

Great Britain to Romania, 29-11-1941

In tandem with two other ultimatums presented to Finland and Hungary (see ultimatum Great Britain to Finland, 28-11-1941 and Great Britain to Hungary, 29-11-1941) Great Britain transmitted a written ultimatum to the Romanian government on 29 November 1941.¹ Soviet leader Stalin had convinced British leader Churchill to request from Romania that it halt all assistance to Germany.² Romania, in turn, had firmly aligned itself with Germany following the forced cession of one third of its territory to the Soviet Union in June 1940 (see ultimatum Soviet Union to Romania, 26-6-1940).³ The ultimatum, phrased in nearly identical terms to the ones issued to Finland and Hungary, read:

The Roumanian Government has for many months been pursuing aggressive military operations on the territory of the USSR, ally of Great Britain, in closest collaboration with Germany, thus participating in the general European war and making substantial contribution to the German war effort. In these circumstances His Majesty's Government in the Great Britain finds it necessary to inform the Roumanian Government that unless by the 5th December the Roumanian Government has ceased military operations and has withdrawn from all active participation in hostilities, His Majesty's Government will have no choice but to declare the existence of a state of war between the two countries.⁴

The Romanian government did not respond until the day after the expiry of the ultimatum when it claimed that it acted out of self defense as it was 'firmly convinced that its military action is the only way in which it can ensure its salvation against the visible Russian threat.'⁵ But before that, Great Britain had already transmitted its declaration of war, again through the US representative. The Romanian leader deplored the course of events in a public radio address saying that Romania 'accepts this challenge'.⁶ The next week, Romania was pushed by Germany and Italy to declare war on the United States which it did on 12 December.⁷ As in the other two cases, Britain's war declaration did not precede the launch of an attack against Romania. It did however mark the further polarisation of the international system into two bitterly divided camps. Romania would remain allied with the German camp until an internal coup d'état toppled the sitting government followed by the invasion of the Soviet Union, which was fighting on the Allied side, of the country in 1944, and the establishment of the Allied Control Commission.⁸

¹ Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania, 1940 -1944* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 91.

² Government of the USSR, 'Correspondence between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War of 1941 - 1945', n. 20.

³ Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally*, 2-3. Paul D. Quinlan, *Clash over Romania: British and American Policies towards Romania: 1938-1947* / by Paul D. Quinlan (Los Angeles: ARA, 1977), 67-70.

⁴ 'The Edinburgh Gazette, December 12, 1941', 616-17, accessed 14 July 2014, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/Edinburgh/issue/15872/page/617/data.pdf>. Cf. fn. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** & **Error! Bookmark not defined.**: different data permutations are used in the three ultimatums which is probably due to different national standards used by the different sources.

⁵ Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally*, 91. Quinlan, *Clash over Romania*, 71-73.

⁶ Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally*, 92.

⁷ Deletant, 92. Quinlan, *Clash over Romania*, 75.

⁸ Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally*, 241-44.