

The Marshals as Key Symbols of the Romanian – Finnish Cooperation during World War II

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Abstract: Kenneth Waltz's levels of analysis are approached here from the perspective of wartime relationship between Romania and Finland. A special attention is paid to the level of individuals, particularly in respect to Marshal Gustav Mannerheim and Marshal Ion Antonescu's role in enhancing the relation between the two states from 1941 to 1944. The result of this analysis is "sampled" to the systemic level of analysis.

Auszug: Die Untersuchungsniveaus in diesem Artikel betreffen die Beziehungen zwischen Rumänien und Finnland während des zweiten Weltkrieges. Eine besondere Aufmerksamkeit wurde den Niveaus von verschiedenen Individuen geschenkt, vor allem den Rollen von Marschall Mannerheim und Marschall Antonescu zur Förderung der Beziehungen zwischen beiden Staaten zwischen 1941 und 1944. Die Untersuchungsergebnisse wurden mit dem systematischen Niveau der internationalen Beziehungen verglichen.

Abstrakti: Kenneth Waltzin analyysin tasoja lähestytään täällä Romanian ja Suomen välisen sota-ajan suhteen perspektiivistä. Erikoishuomiota kiinnitetään yksilöjen tasolle, erityisesti kunnioituksessa, marsalkka Gustav Mannerheimille ja marsalkka Ion Antonescun roolille kahden osavaltion välisen suhteen parantamisessa vuodesta 1941 vuoteen 1944. Tämän analyysin seurausta verrataan analyysin kokonaisuutta koskevaan tasoon.

The levels of analysis in the international relations have constituted ever since Kenneth Waltz's pioneering book of 1959 'The man, the state and the war' matters of controversy among the specialists in international relations. Whereas Waltz believed that the levels of analysis provide explanations to international events such as the war, David Singer and his followers considered that the term should serve the role of identifying, distinguishing and analysing an entity in order to understand events, processes and phenomena. The distinction between various levels of analysis is a controversial topic but the separation between *the level of individuals* (focusing especially on the policy-makers), *the level of states* (focusing on states) and *the systemic level* (international, global) has been accepted by the majority of the scholars. It has been argued in truth that at least two levels or sublevels can be further distinguished: the *bureaucratic level* playing in-between the decision-maker and the state and the *process level* situated in-between the state and the system (Apahideanu, 2006, p. 61-62) The five of levels of analysis represent a good framework for investigating the Romanian-Finnish wartime relations.

In spite of all criticism of the theories emphasising the role of individuals in shaping the international relations, it cannot be denied that during the World War II it was only a few human beings playing a very important role in major decision-making. A component of the analysis on the role of individuals in the international relations is the identification of those leaders whose role was instrumental in the decision-making process. The understanding of the role of these

individuals in shaping the international relations cannot be dissociated from their personality traits, biography, the domestic and international circumstances in which they acted and the type of leadership they stood for or it was supposed to symbolise (Apahideanu, 2006: 63).

The identification of the key actors in the Finnish-Romanian relation-building is therefore one of the aims of this article. The study of documents show that the most important Romanian actors behind the construction of the wartime relation between the two states were Romania's dictator, Ion Antonescu, and his namesake Mihai Antonescu, vice-Prime Minister and foreign minister between 1941 and 1944. Although M. Antonescu distinguished himself as the initiator and the main promoter of the cooperation between the two states, it is difficult to believe that he could have gone so far as he went in this direction without having I. Antonescu's agreement. Indeed, the documents tell the story of an increased interest on the part of I. Antonescu for furthering the relations with the small Nordic brother-in-arms that went hand in hand with the propaganda about the similarities between the countries of the two marshals and with the increased prestige and influence Finland played in the *Festung Europa* in the first years of war. The two Antonescus understood that developing good relations with Finland, a country which started to be generally regarded as a part of the same subsystem of the international relations, served the interests of Romania insofar as it increased Bucharest's external prestige and credibility by the association with a democratic state widely regarded as a victim of Soviet Union. The relation with Finland also increased its capacity, in case of a Wehrmacht victory over Soviet Union, to promote a foreign policy agenda and resist German pressures. Additionally, the Romanian leadership wanted to challenge in Finland the substantial Hungarian propaganda favoured by the kinship of the Finns and the Magyars.

On the Finnish part, the first level of decision-making, even in regard to the development of the relations with Romania, was occupied by several political and military figures, a consequence of the substantially more democratic political establishment. This holds true even in wartime when the decisions tend to be concentrated in a few hands and the democracy temporarily limited. The main artisans of this relationship were President Ryti, Commander-in-Chief and then President Marshal Mannerheim and the foreign ministers Rolf Witting and Henrik Ramsay. Prime ministers Johan Wilhelm Rangell, Edwin Linkomies or Antti Verner Hackzell played a less important role in this respect, the second being even considered a man sharing the Hungarian point of view in the Transylvanian dispute with Romania.

The Finnish leadership was split over the significance of Romania in the European system of international relations. Consequently, the Finnish foreign policy tended to be less enthusiastic than Romania's in working towards the improvement to a level of confidentiality of the relations between the two states. The association with Romania was naturally not equally profitable for a country still maintaining a democratic system of governance and diplomatic ties with the United States, still regarded even after its engagement in the Operation Barbarossa maybe as a peripheral, but however a part of Western Europe. Nonetheless, realists such as Ryti and Mannerheim held the relation with Romania important. They seem to have believed that as members of the same subsystem of international relations, the two states did best if they developed a mutually profitable relation. Pro-Germans and anti-Communists such as Witting even considered that the two countries could play an important role in disintegrating Soviet Union and eliminating the Russian threat for the future, an aim achievable in concord or even concert. Finally, politicians with pro-Western moderate leanings remembered well Romania's pro-Western stance during the interwar period and considered that by emphasising the defensive character of their war and the circumstances which led them into the conflagration will find a more sensible audience in Western Europe. Some of the Finnish decision-makers, first and foremost Marshal Mannerheim, still had memories from the First World War Romania and maintained a feeling of nostalgia towards

this country. In developing the relations with Romania they maintained certain limits imposed by the resistances they met from, for instance, the pro-Hungarian politicians such as Linkomies and from the Hungarian Legation or were hindered by their insufficient knowledge of the Romanian culture and politics.

Although part of a diplomatic mechanism, the envoys of Romania to Helsinki Noti Constantinide, George Duca and George Caranfil and especially the Finnish envoy to Bucharest Hjalmar Palin were key figures in advancing the Romanian-Finnish relations. It is only because they had a subordinate role and were part of the diplomatic mechanism which induces us to consider their role in this relation-building in the bureaucratic level.

The value of a symbol in the Romanian-Finnish relation-building during the wartime was the parallel between the two marshals situated at the helm of the Romanian state and army, Antonescu, and in the leadership of the Finnish Army, Mannerheim. It would not be perhaps misplaced to reveal the main personality traits of the two military and political figures and to approach their merits in bringing about a substantial positive change in the Romanian-Finnish relation.

At the beginning of March 1946, already a legendary figure, Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim, marshal of Finland, resigned his position of President of Finland, after two years of intense efforts to extricate his country from the danger of communisation. An old man in poor health, the marshal of Finland had accepted to highest state position on August 4, 1944 without the satisfaction generally felt by a man who reaches such an important status, rather with a sigh of resignation. Twenty-five year before Mannerheim strove for this position being defeated in the presidential elections held in July 1919 by K.J. Ståhlberg, nicknamed Finland's Wilson. At the time the name Mannerheim was anathema to the left who called him "the butcher of the workers" for his role in the Finnish Civil War (1918) (Paasivirta, 1988: 184).

Mannerheim's merit during his one and a half years of presidency until he handed the State Council his resignation on March 4, 1946 was to extricate his country from the war against Soviet Union, manage the war against Germany, organise free elections and create the new domestic political cadre for Finland's democratic development in the post-war period, avoiding the communisation of the country and its enslavement to Soviet Union. Worried about the effects of the Soviet pretension of leasing the base of Porkkala, close to Helsinki, Mannerheim was not, however, very optimistic that his political program would ever be achieved (Polvinen, 1986: 34-35). Even as he resigned as the chief of state, his doubts, fed by his strategic views, have not vanished (Paasikivi, 1985: 37).

On the other hand, at the end of Mannerheim's mandate at the southern angle of the former Axis front against Soviet Union Romania had gone a long way towards a Communist regime. While the Finnish marshal took possession of his new propriety in Kirkniemi, 60 km. west of Helsinki, the Romanian marshal Ion Antonescu was brought in front of an execution squad who executed him on June 1, 1946. The former white general Mannerheim survived his former comrade on the Romanian front during World War I four years and a half and passed away in a Swiss hospital in Lausanne. Mannerheim died on January 27, 1951, 23.30 according to the Central European time zone, January 28, 0.30 according to Helsinki time. Exactly 33 years had elapsed from the beginning of the Finnish Civil War when the white general made his controversial entrance in the history of his country (Screen, 2000: 253).

Nothing looks less congruent than the destiny of the two countries, Romania and Finland, after 1945. Nothing looks less different than the course of life of the two marshals, Antonescu and Mannerheim. At first sight, nothing links one's destiny with another less than that of the two personages, one of them ended up by being executed as a war criminal and the other one venerated as a hero. The two marshals have not been even members of the same generation, Mannerheim being 15 years older than Antonescu. The former is born on June 4,

1867 in his family domain in Louhisaari, south-western Finland, close to the town of Turku. His family, of Dutch origin, with family links in the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland was considered already at the beginning of the 19th century a part of the Finnish aristocracy distinguishing themselves by brilliant careers in administration and military. His father was a Liberal-minded writer and translator convinced that Finland belonged to the Western civilisation.

The future marshal grew up the future marshal in a lofty familiar environment (Screen, 1970, p. 18-19). Young Mannerheim was requested to converse each weekday in a different foreign language. Not an oddity among the Grand Duchy's elite, the language his parents took care the least that their son learned was Finnish. Eventually, Gustav Mannerheim transformed himself from the rebel expelled from the Hamina cadet school to the serious, resistant and brave officer of the Russian Army. His heroism and capacity proven during the Russian-Japanese 1904-1905 war, while fulfilling the task assigned on him of gathering intelligence from Asia during 1906-1908 and during the World War I gained him a good name.

Ion Antonescu was born on June 2, 1882 in Pitești in a family from where he inherited his passion for the military career. His father was an office captain in the army and his mother was born into a boyar family (Rotaru, 2002: 34-35). Antonescu's family belonged to the petit bourgeoisie which was lower than Mannerheim's more patrician social class. His education was nonetheless a distinguished one, the young Antonescu proving himself capable of joining if not the aristocracy at least the meritocracy. As opposed to Mannerheim, Antonescu has never crossed a rebel phase of his life. He was almost always ahead of his colleagues in learning caring for his education with an atypical gravity for his age. Mannerheim was born and raised up in a cosmopolitan environment, his education and career in the Russian Army further contributing to shape and emphasise his spirit of openness to other cultures' values. Conversely, Antonescu was educated in the Romanian patriotism traditions and values. However, he too was sensible to the values of other cultures, especially of the French culture, and spoke fluently the French language.

In their physical appearance and temperament the two marshals did not have many common features. With a severe expression, a bony face, red-haired, rather short, the first feeling that Antonescu arose around him was anxiety, his severity and apparent insensibility making him feared by his subordinates (Barbul, 1992: 2-3). Throughout his life as an officer and politician he rarely found occasions to have fun. Like Antonescu, Mannerheim was a busy and dynamic man. He nevertheless enjoyed any time he could spend his time on horseback, hunting, playing golf, travelling or listening music. He also liked fine food, drink and cigarettes, reading and during his youth and maturity seems to have been quite chivalrous if not downright courteous to women. A tall (187 cm) and attractive man, elegantly dressed, emanating an air of health and power, Mannerheim believed that he ought to use the advantages of his good look in order to impose on his subordinates. The Finnish marshal alternated a cold expression when he was discontent with a reserved one when he was uninterested in the topic. Sometimes he manifested an artificial politeness. Quite frequently however he showed benevolence to his interlocutors, especially when he was in a good mood and interested in the topic of conversation (Screen, 2000: 256-257).

During his 1946 trial Antonescu was condemned, among other invented accusations, for the Holocaust against the Jews. This is perhaps the accusation that even his most arduous supporters would find difficult to disregard. It cannot be denied the more profound roots of the Romanian anti-Semitism, which had an influence also in the army, being shared by many officers. Yet, Antonescu's anti-Semitism, the way it manifested when he governed Romania, seems to have sprung from Antonescu's belief that the Jews from Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina had taken and continued to take a hostile attitude against the Romanian state, authorities and army. Antonescu intended to evacuate the Jews from the two provinces to

Transdnistria, a province situated in east of the river Dniester. His long-term policy perhaps was not to exterminate the Jews but to encourage them leave Romania (Duțu, Dobre, 2002: 27). Regardless his intention, some 200,000 Jews is claimed to have fallen prey to his regime. On the other hand, out of not entirely cleared reasons Antonescu spared the life of a half of Romania's Jews.

If Romania hosted a significant Jewish minority, in Finland lived only 10,000 Jews. Only eight of them, not holding the Finnish citizenship, suffered during wartime persecution in the form of their extradition to the German authorities. Mannerheim numbered among those Finns who opposed the broadening of the German program of anti-Jewish Holocaust over Finland, without however arrogating a special merit in this: 'my contribution to the Jewish cause was insignificant. I didn't do anything more than any person guided by a true spirit of justice' (Rautkallio, 1987: 259-260). Deserved or not, Mannerheim's image is associated to that of the benefactors of the Jewish people whereas Antonescu's to Holocaust and anti-Semitism.

Different by their birth, partially by their education, temper, behaviour, public image and end of career and life one may ask if there was any common feature linking the two destinies. The first answer, the most obvious one, is that both of them managed to fully consecrate themselves in both the military and political careers. Interestingly enough, they shared the passion for the arm of cavalry becoming cavalry officers. Mannerheim was the providential general of the white army who fought and won over the red army in 1918. Favourable to the Entente, Mannerheim distanced himself from the pro-German regime assuming power in the aftermath of the civil war and became in the fall of 1919 for over a half a year Finland's regent. Returning to the public life in 1931 in his new capacity of chairman of the Defence Council, Mannerheim lobbied for Finland prepare for the worst by caring for a serious preparation of the army and by allocating consistent funds for the acquisition of war materials. In his memoirs the Finnish eminent soldier dedicates an ample space to his efforts, often ending in failure, to convince the politicians on the necessity to strengthen the army capacity (Mannerheim, 2003: 153-159). In spring 1939 Mannerheim presented the dramatically bad situation of the Finnish Army while Soviet Union was manifesting hostility towards his country (Trotter, 2002: 13).

An officer showing exceptional military and moral qualities proven during the World War I when he was General (later marshal) Constantin Prezan's right hand, Antonescu was promoted to brigade general on May 10, 1931. Appointed deputy chief of the General Staff on December 1, 1933, General Antonescu made efforts in the direction of drawing the first comprehensive plan for the supply of the army spread out over ten years (Rotaru, 2002: 55). In a similar way with Mannerheim's strivings, Antonescu's efforts were hindered by politicians who understood nothing from the dangers their countries might face in the future.

The full military consecration of the two officers came with their involvement, at the head of their national armies, in the wars against Soviet Union. During the Winter War (Talvisota), Mannerheim's authority reached the climax. The 72 year-old marshal stood at the head of his country's successful resistance against the Red Army's striving to conquer Finland from November 30, 1939 to March 13, 1940 (Warner, 1967: 145). It was a war Mannerheim did not want and against which he energetically advised the Finnish political leadership. The difficulties associated to the active command of the army did not end with the signature of the onerous Moscow Peace Treaty of 1940 but continued during the Continuation War (Jatkosota) from June 25, 1941 to September 19, 1944. Once again, with Mannerheim at their helm the Finnish Army resisted to the Soviet efforts to occupy the Finnish territory and concluded the armistice with the Finnish Army controlling most of its national territory except for Lapland occupied by the German Army.

At his turn, Antonescu won the admiration of his compatriots by setting free

Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina in July 1941 with the support of mixed Romanian-German military units. Another outstanding victory for Antonescu and the Romanian Army was the occupation of Odessa following a bloody battle lasting from August to October 1941. This victory brought Antonescu Hitler's praise but also Romanian opposition's criticism. On the contrary, Mannerheim, aware of the strategic and military importance of Leningrad to Soviet Union, refused to take part in a military operation designed to capture the town. In the summer of 1944 a portion of eastern Romania was under Soviet occupation, Antonescu preparing the defence in Moldova. He was removed from power while the fighting was still going on.

As a consequence of his great merits in the reintegration of Bessarabia and Northern Moldova in the Romanian territory, Antonescu was promoted marshal by King Mihai I on August 22, 1941. For his merits, Mannerheim received once again the baton of marshal after a year.

The two outstanding soldiers also reached at the head of their countries. Both of them identified with the major interests of their communities which they wanted to defend in the most difficult times of their countries' history. Mannerheim extricated his country from the situation of a German satellite in December 1918 and again reassured his nation between 1944 and 1946 that the country will not be communised. Antonescu took upon himself the burden of governing a country with its borders ruined, in a moral breakdown, neighbouring a Soviet Union still manifesting offensive intentions vis-à-vis Romania. His political program ended in failure and he was not entirely innocent of this outcome but his power to fight against Soviet Union remained in the collective memory of his nation. In their capacity of chiefs of states and leaders of the armies, the two allies without alliance, Mannerheim and Antonescu, had to draw a conclusion in the summer of 1944 from Red Army's victories. Both of them were men of word who placed a special importance to avoiding a war with their former brothers-in-arms in case they broke out from the Axis' camp. While Mannerheim found the strength to write a letter to Hitler, at the beginning of September 1944, explaining the reasons for Finland's intention to abandon the war (Mannerheim wrote to the Führer: „...Germany, even if the fate will not grant the success to our armies, will continue to exist. Nobody can give Finland the same guarantee”) (Mannerheim, 2003: 339.), Antonescu, whose country's geopolitical situation was more complicated, had attempted to postpone this moment until finding a more favourable frontline situation. On August 23rd, King Mihai seized the initiative and Antonescu, was he really willing to break with the Germans or not, was put out of action. Mannerheim assured his country's political and military stability while Antonescu spent his time as a war prisoner in Soviet Union.

Both Mannerheim and Antonescu shared the sympathy for the Right without themselves being ideologues or understanding very well the vocation of ideologies. Both of them flirted during their lifetime with authoritarianism. To the luck of his country and his posthumous image Mannerheim hesitated to establish an authoritarian regime in 1919, eventually becoming uninterested in political adventures. On the contrary, the younger Antonescu did not hesitate to continue on King Carol's authoritarian line, trying to surround himself by persons he considered capable of restoring Romania's inter-war borders (Hillgruber, 1994: 133). The two marshals coquetted for a short while with their country's extreme right where they admired its nationalism and especially its desire to strengthen the state against Soviet Union. They turned against the excesses of the Lapua Movement and the Legionnaire Movement (regarding Antonescu, see Beldiman, 2002: 92-98; regarding Mannerheim, see Trotter, 2002: 28) when they understood better the revolutionary character of these political movements. Unlike the right-wingers who aimed at mobilising the masses and pensioning the old elites, conservatives such as the two marshals represented the old elites willing to maintain the traditional social hierarchies and spread paternalistic ideas to the

masses (Vares, 2002: 22). It was not by chance that the two marshals patronized institutions of social assistance.

Finally, one of the most consistent political credos of the two marshals was the anti-communism. It is a paradox that it was exactly the Bolshevik revolution, the historic event that Mannerheim and Antonescu hated the most, which raised the two marshals to prominence. This is more obvious with Mannerheim, attached to the Russian monarchy, who planned his return to Finland in 1918 from the perspective of the continuation of the struggle against the left wing. His anti-Communist struggle did not end in 1918 the following year he nurturing the hope that, supported by British and French troops, he will remove once and for ever the red threat from Russia. From 1939 to 1944 Mannerheim led the struggle against the Red Army. Antonescu numbered among the planners of the disarming of the Bolshevized Russian troops from Socola and from across Moldova that endangered the main Romanian national institutions including the monarchy and the military stability of the country (V.Fl. Dobrinescu, H. Dumitrescu, 2002: 75). From June 1941 Antonescu started an 'anti-communist crusade' in the east, a propaganda concept accompanying the war efforts of the Romanian Army. Unlike Mannerheim who learned from his youth to praise the qualities of the Russian people and knew Russia's strategic priorities, Antonescu, such as many of his Romanian contemporaries, despised the Russian people and failed to comprehend the Russian susceptibilities. Therefore, he went too far in the war against Soviet Union, including in the field of propaganda. It is also true that Antonescu's task during 1941-1944 was more difficult. Antonescu vested in himself both the political and military supreme authority, placed at the top of his priorities the raising of his country's morale and wanted first and foremost Romania's reunification both in the east and in the west.

It must be pointed out that none of the two marshals was pro-German. The two marshals respected and appreciated the Wehrmacht but Antonescu was known as a pro-French and pro-British and Mannerheim as a pro-British. The two marshals accepted the cooperation with the Wehrmacht out of realistic not sentimental considerations.

But did the two political and military figures something more in common than their military excellence, their capacity to sacrifice themselves for their countries and to take responsibility in difficult situations, the conservatism and the anti-Communism? All serious Mannerheim's biographers have mentioned in less or more details Mannerheim's participation in command of the Russian 12th Cavalry Division starting with December 1916 in the battles on the Romanian frontline. Mannerheim's assigned task was initially that of taking a defensive position on a frontline situated about 40 km. north of Focșani reporting to General Alexandru Averescu, the commander of the Romanian 2nd Army, the most outstanding Romanian frontline commander of the World War I (Mannerheim, 2003: 50-51). Mannerheim was eventually promoted to the position of commander of the Vrancea Group constituted of mixed Russian and Romanian troops. The group consisted of four cavalry and two infantry divisions and an infantry brigade. During December 1916 and January 1917 the Finnish general contributed to the stabilization of the mountainous front down rivers Șușița and Putna. Although he remained for a short period of time in Romania, Mannerheim managed to establish close relations with Romanian officers. At the end of January 1917 he left the Romanian front at the head of his division (Screen, 1970: 112). Following his departure from the Romanian front Mannerheim was awarded Mihai Viteazul Order, 3rd Class. It is difficult to prove unless new documents are found if the two future marshals – Mannerheim and Antonescu – have ever met each other. We assume that this is not likely to have happened. General Mannerheim remained on the Romanian frontline for only about a month at a time when Major Antonescu acted as chief of the Operations Section of the General Staff situated behind the frontline. General Prezan had appointed Antonescu to this position on December 5th, 1916 (Rotaru, 2002: 43). We found throughout our researches no mention to such a meeting.

The second time when the two upper officers found themselves engaged in the same struggle, one in the south, the other one in the north, was during the anti-Soviet war of 1941-1944. The reasons for which the two countries engaged in the war were fairly similar: their desire to reintegrate in their national body the provinces Soviet Union had annexed the year before. The two political and military leaderships pursued pretty similar objectives but the means were only partly similar. It must be remembered that already from July 1941 the two states had agreed on a permanent consultation and on a program of strengthening their political, economic, cultural and military bonds (Minutes of the meeting between Mihai Antonescu and Hjalmar Palin, AMAE, Folder 71/1920-1944, Finland, vol. 17, 6-7).

Mannerheim's 75th anniversary was celebrated in Bucharest with the festive presentation of the movie 'Finland in the war' prefaced by a conference titled 'Finland's heroic struggle'. The speaker was the professor of Helsinki University V. J. Mansikka. The event was not attended by I. Antonescu, but King Mihai I and Mihai Antonescu took place in the audience (ANIC, Folder Ministry for National Propaganda. Domestic Press, File 601/1941, 200, 205-206). On the other hand, the Finnish authorities awarded Antonescu in January 1942 the Grand Cross with Swords of the Finnish White Rose (KA, Folder Risto Ryti, Microfilm VAY 4048). The occasion was used in order to strengthen the already amiable relations between the two states (Minutes of the meeting between M. Antonescu and Palin of January 22nd, 1942, AMAE, Folder 71/1920-1944, Finland, vol. 17, 41; see also Constantinide's telegram no. 4/29 of February 2nd, 1942, 42).

Already in the epoch parallels were drawn between the figures of the two marshals. In an article published on order from the Ministry of National Propaganda, the Romanian newspaper 'Curentul' of June 5, 1942 emphasised that the Finnish and Romanian peoples shared a common history and destinies 'being led to triumph by two Marshals who have proven great men both in peace- and wartime, who have never abdicated from their firm beliefs, who have never been mistaken because in them resides lucidly the conscience of the peoples from which they grew up in order to bring them on the avenues of honour and glory' (ANIC, Folder Ministry for National Propaganda. Domestic Press, File 649/1942, 6).

It would be difficult today to claim the absolute parallelism of the destiny of the two nations that left the war in a partly different situation and with different perspectives. The two heroes of 'Curentul' have demonstrated that they too could be wrong and that the glory is not always the only way to promote one's national interests. They were not supermen. Each of them has demonstrated that he can be mistaken in their political and military calculations, in the treatment of ethnic minorities (in Antonescu's case) or political enemies (in Mannerheim's case). Antonescu has made a very grave mistake by deporting and practicing mass killing against the Jewish and Rroma minorities in Transdnistria. During and in the aftermath of the Finnish Civil War Mannerheim failed to take measures capable of preventing the death of thousands of supporters of the reds. The two personages have proven different personality and behavioural features. What made for the aureole of the two national figures was their eagerness to identify with their country's interest and honour, their power and courage to take up arms in order to defend the rights and interests of their countries, even against a great power such as the Soviet Union was, their self-sacrifice of taking responsibility in the most difficult times in their history. One way or another, the two old soldiers represented the last redoubt of their countries at a time when it seemed that all the others have fallen apart. Regardless their different end of life, none of them was a tool in Hitler's hands; both of them attempted to promote their nation's interests within the circumstances, even when they joined the Wehrmacht against the Red Army. It was Soviet Union's aggressive policy of 1939-1940 in Poland, the Baltic States, Finland and Romania which created the circumstances in which the two nations joined the anti-Soviet front. Marshal Antonescu's as well as President Ryti's trials were nothing more than political trials, which could have been

easily avoided if, for instance, Antonescu would have concluded the armistice agreement with the USSR. Antonescu's real guilt might have been easily obscured. By his politics in contrast with the international conventions Soviet Union had signed, Stalin have made it possible the joining of peoples with different cultures and traditions such as the Finnish and the Romanian peoples to Hitler's aggressive war against Soviet Union and drew close once more the figures of the two soldiers Antonescu and Mannerheim.

The figure of the two marshals was used as an "excuse" in order to advance the Romanian – Finnish relations. Although they were not the only supporters of an intimacy between the two countries, other figures such as Witting, Ramsay, M. Antonescu and some others also supporting or even contributing to the initiation of this trend, by their past memories (Mannerheim) and their foreign policy objectives (Antonescu, Mannerheim) the two army and political leaders have greatly contributed to the progress of the Romanian – Finnish relations. This is not to say that the systemic level played no role at all. Mannerheim had positive feelings about Romania even before the World War II and contributed to the enhancement of the Finnish – Romanian relations, but no considerable progress was achieved. Truly, he was not a decision maker at the time. Nevertheless, it can be safely argued that it was the international circumstances which created the favourable frame for developing these bonds. It is in this context that the personality of the two marshals played a positive role in furthering the Romanian – Finnish relationship.

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