for Eastern Europe with the Soviet Union. Operation “Autonomous” had strained the relations with Moscow, and London had been accused of double crossing its Soviet ally. Meanwhile, on 5 May, in London, behind closed doors, the British Foreign Minister A. Eden and the Soviet Ambassador F. Gusev signed a first agreement that defined their „spheres of influence” in South-Eastern Europe, whereby the Soviet Union was granted the right to decide in Romania. This agreement was meant to diminish Soviet suspicions, but it also opened the way for Anglo-American concessions on the issues of South-Eastern Europe. The Percentages Agreement signed in October 1944 highlighted the major interests of the Soviet Union and Great Britain in the Balkans.

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