

**1919 ROMANIAN OCUPATION OF BUDAPEST  
– CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING GENERAL HARRY HILL  
BANDHOLTZ’ “UNDIPLOMATIC DIARY”**

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**Abstract.** *Romanians and Hungarians have different memories of same historical events and for instance different “truths”. Naturally as in most other conflictual events affecting social constructed collectivities they memorialize certain periods and events in a different manner (Irish and English, French and Germans, Poles and Russians, British and Bure, Koreans and Japanese, Serbs and Croatians, Turks and Greeks etc). General Harry Hill Bandholtz’ Undiplomatic Diary remained in Hungary one of the most quoted source on the Romanian occupation of Hungary. Unlike General Mărdărescu’s Memoires, his Diary was not written to be published, since it is very undiplomatic in its considerations about both allied the Romanians and other members of the Entente (in particular, the French and the Italian Representatives). Although idolized and passionate quoted by the Hungarian historiography, Bandholtz’ Undiplomatic Diary can be considered however an interesting source for an interpretation of the events from a Romanian perspective.*

**Keywords:** *History; Historical Memory; WWI; Romanian-Hungarian War; Romanian-Hungarian History; International Relations.*

On August 4, 2019, there are 100 years since the occupation of Budapest by the Romanian army. It may be a good moment for reconsiderations on both sides. By 2019 the “Romanian-Hungarian War” of 1919 is still not remembered in the alternate school textbooks of Romanian history for the 8<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Before 1989 the episode of crashing the “First Soviet Republic” was however remembered in History school text books in one sentence as a “pity” and a “regrettable act” dictated to the Romanian rulers of the time by the “western Imperialist powers”.

From the very beginning we should acknowledge that Romanians and Hungarians have, naturally, different memories of same events and for instance

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different “truths” because they memorialize specific events in a different manner.<sup>1</sup> What is “legitimate war reparation” for some, is “lute” for others, what is “liberation” for some may be “occupation” for others, although things are not that simple in this particular case because those *Budapestans* contemporary with the events (or at least some of them) have had indeed a sense of “relief” when the “Red terror” was replaced by “Romanian occupation”. Correspondingly Greeks and Turks have a different interpretation and memory of what it was the Ottoman Empire, or the Conquest of Constantinople, Irish and English (Protestant and Catholic communities) would have different memories regarding Ireland’s British past. The term “memorialize” may also be a non-sense. Contemporary living citizens were not contemporary with the events, so, the “memory” of those events is intermediated by politicians, historians, sociologists, school books, published books, commemorations, statues, TV documentaries and, in the last two decades, the internet (blogs, forums, databases).<sup>2</sup>

### *The Romanian historiography of the events*

In 1989, within the context of Romanian “national communism ideology” and the “deviationism to the West” of Hungary under “Glasnost” and “Perestroika” influence, in Romania was published C. Kiritzescu’s book *Istoria războiului pentru întregirea României* (*The History of the War for Greater Romania*, two vols., 1124 pages) a book presenting in detail the Romanian Army’s campaign in Hungary in 1919.<sup>3</sup> While the memory of Budapest occupation plays a minor importance (if any) in the Romanian historical memory and the historiography the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919 was important for the Hungarian political culture, particularly during the communist times, and given the appropriate attention.

<sup>1</sup> “Truth” in history is one of the long-discussed sensitive issues on which the status of history depends; a status which is different from that of “truth” in science or art. Most professional historians consider today’s “historical truth” an ideal impossible to reach due to the complexity of any historical event. The “historical truth” differs also from the historical chronology. Often, it is not a matter of facts as such, but it depends on the interpretation of facts according to different perspectives, interests, cultures, etc. What is “normal” or “just” for contemporaries of events can be “immoral” or “unfair” to today’s society with its different standards, culture and experiences. The more the historian manages to take into account as many points of view as possible (or “truths”), the more it draws closer to “historical truth” in all its complexity. The “absolute truth” (“true history”) is an ideal that cannot be reached but which historians try to get closer to as much as possible.

<sup>2</sup> It is thought that there is an “individual memory” and a “collective memory” of the groups, both built up by personal experience, but also by education and the socio-cultural context. Collective memory because it assures the cohesion of a group or nations is helped by “memory policies” (materialized in school textbooks, public discourses, commemorations, monuments, literature, documentaries, historical films, etc.). There is a pre-existing collective memory in relation to an important historical landmark to which new significations are attached according to the political interests of the present. Because historical memory is multi-layered, (often the layers having contradictory information) highlighting (by commemoration practices) one “layer” or the other can create a bridge of communication between conflicting nations or deepen a pre-existing cleavage. Pierre Nora, associates the “places of memory” with modernity, although a certain kind of propaganda that calls on collective historical memory can be documented in Antiquity or the Middle Ages.

<sup>3</sup> Constantin Kiritzescu, *Istoria războiului pentru întregirea României*, (2 vol.), Științifică și Enciclopedică Publishing House, Series of History, Bucharest, 1989.

A good reference book consisting on Romanian Army documents and reports in two volumes (in Romanian only) describing the events from a contemporary Romanian perspective was published in 1998 by Viorel Ciubota, Gheorghe Nicolescu, Cornel Tuca at a less known publishing house (at the Publishing House of the Museum of Satu Mare town) with a limited number and implicitly with a limited circulation: *Jurnal de Operatiuni al Comandamentului Trupelor din Transilvania (1918-1921) – Operations Log of Transylvania Troops Command (1918-1921)*. The book would have deserved a better circulation and attention as is based on military documents and reports, usually more objective than the various *Memoirs*.

Almost a decade later *Românii la Budapesta (Romanians in Budapest, in Romanian only)* was published by Radu Cosmin, again at a little know publishing house (Fundăției “Moise Nicoară” Publishing House), Arad, 2007 (457 pages in two volumes), and again with a limited circulation and implicitly impact (although published in two successive editions). The book will be published again in 2018 at Saeculum Publishing House. This book, using contemporary documents and personal letters and *Memoirs* of the participants (generals, officers, journalists and even simple soldiers), succeeds to offer a multi-layer Romanian perspective. The author of these books seems to be more interested in the mentalities and soul of the participants at the events.

Some testimonies of Hungarian personalities participating at the events are also offered in the book. General G. D. Mărdărescu *Campania pentru desrobirea Ardealului și ocuparea Budapestei (1918-1920)*, published in 1922 – *The campaign for the liberation of Transylvania and the occupation of Budapest (1918-1920, in Romanian)* the book published by the Chef Commander of the Romanian Army operational in Hungary and Budapest in 1919-1920.<sup>4</sup> While the most well-known Hungarian quoted book of *Memoirs* is the *Diary* of the US General Bandholtz, a book published in 1933 and at the time of the events unwritten to be published, in the case of General Mărdărescu, the book is contemporary with the events and it must be understood and read as a book written to explain, justify and be in general the coronation of a successfully military career. Mărdărescu’s entire book, as well as his contemporary reports from Budapest, describes the Hungarian campaign not as a “conquest” but as a “pacification mission”. After the war, he became Defense Minister (between 1922 and 1926). In the day his Army occupied (with no resistance) Budapest, General Mărdărescu addresses a “Proclamation to the Hungarian people”, sends telegrams and a daily order to his troops: “the Romanian soldier guarantees the peace, the wealth and the life of the Hungarian citizens“. Mărdărescu’s description of the events in his book follows the lines of this “Proclamation” in opposition with the facts related by General Bandholtz in his *Undiplomatic Diary*. Another facts continuously highlighted by General Mărdărescu’s official *Memoirs* (often in a rhetoric language)

<sup>4</sup> G. D. Mărdărescu, *Campania pentru desrobirea Ardealului și ocuparea Budapestei (1918-1920)*, Cartea românească Publishing House, Bucharest, 1922.

are as following: “The population of the Hungarian capital received with sympathy the Romanian troops, during the occupation of Budapest the beneficial role of the Romanian Army, the population of Budapest, since the troops entered the capital, was fed with the necessary food (the daily bread, the food being provided, especially for children, through canteens and bakeries of some troops). This is more or less what the Romanians know about those events and what remained in the Romanian historical memory cultivated by books, memorials, TV documentaries. General Mărdărescu’s 1922 book was republished twice during the last years (in 2009 and 2018 at Editura Militară/ Romanian Army’s Publishing House).

In both countries, Romania and Hungary, too often Historians are seen as a kind of “guardians of collective memory and identity” while their profession should be to reveal the past in all its complexity in order to get to the “truth” as much as possible even when this “truth” is less appealing or comfortable. This is a difficult and, sometimes, dangerous mission in Central and Eastern Europe, a region where the appeal to a glorious mythical past had created the modern nations. In his well-received book “Eastern Europe” Jankowski Tomek (a Hungarian Historian with a Polish name) was trying to explain the average westerner what collective historical memory means for the people in the region. He explains that if for the average American events like the American Revolution happened long time ago, for a Serbian, the battle of Kosovo Polje “haven’t quite ended yet.”<sup>5</sup>

In Hungary the idealization of the pre-WWI Hungary was the rule at all levels (schools, state ideology and propaganda) of education. Trianon Treaty was considered a “monstrosity”, a “crime” against the Hungarian nation and its revision a Hungarian “Civil Religion”. The revisionist idea was inoculated day by day to the school children through the Hungarian Credo (a poetry written by Elemer Papp Vary) they were supposed to recite twice a day at the beginning and at end of the classes: *I believe in one God, I believe in one country, I believe in the resurrection of Hungary! ...Amen!*<sup>6</sup>

In both Romania and Hungary post-Trianon, a mythical past became inspiration, motivation or refuge. An entire army of historians, writers, poets, journalists and politicians joined the effort of creating or reviving historical myths based on ancestry, purity, primordially in the Carpathian Basin and in the case of Hungarians a claimed and self-perceived “civilizational and cultural superiority” as opposed to the rural, barbaric, Balkan eastern neighbours.

The Romanian campaign in august 1919 also gave to some representatives of the Hungarian historiography (often not professional historians but rather politicians, journalists and literates) the opportunity from one side to shift a certain “guilt” supposed to be carried by one of the WWI starters (Austro-Hungary) into the

<sup>5</sup> Tomek Jankowski, *Eastern Europe!: everything you need to know about the history (and more!) of a region that shaped our world and still does*, New Europe Books, Williamstown, Massachusetts, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Eva Mathey, *Chasing a Mirage: Hungarian Revisionist search for US support to dismantle the Trianon Peace Treaty, 1920-1938*, PhD Thesis at Debrecen University Hungary, 2012, p.43, available online at [https://dea.lib.unideb.hu/dea/bitstream/handle/2437/132096/Mathey%20%C3%89va%20doktori%20%C3%A9rtekez%C3%A9s\\_titkosított.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://dea.lib.unideb.hu/dea/bitstream/handle/2437/132096/Mathey%20%C3%89va%20doktori%20%C3%A9rtekez%C3%A9s_titkosított.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) accessed 21<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

Romanian side and to blame one more time eventually the Bolsheviks who (in their arguments) gave to the Romanians to opportunity to claim and obtain at the Paris Peace Conference a “preferential status”.

*Thoughts regarding General Harry Hill  
Bandholtz’ “Undiplomatic diary”*

Anyone visiting today's Budapest will find in front of the US Embassy a bust statue of US Major General Harry Hill Bandholtz, member of the Inter-Allied Military Mission in August 1919 designated in Budapest during the Romanian occupation. The choice of the US diplomats is by no means random: the American general was cultivated as a “luminous” figure in the Hungarian collective memory. From the very beginning as a non-Hungarian nor Romanian his account of the events was supposed to be somehow more credible for an international audience. His openly declared antipathy towards the Romanian generals and sympathy for the Hungarian nation and culture, the concern to stop both the Hungarian newly installed political regime (“the White Terror”) abuses against Bolsheviks as well as against the Jews as well as the reminiscences of the “Red Terror”, the insistences towards the Romanians to stop what they called “justified requisitions” (of goods, food and materials) made him at the time and after a very popular figure in Hungary regardless the political spectrum dividing the nation. General Harry Hill Bandholtz’ *Undiplomatic Diary* remained in Hungary the most quoted source on the Romanian occupation of Hungary. Compared to General Mărdărescu’s *Memoirs* his *Diary* was not written to be published, is very undiplomatic in its considerations about both allied the Romanians and other members of the Entente (in particular the French and the Italian Representatives). However, the *Diary* was published in 1933 for the first time almost a decade after his death (possible as a part of the Hungarian propaganda efforts in United States).

Although idolized and quoted in a passionate manner by the Hungarian historiography Bandholtz’ *Undiplomatic Diary* can be considered also an interesting source for an interpretation of the events from a Romanian perspective. When a historian does historical research he/she must decide which source to use and to what extent is credible. However, the US general does not provide a “military report” describing facts as such but rather a passionate description of people and events full of gossip, colourful appreciations and often invectives, many of his observations are based on what he “have heard” or “what it may have happened” without his “prompt saving intervention”. The relationships between the *Allied* powers at the Peace conference were strained on issues concerning the new borders, the reparations ratio etc. Those tensions were reflected on the active military fields of 1919 in Hungary and Russia. Distrust, lack of coordination and above all lack of proper dialogue and understanding plagued the relationship between the Romanian Army and the Allied representatives in Hungary and Budapest between August 1919 and February 2020. The relationships

between Romania and the Great Powers were complicated even further by the suspicions and tensions among “the little ones” namely the Serbs, Czechs, Slovaks, Ukrainians and Poles all wishing reparations and a “fair share” of the dismantling Austro-Hungary.

The patronage and superior attitude of the Allied representatives towards the Romanian Army (easily identifiable in the *Diary*) for sure, did not help. For the Romanians the Allied representatives were trying to obstruct them benefiting from what was their victory against a former enemy and occupier. For the American general its mission was to keep as much as possible within due limits a “troublesome” and “unreliable” ally, whose presence in Hungary and Budapest was a result of the Great Powers military victory who were not asked by the same Great Powers to intervene in Budapest and for instance who should obey to what the Allied forces and their representatives dictate. Several imperative requests to the Romanians to stop requisitioning strategic materials (locomotives, automobiles, fuel, telephones and military effects factories), which the Romanians were arguing to be a tiny compensation for what was requisitioned by the Central Powers during the occupation of Romania (1916-1918) explain those clashes and the deep antipathy among them. Bandholtz describes himself as an American general whose mission is to protect the Hungarians and their “magnificent capital” from being looted by an “unscrupulous barbarian horde” who were acting also in complicity with their French and Italian Allied.<sup>7</sup>

For General Bandholtz Romanian counterparts are clerks who continuously “procrastinate, delay and broke promises” made to the Allied Military Commission while continuing their requisitions. The same personage adds into his *Diary* as blameable for the Romanians the “lack of punctuality at official meetings”, the “hypocrisy of declaring confiscation of phone machines, type writing machines, as effects absolutely necessary for the administration of the city by the Romanian army”. General Bandholtz’ visits to Bucharest (a city which has never excelled on monumentality and already devastated by war and occupation) compared to the “splendour” of Budapest, further enhances his admiration for the Hungarians and the antipathy towards the Romanians. Lavish banquets and the continuous attention and appreciation showed to him by the Hungarian aristocracy and the Hungarian industrials for which he was both a rescuer from Bela Kun Red Terror and a protector from the Romanian Army of occupation could only strengthen his attitude. Still, Bandholtz does not excessively take a liking in the Hungarian “Whites” either. He is appalled by the treatment given to the soldiers enlisted in the Bolshevik army and by the pogroms against the Jews (the Jews being considered by the “Whites” as primarily responsible for the “Red Terror”)<sup>8</sup>.

Romanian military reports in many respects contradict Bandholtz’ *Diary*. Just like in most occupations there have been cases of violence, looting and abuse,

<sup>7</sup> Harry Hill Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, Columbia University, 1933, available online at <http://mek.oszk.hu/08200/08202/08202.htm>, accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

however, they never had a generalized character as it has been allowed to understand neither can they be compared with the abuses and violence of the *Red Terror*. The Romanian occupation coincided to a large extent with the works of the Peace Conference in Versailles, a place where propaganda networks and access to the media channels was the new “battle front”. Any rumour and occasion to depict in “black” the enemy was promptly speculated. Outside the country, a whole anti-Romanian propaganda service has been created, being constantly fuelled by a large, skilful, influential and financially potent network of Hungarian and White Russian aristocrats.

The Romanian military and diplomatic reports of 1919-1920 witness on how the Hungarian aristocrats and intellectuals were highly skilled in attracting representatives of the western winning powers either belonging to the army either press correspondents, by lavishing them with luxurious housing, opera shows, concerts and banquets. Some Romanian diplomatic reports witness cases in which foreign journalists whose journey in Transylvania was paid by the Romanian Government ended on the Hungarian side simple because in Transylvania they were invited by charming Hungarian aristocrats, owners of lavish castles, hunting fields etc. People like General Bandholdz were pleasantly impressed not only by the beauty of the Hungarian capital, the stylish restaurants and hotels, but also the sophistication of the higher classes as opposed to the simplicity and rudeness of “the soldiers” (usually Romanians, but also Serbs and Czechs): “Our offices located in the Royal Palace are gorgeous in the extreme. This magnificent building must have cost millions to erect and furnish, and no pains or expense were spared. The walls of each room are covered with the same cloth with which the furniture of the room is upholstered, except the magnificent ball rooms, the walls of which are solid marble (...)”.<sup>9</sup>

Bandholdz also seems to have come from America with already rooted racial prejudices regarding the “Latins”, namely the Mexicans compared in his *Diary* with those “Little Latins of the East” (the Romanians): “Turning over portions of Hungary with its civilized and refined population will be like turning over Texas and California to the Mexicans (...).The Hungarians certainly have many defects, at least from an American point of view, but they are so far superior to any of their neighbours that it is a crime against civilization to continue with the proposed dismemberment of this country (...).It is simply impossible to conceive such national depravity as those miserable ‘Latins’ of southeast Europe are displaying.”<sup>10</sup> It is notable that for General Bandholdz in his *Diary*, Serbia and Czechoslovakia also represent “miserable little nations”.

General Bandholdz did not write his *Undiplomatic Diary* at the time with the thought of publication and many of his remarks are valuable for the simple fact that they were written within a certain context with the passion and frenzy of

<sup>9</sup> Harry Hill Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, Columbia University, 1933, available online at <http://mek.oszk.hu/08200/08202/08202.htm>, accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

someone caught in the middle of some dramatic events, someone who is often overwhelmed by its responsibilities and contradictory flux of information coming from different sources.<sup>11</sup>

The American historian Patrick Garfield, in his biography *A Forgotten Soldier: The Life and Times of Major General Harry Hill Bandholtz* depicted General Bandholz as a strong (often impulsive) individual personality who wouldn't hesitate to take ad-hoc personal initiatives ahead and above official orders (as he often did in his 13 years of service in the Philippines).<sup>12</sup> Certain clashes with another impulsive and arrogant general, namely General Mărdărescu, may have been unavoidable.

Bandholz also was supposed to manage an "impossible" situation in which all the parts involved were suspicious or fighting each other ("White" Hungarians, against "Red" Hungarians with the "moderate" Hungarians in between, the Hungarians in general against the Romanian occupation army but also against the Serbian and Czech forces; the Romanians and the western allied mutual suspicions regarding the compensations and requisitions, as well as the suspicions between the "little ones" Romanians, Serbs, Czechs).

The aim of this article is to show the way General Bandholtz' *Diary*, while unsurprisingly extensively used by the Hungarian revisionist literature also unintentionally provides several pieces of information which are in fact favourable for the Romanian point of view. Here are just some of them: The Romanian administration did not allow the new Hungarian right-wing government to remove the political opponents by execution. "Prime Minister Friedrich (...) also complained that the Roumanians would not allow his government to execute death sentences, (...) It is no wonder that he is peeved at this action, because, if left to carry it out, he would, in a short time and with all appearance of judicial legality, have been able to rid himself of many of his more dangerous opponents."<sup>13</sup>

This issue is related with the Allied debates over the Hungarian war prisoners, General Bandholtz' bitter remarks against the Romanians being in fact a testimony of the Romanian attempt to save the Hungarian "Red" prisoners from an most certain death into the hands of the new Hungarian "White" government: "M. Diamandi then brought up the question of Hungarian prisoners of war. He said that they had 27,000 Hungarian prisoners of war, many of whom had been formerly Bolsheviks (...). He made the point that, in case they were turned over to the Hungarian government, the latter would be given an opportunity to persecute and probably execute great numbers on account of their having belonged to the Bolshevik army, whereas their service had been entirely compulsory."<sup>14</sup> With no

<sup>11</sup> General Bandholtz was commissioned in Budapest on August 6, 1919 where he arrived together with the Director of Food Supplies Herbert Hoover on August 10, (his mission was ended six months later).

<sup>12</sup> Patrick V Garfield, *A Forgotten Soldier: The Life and Times of Major General Harry Hill Bandholtz*. Pennsylvania, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Harry Hill Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, Columbia University, 1933, available online at <http://mek.oszk.hu/08200/08202/08202.htm>, accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*

possibility to carry them in Romania and unwanted to leave them into the hands of the “whites” many Hungarian Bolshevik prisoners are liberated by the Romanian Army a fact noted with disappointment by General Bandholtz: “A complaint was received from the Hungarians that the Roumanians, in the evacuation of Transdanubia, had liberated many Bolshevist prisoners. As this is particularly in line with what they have been doing in the city of Budapest, a letter was sent to the Roumanian Commander in Chief, calling his attention to the impropriety of any such conduct and advising him to discontinue it in the future.”<sup>15</sup>

Also many readers of the *Diary* would notice that the American general also seems to have arrived in Hungary with already created prejudices: “In fact everything Roumanian makes a sad comparison with Hungarian equivalents. The city of Bucharest compared to Budapest would be like a tadpole by the side of a rainbow trout. At the meeting this morning, General Graziani presided, and our Roumanian friends showed up, as usual, about twenty minutes late (...).”<sup>16</sup>

In fact, Romanian Army’s administration of Budapest was permanently obstructed not only by the reluctance of the Hungarian bureaucracy to cooperate but also by the contradictory messages and instructions coming from the western Allied representatives. General Bandholtz noted in his *Diary* that various complains sent by him to the Allied Supreme Council designed to accelerate the retreat of the Romanian Army were blocked deliberately by French or Italian members of the Inter-Allied Military mission whose interest was to extend their mission in Hungary as much as possible due the salaries several times higher while in mission abroad: “I learned afterwards that both the French and Italian officers are receiving as allowances several times what their pay would be in case they were relieved and returned to France and Italy, all of which accounts for their reluctance to give up a remunerative job.”<sup>17</sup>

### *Considerations over the “Museum looting” episode*

General Bandholtz’s remained famous in Hungary as the “saviour” of the Hungarian National Museum episode, an episode of personal initiative and improvisation proudly related in details in his *Diary*. “At a meeting of the Military Mission on October 1, 1919, it was decided that although the Roumanians did claim many articles in the National Museum as belonging to them on account of their present ownership of Transylvania, they should have none of these articles until passed upon by our committee, of which Captain Shafroth, U. S. A., is chairman. (...) It appears that about 6 o’clock in the afternoon. General Serbescu, accompanied by an entourage of officers and civilians, showed up at the Museum conveying fourteen trucks and a detachment of soldiers. He stated that he was authorized by General Mărdărescu and High Commissioner Diamandi to take

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem.*

over the objects from Transylvania, and demanded the keys. The Director informed him that the Inter-Allied Military Mission had taken over the Museum and he would not give up the keys. (...) The Museum authorities have sent me word that there were a few boxes in the Museum which really belonged to Transylvania and which they were willing to turn over to Roumania.”<sup>18</sup>

As proven later it was not the case of a “few boxes” but several containers with historic artefacts evacuated from Transylvania. It is also speculative and unproven that General Șerbănescu with his “fourteen trucks” would have taken from the museum more than the designated boxes with Transylvanian historic artefacts. The Romanian “visit” to the History Museum must have been motivated also by the discovery in the Royal Palace of several archival units taken in 1917 during the occupation from the Library of the Romanian Academy, as well as a hundred other containers with different objects from the Transylvanian museums, which would belong to Romania. Nevertheless the Romanian Army respected the “Allied Seal” (in fact the US Censorship seal) attached by General Bandholtz to the Museum entrance.

The episode somehow linked into the Romanian press fuelling a press campaign depicting in Romania the Allied Mission representatives as unfriendly and obstructionist, regarding whatever the Romanian Army used to consider legitimate reparative actions through requisitions. General Mărdărescu may have not many reasons to be sympathetic regarding the Allied Mission representatives but is less likely he may have ever told the Allied representatives the words quoted by Bandholtz in his *Diary* depicted in a Romanian Newspaper: (...) *Gentlemen, you have four telephones but I have 80,000 bayonets.*<sup>19</sup>

### *The food crisis in Hungary*

The Romanian point of view considers that the new rightwing Hungarian governance’s main concern being restoring the military forces needed to confront perceived internal and external enemies, while it neglected the civilian population basic needs, the result being a starvation crisis in the entire country but in particular in Budapest. In that situation the Romanian occupation army was a natural “scape goat” to be blamed for everything.

While Hungarian government petitions were flooding the Inter-Allied Military Mission (implicit General Bandholtz Office) with information regarding Romanian food requisitions (often described as looting), Romanian Military reports mention corrupt Hungarian administration officials hiding food supplies or de-turning them in order to be sold at speculative prices just to blame the Romanian Army in the end. Romanian military reports mention how employees of the Hungarian food ministry, being commissioned to buy goods for the capital, largely behaved

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>19</sup> Harry Hill Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, Columbia University, 1933, available online at <http://mek.oszk.hu/08200/08202/08202.htm>, accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019.

irresponsibly, wanting to take material gains in at the expense of the starving population forging orders and storing food supplies to sell them at exorbitant prices to the population. Several misunderstandings and bottlenecks due to suspicions affected the food transport network.<sup>20</sup> Thousands of wagons with food supplies designated by the Romanian Army for the civilian population were blocked due to the refusal of the Hungarian railways to provide the needed locomotives, the Hungarians being afraid that the locomotives would be requisitioned by the Romanian Army.<sup>21</sup>

Also, within the very complicated diplomatic situation and in the general chaos often the food supplies coming from abroad were resumed until the situation was eventually clarified. Again in such cases the Romanian Army was the natural “scape goat” to blame. The Romanian military reports were testifying blockages in the food supplies due to the Hungarian administrators, keeping them in stores just to be at a later stage sold at speculative prices.

The order given by the temperamental General Mărdărescu to “open immediately” all the food depots and to distribute them to those in need in order the food supplies ending into the hands of the local speculators is depicted by General Bandholtz just as another Romanian abuse: “Yesterday morning there appeared in the papers a notice from Roumanian Headquarters that they proposed to distribute large quantities of food to the inhabitants of Budapest. Then in characteristic Roumanian style, they broke into the food depots belonging to the Hungarian government and distributed these supplies right and left, thereby completely upsetting the ration system of Budapest, but during the process being photographed as international philanthropists.”<sup>22</sup>

Just another proof of misunderstanding and lack of communication among those supposed to be on the same side? Or just one more proof on deep antipathy or even hate towards the Romanians?

Another controversy episode is related with the death of some infant children in a maternity reported by a delegate of the US committee in Budapest who gave as the reason the lack of milk in maternity apparently caused by the requisition of milk by the Romanian Army. This undocumented information was speculated to spoil Romania’s reputation in the main European capitals. An investigation carried later by one of the Allied Committee demonstrated that the children died because of the infested milk, an epidemic being reported at the largest dairy supplier of the city; the Romanian commandment ordered the transports of infected milk to be stopped. General Bandholtz also reacted emotionally in his *Diary* (and most probably not only there) before an official Allied proper investigation be performed: “Replying to your No. 63, there is only too much proof of Roumanian looting. I

<sup>20</sup> G. D. Mărdărescu, *Campania pentru desrobirea Ardealului și ocuparea Budapestei (1918-1920)*, Cartea românească Publishing House, Bucharest, 1922.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars, a History of East Central Europe*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1974, pp. 152-153.

<sup>22</sup> Harry Hill Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, Columbia University, 1933, available online at <http://mek.oszk.hu/08200/08202/08202.htm>, accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019.

myself saw them taking hospital supplies and reported it at the time. They did not loot children's hospitals, but did cut off the usual supply of milk which was equally bad."<sup>23</sup>

The final conclusions of the Allied Committee on this case (including the Romanian Army's measure to stop supplies of infested milk and the regrettable confusion contained by the initial US Report) was unworthy to be mentioned by General Bandholtz in his *Diary*.

### *Reparations or looting?*

As far as war reparations were concerned Romania was mistreated by its Entente Allies and, for instance, they were seeking compensation acting often outside the framework set up by Entente with Hungary in their negotiations and agreements at the Versailles Peace conference – *Looting, War requisitions* (sometime in exchange for worthless government bonds a practice performed by the Central Powers in occupied Romania and then proposed by General Mărdărescu for Hungary, and noted as such by Bandholtz) and *War reparations* –, in a certain context are more or less the same act, labelled differently by the persons involved, conquered or defeated.

The war reparations taken by the Romanian Army from Hungary were comparable with the quantity and value of what the Central Powers have taken from Romania during the months of occupation (most of the strategic materials requisitioned or looted from Romania being deposited in Hungary according with the Romanian Army reports and General Mărdărescu *Memoires*) and less in terms of the proportion of total material goods with strategic value. For example, General Mărdărescu explained the complains of General Bandholtz that the 800 locomotives requisitioned from Hungary were meant to compensate for the 1200 locomotives seized from Romania by the Central powers (information provided by Bandholtz in his *Diary*). The fact that requisitions labelled "war reparations" were made on the basis of a Romanian-Hungarian Armistice outside the will of the Entente Powers and before a Peace Treaty was signed was justified by General Mărdărescu as a return of looted goods taken from Romania during Central Power occupation and of requisitioned material goods for the dally needs of the Army.

Romania received almost no reparations from Germany (less than 1%) and still had to pay an enormous amount of money to the Allied Powers as the share of war reparations for the Austro-Hungarian territories which after the Peace Conference became parts of Romania. In such conditions the remaining amount Hungary had to pay as much as possible represented the burden of reparations belonging to both Germany and Austro-Hungary.

However, war reparations paid by Hungary to Romania as a per cent of the country wealth were rather small compared with the war reparations paid by Germany to France after WWI or by Romania to Soviet Union after the 23<sup>rd</sup> of

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

August 1944. Then, there was the question why should Hungary be limited to a half of its former territory and be made responsible to pay for the entire weight of what the Central Powers looted or requisitioned from Romania between 1917-1918? Romania was in ruins after two years of occupation and by 1919 having to fight and maintain an army on two fronts meant that they have had to compensate from wherever they could. No doubts that apart from the military industry and railways stock the 30% of the livestock, 30% of all agricultural tools requisitioned in the autumn of 1919 and February 1920 from Hungary burdened the shoulders of Hungarian private owners, with the respective toll on the collective historical memory.

*Romanian Army's intervention in Budapest was requested  
by a part of the Hungarian political spectrum  
(the anti-Bolshevik elements)*

This rather bizarre truth is still little acknowledged in both Romania and Hungary and directly relates with the *Red Terror*. In fact, Budapest was not the first major city in which the Romanian Army was requested to intervene by the Hungarian civil authorities. In Oradea Mare / Nagyvárad, General Moşoiu's intervention was explicitly requested by the city major Rimler Károly (re-elected for the office between 1902-1919) a personality mutually respected by both Romanian and Hungarian communities.

The *Entente* representatives had an unfriendly and cold attitude towards the Wallachian officers, who took the liberty to enter Budapest with no Allied permission or mandate (but surprisingly enough at the request of several Hungarian right wing delegations, which preferred the Romanian Army's occupation rather than the "Red terror"): "and we will protect you from the Romanians, who have no authority from us. We are sending forthwith an Inter-Allied Military Mission to superintend the disarmament and to see that the Roumanian troops withdraw."<sup>24</sup>

Some interesting facts in this sense were revealed in the last years by the Hungarian literate and journalist András Nyerges in his well-received book *Colour Separation*, where he compares nowadays Hungarian rightwing activists and politicians, with those from the interwar times. Analysing the interwar rightwing activism he also provides the historians with valuable information from Hungarian National Library's collection of newspapers from the interwar period. He reveals some information interesting for this article because it offers more proof regarding the fact that the Romanian troops entered Budapest at the beginning of August 1919 not by "inviting themselves" neither at the Entente's request but at the request of some Hungarian right wing political circles to obtain a much needed relief from the "Red Terror". Nyerges's research reveals the way Hungarian interwar newspapers debates reflected how in 1922 some liberal members of the Hungarian parliament asked the Prime Minister István Bethlen to investigate

<sup>24</sup> Harry Hill Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, Columbia University, Columbia, 1933, available online at <http://mek.oszk.hu/08200/08202/08202.htm>, accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019.

who were the “Hungarian traitors” in 1919 who asked for the Romanian army’s intervention in Budapest.

Other new revealed testimonies come from an interview published in a Hungarian-language newspaper in Cluj in 1922 from Ioan Erdelyi at the date of the events (1918-1919) a lawyer with his office in Budapest, a member of the Committee of the Romanian National Party of Transylvania and Hungary (brother-in-law with Iuliu Maniu) subsequently appointed by King Ferdinand’s diplomatic agent in Budapest. Ioan Erdelyi speaks about the several delegations made up of Hungarian industrialists and aristocrats who requested the intervention of the Romanian Army in Budapest at the end of July and early August 1919. The same source also mentions that Erdelyi refused to give any details about the names of the Hungarian participants in the negotiations (a normal attitude for a skillful and professional lawyer and diplomat).

Another interesting source unknown in Romania is the Hungarian writer, Cécile Tormay’s *An Outlaw’s Diary* in which she describes how she remembers the events at the beginning of August 1919.<sup>25</sup> Tormay describes the ingrate and “unimaginable” situation facing most Hungarians at the time having to wait for the “Romanian occupiers” in order to get rid of the “Red terror”.

### *Conclusions*

In Romania, as far as we know, there were no attempts organized to identify, research and valorise official military documents of the particular units active in Hungary during the six months of occupation, or the private correspondence of soldiers or officers, the diaries or the interviews with various participants (oral history).

The 100 years since the Romanian “intervention” in Budapest may be an opportunity for further attempts of dialogue and cooperation within the field of common History for this two neighbouring countries. Romanian-Hungarian attempts to cooperate in the field of History research are not new. The Romanian-Hungarian mix historical commission date back 70’s but it deliberately avoids the “hot subjects”.<sup>26</sup> A reconciliatory point of view probably cannot be achieved in the foreseeable future but an integrated history of the events acknowledging in full all points of view and arguments is a possible task. The “new wave” of historians in Romania, as well as in Hungary, acknowledge the “use and abuse” of History for political purposes by populist movements and politicians and they have the courage to address the various myths upon which most nations official past was built during the last two centuries.

Achieving a sense of mutual understanding regarding disputed historical events is a sign of maturity, confidence and normality or perhaps an indicator of post-modernity or post-nationalism. The most quoted example is the Franco-German

<sup>25</sup> Cécile Tormay, *An Outlaw’s Diary*, Phillip Allan &Co, London, 1923, available online at <https://archive.org/details/outlawsdiary02tormuoft>, accessed 21<sup>st</sup> February 2019.

<sup>26</sup> The various issues of interest for the common history, such as the “Liberal Movement in Central Europe” or the “History of the Danube River Basin,” have been approached.

reconciliation with its corresponding implications into the contemporary historiography and implicitly historic memory of the respective nations. "Reconciliation" within the representation of history does not imply dropping the "right" to memorialize own experience in a certain manner. It rather implies a certain attitude in which dialogue prevail, there is a base for constant and civilized communication, various point of views and arguments are acknowledged and understood within the specific context of historical events. In this rather ideal scenario in the interpretation and representation of historical events there is no room for passion or de-contextualization. The official state sponsored national memory must be replaced by a pluralist interpretation of shared history with the aim to achieve a "shared truth".

History as an on-going argument is still preferable to the unidirectional official collective memory.<sup>27</sup> The official state sponsored national memory must gradually "cohabitate" with (not replaced by as many would say) a pluralist interpretation of "shared history" with the aim to achieve a "shared truth". Again, history as an "on-going argument" may delight professional historians but may "scare" politicians for the foreseeable "identity crisis" which may be created by any uncertainty in the "crystal clear" heroic nation's past. Finally, history as an "on-going argument" may be challenging in pedagogical terms as well, if applied in history school books whose mission in Romania as well as in Hungary is to cultivate a "patriotic spirit" and to a lesser extent the analytical skills of the students. Whatever difficulties prove to be this shift in Central and Eastern Europe we should notice that "powerful nations" succeeded to confront and reevaluate their past. Last but not least, the eventual success of a Romanian-Hungarian project on controversial historical events may become a model for other nations "divided by History".

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<sup>27</sup> Adam Heribert, "Divided Memories: Reckoning with a Criminal Regime" in *Justice and the Politics of Memory-Religion & Public Life*, 2003, vol. 33.

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