

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF ROMANIA (1920-1930) ~SEQUENCES~

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he foreign policy of Romania was influenced before the first world war by the desire to realize national unity, the dream of union with all the Romanians outside of Romania's frontiers¹.

In this policy Romanian was always supported more especially by France. Together with Little Entente and the Balkan Entente, France was the guardian of the inviolability of the Treaties².

The entire policy of Romania was dominated by this „Leit-Motiv”. The Little Entente, the second important factor of Romanian's Foreign Policy, was based on the idea of Take Ionescu, who exposed the plan of a close collaboration between the three succession states, which was begun in the Autumn of 1918, and of which President Masaryk said that it would be a question easily resolved. This collaboration was already very close at that time of the peace negotiations³.

The first common manifestation was produced in february 1920, on the occasion of the peace negotiations of Trianon, when a common memorandum was signed by the representatives of the three successions states. This alliance of the three states was baptised by a Budapest paper maliciously, in an article which appeared on february 21, 1920, the „*Little Entente*”⁴.

Take Ionescu advised the union of the three states in this way: Jugoslavia and Czechoslovakia first to close a treaty, and the Romania a second treaty with these two states. On March 3, 1920, The Supreme Council recognized the union of Bessarabia with Romania. In October 1920 Take Ionescu together with Nicolae Titulescu visited Rome, Paris and London, to expose the general policy of the Little Entente. Towards the end of October, Take Ionescu arrived at Prague where he signed, on October 30, 1920, a memorandum confirming the Agreement of Bucharest. From Prague, Take Ionescu went to Warsaw, where he pleaded for an understanding between Poland and Czechoslovakia. At Warsaw he discussed the question of the Little Entente - in which Poland had no interest, - and of an understanding between Poland and Romania in regard to Russia. These negotiations was the basis of the defensive treaty between Romania and Poland closed on March 4, 1921⁵.

On June 5, 1921, Take Ionescu visited Belgrade and on June 7th the Convention with Jugoslavia was also signed. With the signing of this treaty the formal and juridical bases of the Little Entente was established.

The economica conference at Roma which began on April 6th and ended on June 15, 1921, and in which Austria, Czechslovakia, Italy, Poland, Romania and Jugoslavia participated and from which Hungary withdrew in the middle of the month of May, had as object the economic restoration of the Central Europe. Many economic and even political questions were settled during this conference.

¹ C. Kirişescu, *Istoria războiului pentru întregirea României. 1916-1919*, vol. 1, Ed. Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 1989, p. 117.

² H. Prost, *Destin de la Roumanie (1918-1954)*, Paris, 1954, passim.

³ Frederic C. Nanu, *Politica externă a României. 1919-1933*, Ed. Institutul European, Iaşi, 1993, p. 120

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ *Xxx Drept internaţional public*, Iaşi, 1936, pp. 409-413.

On October 21, 1921, King Charles IV of Hungary returned to that country and the Little Entente sent from Prague a letter addressed to the Great Entente, and on the following day another letter to the Conference of Ambassadors worded as follows:

„The Romanian, Yugoslav and Czechoslovakian Governments consider the events occurring at present in Hungary to be a consequence of the events in the Burgenland. They see in these events an assault on the Peace Treaties, which these Governments themselves have executed loyally, trying in that way to keep the peace in Central Europe. They feel themselves to be menaced not only by return of Charles, but also by attitude of the Hungarian Government, which has favoured and defended openly the happenings in the Burgenland. Their Governments are convinced that the peace of Europa requires that all measures, even the most energetic measures, should be taken for the final liquidation of the Habsbourg question and the execution of the Peace Treaties. They hope for the support of the Allies, especially in all matters relating to the strict application of the Peace Treaties.

The Romanian, Yugoslav and Czechoslovakian Governments while thus informing the Allied Powers of their point of view, assure them that they will take all measures necessary for a rapid and definitive settlement of the said questions in order that peace may be finally re-established in Central Europe, as they are convinced that any solution that did not bring about a definitive settlement would have the greatest danger for Europe”.

The steps taken by the Little Entente, the first common manifestations of the new organ, was successful. The question of the Habsburgs was finally settled⁶.

On May 7, 1922, the Romanian-Czechoslovakian Treaty of Alliance was prolonged without any amendment, for a further 3 years. In the same way on July 7, 1923, with a text almost identical, the Romanian-Yugoslav treaty was also prolonged for 3 years.

The Little Entente conference lasted from July 27 to July 30, at Sinaia; those present were: Ionel Brătianu, I.G. Duca, Nintchich and Benes. Poland did not take part, thus demonstrating that she did not intend to enter the Little Entente, but sent her former minister at Prague, Pilz, as observer. The conference examined Hungary's demand addressed to the League of Nations for a loan. The loan was granted and the protocol was signed, amongst others, by Romania. The conference also discussed the new situation which had arisen in Bulgaria through to overturning of the Stamboliinski government, and decided to adopt an expectant attitude.

On March 1924, a conference was held at Vienna between Romania and Russia for the settlement of all questions. On April 2th the discussions were interrupted, owing to the fact that Russia refused to accept formal recognition of the union of Bessarabia with Romania⁷. On the other hand France ratified the treaty relative to Bessarabia.

On July 11 and 12, 1924, Duca, Nintchich and Benes met at Prague. Many circles were speaking of an eventual dissolution of the Little Entente because of various divergencies which had arisen in the policies of the States composing it. The conference was however held in the spirit of the most perfect cordiality and Nintchich stated that Jugoslavia had closed with Romania a number of important agreements amongst others one relative to the delimiting of the frontiers in the Banate. Duca declared that the Russian question regarded only Romania; Romania had no theoretical objections against the recognition of the Soviets, but until the Soviets should have recognized present frontiers of Romania, a recognition of the Soviets by Romania was impossible.

The year 1925 brought the Locarno Pact. From May 9 to 11, 1925, the Little Entente conference was held at Bucharest. Before the opening of the proceedings, Duca stated that the

⁶ Henry Bogdan, *Histoire des Habsbourg*, Edition Perrin, 2008, pp. 374-376.

⁷ Ioan Scurtu, Dumitru Almaş, Armand Goşu, Ion Pavelescu, Gh.I. Ioniţă, *Istoria Basarabiei de la începuturi până în 1994*, Europa Nova-Tempus, Bucureşti, 1994, p. 252 şi urm.

conference would discuss neither the recognition of the Soviets nor the question of the adherence of Poland or Greece to the Little Entente.

The Ministers of the Little Entente met on September 7, 1925 at Geneva on the occasion of the Session of the League of Nations where once more a unity of views in all questions relative to the great international political matters was ascertained.

On November 5, 1925, Duca made an important speech in the Senate on questions of foreign policy in which he once more stated that Romania was at any moment ready to resume diplomatic relations with Russia but only on condition that the Soviets should recognize the present frontiers on the country; and further, that Roumania was even disposed to close with Soviet Russia a permanent treaty of nonaggression, an offer which was repeated to the League of Nations. Duca's offer received no answer from the Soviets⁸.

On March 26, 1926, the Treaty of Guarantee between Poland and Romania was signed at Bucharest. Since the Convention of Defensive Alliance was to expire on April 3, 1926, the two states agreed to close a new treaty for 5 years. The treaty was based on the Covenant of the League of Nations. The ratification of the convention was effected later, on February 9, 1927, and it was registered by the League of Nations on March 7, 1927.

On the day following the signing of the treaty with Poland, the Brătianu government resigned, and in the new government of general Alexandru Averescu, Ion Mitileneu was Minister of Foreign Affairs. The change of government brought about a partial change in the foreign policy of the country, since general Alexandru Averescu, whose Italophil sentiments were known, inaugurated a pro-Italian movement. Negotiations were opened with a view to the closing of a treaty of friendship and a new arbitration agreement⁹.

On June 10, 1926, Romania closed at Paris, a Treaty of Friendship with France providing almost the same stipulations as those of the Treaties of France with Czechoslovakia and Poland.

General Averescu succeeded in obtaining a loan from Italy and placed an order there of considerable importance, for the delivery amongs other things, of a submarine for the Romanian fleet.

On September 16, 1926, Romania was elected for three years to the Council of the League of Nations. In September general Averescu visited Rome and on September 16 signed a Pact of Friendship and Cordial Collaborations between Italy and Romania¹⁰.

Article 4 spoke of the procedure of conciliation or arbitration. The treaty was valid for 5 years. At the same time it was established that a special commission should study the possibility of closer economic collaboration. The ratification was made on July 18, 1927 and was deposited with the League of Nations on November 1 st. In regard to the question of Bessarabia an exchange of letters took place in which Mussolini promised the ratification of the Bessarabian treaty as soon as circumstances should allow it. This ratification was effected on March 8, 1927, Romania thus obtaining the majority of signatures of the great powers.

In 1927, the debates on the question of the optants was commenced before the Assembly of the League of Nations. In June 1927, the League of Nations went thoroughly into the question of the Optants, those agricultural land-owners of Transylvania who had opted for Hungary. The main question was whether the Mixed Arbitral Tribunal was competent to decide on the question.

⁸ Radu Meitani, *Istoria politică a raporturilor dintre state de la 1856-1930*, București, 1930, p. 298.

⁹ Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, Ion Pătroi, Gheorghe Nicolescu, *Relații politico-diplomatice și militare româno-italiene (1914-1947)*, Editura Intact, Craiova, 1999, pp. 123-126.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

The matter was postponed for September and the Parties were recommended to re-examine the question¹¹.

King Ferdinand died on July 1927. In the new Ionel Brătianu government, Nicolae Titulescu who up to that moment had been Romanian Minister at London and first delegate at the League of Nations, accepted the Portfolio for Foreign Affairs.

In December, 1926, the optants brought their claims before the Romano-Hungarian Mixed Arbitral Tribunal, with its jurisdiction strictly limited to the liquidation of ex-enemy property. The optants now pleaded that the expropriations were war liquidation.

The Romanian Government raised the question of the competence of the Tribunal. The reform not only deprived Hungarians of their lands, but also many of Romanian ecclesiastical and other institutions, such as the Uniate Church, the Academy, and the hospitals of Bucharest. The agrarian reform was not a measure of war liquidation. Nevertheless, the Mixed Arbitral Tribunal, by a majority of two to one, declared it self competent. Thereupon Romania withdrew her representative from the Tribunal, so far as the agrarian matter was concerned. Hungary next asked the Council of the League to appoint an arbitrator to replace the Romanian.

In June, 1927, at Geneva, as in the preceding May at London, various meetings took place under League auspices between the interested parties with a view to a settlement, but were unsuccessful. On September 17, 1927, the Committee of the Council of the League which was dealing with the acceptance of the Treaty of Trianon made obligatory for Romania and Hungary: the provisions of the Peace Settlement effected after the War of 1914-1918 do not exclude the application to Hungarian nationals, including those who have opted for Hungarian nationality, of a general scheme of agrarian reform; there must be no inequality between Romanian and Hungarians, either in the terms of the Agrarian Law or in the way in which it is enforced. The case argued with skill and feeling. Titulescu appearing for Romania and Apponyi for Hungary, on September 19, 1927¹².

At the beginning of 1928, Nicolae Titulescu began a series of visits abroad and of January 24th arrived at Rome where the next day he had an interview with Mussolini. Rumours about the truth was the apart from the general question of the international situation, Titulescu was charged with the negotiations of a commercial convention with Italy. In his statement he said that there was no divergences between Italy and Romania and that collaboration between the two countries could not be against the interests of the Little Entente.

On February 2, 1928, Nicolae Titulescu arrived at Paris where he had conversations with Poincare', Briand and the other official personalities. There too he repeated that Romania wished for collaboration with Italy, France and England.

On June 8, 1928, the optants question came before the Council once more, and a resolution was unanimously adopted saying that while the Council deeply regretted that Romania and Hungary had failed to reach agreement the controversy ought to be settled by the states themselves. On August 29, Romania addressed a Note to Hungary suggesting the appointment of delegates to begin direct negotiations, but on September 7 Hungary replied that she would not do this. She preferred to apply again to the Council of the League¹³.

In february 1929, Romania signed the Litvinov Protocol, by which the Kellog Pact was made immediately operative between Romania and the Soviets. The Pact was signed together with the Baltic States and Poland. The signing took place at Moscow, where Romania was

¹¹ Pe larg, în I. Calafeteanu, *Revizionismul ungar și România*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1995.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ Ibidem.

represented by the Minister at Warsaw, C. Davilla. Before proceeding to the signing, Litvinov affirmed that grave and important litigious questions still remained open¹⁴.

A treaty of commerce was closed between Romania and Poland at Warsaw on June 23, 1930, to replace that of 1921. The most characteristic point of this treaty is the introduction of the principle of the most favoured nation, limited to certain fixed products. This principle is an innovation in international commercial law.

An agrarian conference was held at Warsaw during the month of August, representatives of Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and other Balkan States attending.

At the end of 1930, news was spread according to which Moscow had proposed to the Poles a pact of perpetual neutrality and non-aggression, each state obligating itself not to participate in alliances directed against one of these states, this agreement to be completed by a commercial convention. Romanian public opinion saw in this offer of the Soviets a manoeuvre intended to prevent the renewal of the Polish-Romanian treaty. At Bucharest political circles believed that Russia was continuing the old Czarist policy directed towards Constantinople. Poland answered Russia that she was disposed to sign an agreement of this kind but only if all countries bordering on Russia would do the same. The Polish-Romanian Treaty of Alliance was renewed on January 15, 1931 at Geneva, repeating almost entirely the treaty of May 26, 1926.

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¹⁴ Alexandru Vianu, Zorin Zamfir, Constantin Bușe, Gheorghe Bădescu, *Relații Internaționale în acte și documente, vol. 1 (1917-1939)*, Ed. Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1974, p. 133 și urm.

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