

THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS OF 1914 AND THE GREAT DIPLOMATIC BATTLE FOR ROMÂNIA

Part II

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Abstract: *The international crisis of July 1914 and the great diplomatic battle for Romania.*

The study used diplomatic documents as the base for a thorough analysis of the great confrontation that took place between the two military and political groups – the Central Power and the Entente, during the international crisis of July 1914. Their intentions were to attract Romania, according to their own interests, in the world war that was under way. Entente would prove to be the winner in this diplomatic battle, for whom Romania's decision to be neutral represented a success.

Due to space restrictions, this study is structured in two parts. Part I presents the aforementioned diplomatic events, starting with the crisis of July 1914 up until the outbreak of the war between the Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Part II continues this presentation with an analysis of the facts and events that led to the decision adopted by the Romanian government, as the conflict was spreading and transforming into a world war.

The study highlights that, although Romania's diplomatic treaties with the Allied Powers influenced the decision adopted by the Romanian state to a certain extent, they did not play a leading role in it. The decision adopted by the Crown Council in Sinaia on August 3rd 1914 was based exclusively on an analysis of the opportunity to apply the treaty of alliance with the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It not take into account the possibility of a political affinity with the Entente, and to an even lesser extent that going to war on the same side.

Romania's relationship with the Entente had not been discussed given the circumstances in which the option of King Carol I was to enter war alongside the Central Powers. The solution of army standby, supported by prime-minister I. I. C Bratianu and adopted by the Romanian government, was a solution that reflected Romania's real interests. At the same time, it served as a premise for a policy which supported – even if only partially – the ideal of national unity. As a consequence, Romania's foreign policy, which had taken shape in the previous period, continued on a new basis, formed by the decision of leaving the alliance with the Central Powers.

Keywords: *diplomatic treaties, demand, offer, treaty of alliance, neutrality, armed standby, national interest, external political reorientation.*

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After the outbreak of war between the Austria-Hungary and Serbia, the pressures made by both political-military groups in Bucharest to attract Romania on its side grew considerably. Assuming an extension of the war, Romania's attitude was critical. The importance of knowing its position was demanded more and more by both sides. As I have mentioned, on July 29th 1914, the King succumbed to the German pressure exerted by Waldburg, urging Prime Minister I.I.C Brătianu to prepare the public opinion in terms of the treaty of alliance with Austria-Hungary¹, even though he had declared to Czernin that Romania would remain neutral. The same day, sent a telegram to Poklewski Sazonov-Koziell, urging him to obtain a clear indication of the Romanian government's position in the event of a war between Russia and Austria-Hungary. *"Please, Sazonov wrote, send the following message to Bratianu: If there is a conflict between Austria and Serbia, we will intervene to prevent the destruction of the latter. This will be our purpose in the war with Austria, if war is inevitable. Responding in this way to the questions posed by Bratianu, please ask him firmly about Romania's position and - in doing so - convince him that **we do not exclude the possibility of advantages for Romania if it sides with us in a war against Austria** (author's underlignment). We would like to know what the point of view of the Romanian Government on this issue is".*²

The position adopted by the Romanian Prime Minister at the request made by Sazonov was highlighted by historian Serban Radulescu-Zoner, who pointed out the excellent diplomatic skills of I.I.C Bratianu: *"As it emerged from the analysis of I.I.C. Bratianu's policies during the international crisis of July 1914, he did not pursue the option of Romania openly joining the Entente from the outset, although he advocated for a gradual shift of Romania's alliances. In the international context of that time, the only solution that he saw was finishing the state unification. The pro-German King in opposition to public opinion in the country, fear an outbreak of a monarchical crisis, the danger posed by Bulgaria and finally a certain distrust of Tsarist Russia were the basis for the reserved attitude adopted by the Romanian Prime Minister to Entante's pressures for Romania intervene in the war immediately. However, he feared that the mere adoption of government neutrality he would miss the opportunity to achieve state unification with the external support of Russia and France. Through a complicated diplomatic game, the Romanian Prime Minister finally managed to convince the governments in Petersburg and Paris to give Transylvania to Romania in exchange for the neutrality adopted by the Cabinet in Bucharest"*.³

¹ Also see C. Diamandy, *Ma mission en Russie. 1914-1918*, "Revue des deux mondes", February 15th 1929, p. 816.

² Ardeleanu, Ion, Vasile Arimia, Ionel Gal, Mircea Mușat (eds), *1918 in Romania. Achieving National and State Unity of the Romanian People. External Documents (1879-1918)*, Vol. I, Scientific and Enciclopedic Publishing, Bucharest, 1983, p. 443 (to be cited as *1918 in Romania*).

³ Gh.N. Căzan, Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *Romania and Tripla Entente (1878-1914)*, Scientific and Enciclopedic Publishing, Bucharest, 1979, p. 413-414. Worth noting is that the offer was not made by Russia and France until the Crown Council of August 3rd 1914, as the author might imply.

The aforementioned historian, one of the most knowledgeable researchers of the issue, described in detail the events of submitted this "*complicated diplomatic game*"⁴, as did historian Ion M. Oprea, author of the only work dedicated to the Romanian-Russian relations in this period⁵. However, in our opinion, some assessments require certain nuances and details in order to provide better evidence of Romania's foreign policy orientation in the outbreak of World War I.

From the perspective of Romania's relations with the Entente, it was obvious that starting discussions with Russia about the benefits Romania would have by joining the Triple Entente in a continental war was of particular importance. These discussions in which, as we will see, the French diplomacy was also involved, eloquently expressed the state of relations between Romania and the Entente on the eve of the outbreak of World War I. They are also suggestive of Romania's foreign policy orientation. From a historical perspective, we consider the request made by Sazonov to Romanian Prime Minister on July 29th 1914 – in other words, the day after the outbreak of the Austro-Serbian war - to mark the beginning of the Romanian-Russian negotiations that will ultimately lead to agreement between the two countries signed on October 27th 1914 / October 10th 1914. By August 3rd 1914, talks had reached a certain stage, but without the Russian and French diplomats to provide guarantees of the union between Transylvania and Romania just by adopting neutrality. This fact was recognized by Paris and St. Petersburg as possible only through the military participation of Romania in the war on the side of the Entente.

The start of these negotiations was prepared by the entire development of the relations between Romania and Russia in the earlier period, in which the Tsar of Russia's visit to Constanta was a milestone. However, the talks were especially favored by the consultations that the Romanian government had had with the great Powers of the Entente to adopt a joint action plan that would prevent the outbreak of war. These negotiations were conducted under very strong pressure by the Central Powers to impose the Treaty of Alliance of 1883 on the Romanian government. They significantly influenced Romania's decision, which was adopted by the Crown Council in Sinaia on August 3rd 1914.

As already noted on another occasion⁶, the key goals of the Entente in its relations with Romania were related to its removal from the alliance with the Central Powers and the inclusion in the Triple Entente. In this sense, the French and Russian diplomats acted in focused and active manner. For Russia, in particular, it was essential to ensure the neutrality of Romania in the event of an Austro-Russian war, in case it could not obtain more - that is, the military cooperation against Austria-Hungary, keeping in mind the Romanian interest in national reunification. It could not get any commitment in this regard from Romanian government, neither in December 1912 on the occasion of the Grand

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 414-416.

⁵ Ion M. Oprea, *Romania and the Russian Empire. 1900-1924*, Vol. I, Albatros Publishing, Bucharest, 1998, p. 69-70.

⁶ For an extended analysis, see Nicu Pohoată, *Romania and the Triple Entente*, Cavallioti Publishing, Bucharest, 2003, *passim*.

Duke Nicholas Mikhailovich's visit in Romania during the First Balkan War, nor in June 1914, during the meetings between Sazonov and I.I.C. Bratianu. The serious international situation created by the outbreak of war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, which involved extending the conflict in the event of a Russian military intervention against Austria-Hungary, made it necessary for the Russian government. Not only to know the exact position of the Romanian government. But it also had to obtain the promise of a military cooperation from Romania. That is why Russia started negotiations with the Romanian government on the issue. During this stage, Petersburg made great demands and minimum offers to Bucharest. The greatest demands, as concluded from the instructions given by Sazonov to Poklewski on July 29th 1914, were for Romania to participate "*with us [Russia - author's note] in a war against Austria*". The minimal offers to the Romanian government were ambiguously formulated, and referred - as we pointed out - to not excluding the "*possibility of advantages for Romania*".

For the reasons mentioned above, I.I.C. Bratianu declined to specify the Romanian government's position at the request of the Minister Plenipotentiary Minister of Russia. He was tactful by leaving the door open to dialogue, while the issue of Romania's position would be considered during a government hearing. In Petersburg, Sazonov was anxious because of this. On July 29th 1914, Sir G. Buchanan, British Ambassador to Russia, reported to Sir Edward Grey that he had a conversation with Sazonov about Romania's position. On this occasion, the head of Russian diplomacy expressed "**considerable doubt about Romania's attitude in case of an outright war and he stated that he feared he King would take Austria's side, although his subjects sympathized with Russia** (author's underlinement)"⁷.

In reality, I.I.C. Bratianu considered that it an indication of Romania's position in the event of an Austro-Russian war would be premature, and limited himself to just deciding in the circumstances of the war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia - without losing sight of the perspective of any future developments in the situation. In addition, the head of the Romanian government understood that, given the importance of Romania in the event of an Austrian-Russian conflict, even mere neutrality would have a "*price*", which had to be negotiated with the Entente in the most profitable manner, according to the national interests.

Thus, during the government meeting of July 16/29 1914, the position of neutrality towards the Austrian-Serbian⁸ conflict was adopted without specifying Romania's attitude in case of an Austrian-Russian war. The Bulgarian government adopted the same position on July 29 1914. In a telegram to Sir Edward Grey, the British Ambassador in Sofia, Sir Bax-Ironside, informed in this matter: "*Romanian and Greek ministers have warned the Bulgarian government that their respective governments will use conviction to their best ability to maintain the terms of the Treaty of Bucharest and have shown*

⁷ ***British Documents on the Origins of the War (1898-1914)***, vol. XI, doc. nr. 271, p. 175. Sir G. Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, July 29th 1914 (to be cited as **B.D.O.W.**).

⁸ "The Universe", XXXII, 1914, No. 195, July 16/31 1914.

*solidarity in this matter. The Bulgarian government has instructed its representatives to inform the governments to which they are accredited that Bulgaria will follow a strict neutrality. Bulgaria's policy will, nevertheless, be an opportunistic one*⁹.

Of course, the statement of the Romanian government did not please Russia. That is why, on July 30th 1914, Sazonov sent a new telegram to Poklevsky-Koziell, the Russian Minister in Bucharest, which gave him the following instructions: "*Very confidential. If you find that it is possible to determine with the greatest precision the benefits that Romania could count on **if it takes part in the war against Austria, you will be able to declare to Bratianu categorically that we are ready to consider the annexation of Transylvania to Romania** (author's underlignment)*"¹⁰. During that time, the Russian media also displayed a special interest in Romania's attitude. Thus, the "Petersburger Herold" newspaper from July 29th 1914 wrote that Romania's interest was to release Romanians who were in Austria-Hungary, which would favor its inclusion in the Triple Entente. "Without a doubt – wrote the aforementioned newspaper – that the Triple Entente diplomacy is working as hard as it can to bring Romania on its side. The short visit of Mr. Diamandy, the Romanian minister in St. Petersburg, to Bucharest indicated that important proposals to the Romanian government were made in St. Petersburg. Romania's position will probably be clarified in a couple of days."¹¹ "Romania's plans are a great enigma", highlighted the "Petersburger Zeitung" newspaper on July 30th 1914.¹²

So, to obtain Romania's allegiance in the event of continental war, Russia declared its readiness to consider the unification of Transylvania with Romania. Compared to the previous approach of the Russian diplomacy in Bucharest, it clearly specified Petersburg's "*offer*", while the "*demand*" remained the same: participation in the war on Russia's side, against Austria-Hungary.

Another meeting of the Council of Ministers took place on July 30th 1914, the day in which Poklevsky-Koziell, the Russian Minister in Bucharest, received these instructions from Sazonov. He decided that Romania would remain neutral as long as this situation did not change, in other words as long as the conflict took place only between Serbia and Austria. Blondel expressed his dissatisfaction with the decision in his report of July 31, 1914, stating that the interest of the Triple Entente was to obtain Romania's neutrality and nothing more. In other words, Romania's neutrality towards the Serb-Austrian conflict had to be maintained in case the war broke out worldwide. Since Romania's intervention in the conflict on the side of the Entente was unlikely, the French minister expressed concern that, following pressure from the Central Powers, the Romanian government could finally decide an intervention with Germany and Austria-Hungary, thus abandoning its neutrality. Therefore, after the government meeting, Blondel met

⁹ *B.D.O.W.*, Vol. XI, Doc. No. 267, p. 173. Sir H. Bax-Ironside to Sir Edward Grey, July 29th 1914.

¹⁰ *1918 in Romania*, vol. I, p. 444.

¹¹ "Petersburger Herold", July 29th 1914.

¹² See extended excerpts from the Russian press of the period in the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives* (to be cited as *A.M.A.E.*), Stacks 71-1914, E1, Petersburg. 1914-1924, vol. 50. Misc. 1914, f. 1-57.

with several cabinet members. The content of the discussions is clearly summarized in his report: "**All my efforts have tended to show to the ministers that in my opinion Romania's true interest is to maintain the treaty of Bucharest and not let itself swayed to one side or the other, by asserting its neutrality (author's underlignment)**"¹³.

It may be noted that Blondel's position was different from that formulated by Sazonov through the above-mentioned instructions given to Poklevsky-Koziell. While Blondel pushed for Romania's neutrality in case of a world war, Sazonov requested its participation on the side of the Entente. Sazonov's instructions were quite flexible, allowing Poklevsky-Koziell, the Russian Minister in Bucharest, to adapt to the situation, as he was able to establish "*with the best accuracy the advantages that Romania could count on*". It seems that Blondel's attitude influenced Poklevsky-Koziell: both diplomats argued for Romania's neutrality in Bucharest. This fact is recorded by Al. Marghiloman in his notes of 30 and 31 July 1914: "*Poklevsky [...] tells me that Russia is only asking us for neutrality (author's underlignment); it conjures me to work in this regard. [...] Blondel, softened by now, only preaches neutrality, he is not bothered by us jumping in to help Serbia*"¹⁴.

On the morning of July 31st 1914, discussions took place between Prime Minister I.I.C. Bratianu and the Russian and French ministers accredited to Romania's capital. From Blondel's report to Viviani, worth noting is that the French diplomat tried to obtain a categorical statement from Bratianu regarding maintaining Romania's neutrality in case of a world war. The Romanian Prime Minister let the two diplomats know that he is reticent out of fear that "*the Great Powers would only treat Romania as a negligible factor, even if it stays away from conflict*". In other words, Bratianu wished to obtain assurances that by adopting this attitude, Romania could count on the support of the Entente in achieving a national-unity of the state. Blondel assured the Romanian Prime-Minister that Romania's neutrality "*would benefit our allies*" - something which France will be grateful for and, "*if general rules will occur (at the end of the war - author's note) Romania's interests will be defended*". The French diplomat stated that, during the discussion, the Russian Minister Poklevsky-Koziell made "*almost the same statement*". It is significant that, according to Blondel's account, the Russian diplomat assured Bratianu that Romania's neutrality "*would be considered (by Russia - author's rates) as a sign of friendship (author's underlignment)*". Blondel mentioned that the Romanian Prime Minister "*seemed a little troubled*" and "*did not make any formal commitments*". He noted that Romania's attitude would soon be decide in a Crown Council¹⁵.

The Russian documents referring to the talks carried out in Bucharest between I.I.C. Bratianu and Poklevsky-Koziell on July 31st 1914 gave the impression that the Russian diplomat nevertheless asked the Romanian Prime

¹³ **Documents diplomatiques français (1871-1914)**, 3^e série, Stacks XI, doc. nr. 379. Blondel to Viviani, July 31st 1914 (to be cited as **D.D.F.**).

¹⁴ Al. Marghiloman, **Political Notes. 1897-1924**, vol. I, edition and foreword by Stelian Neagoe, Scripta Publishing, Bucharest, 1993, vol. I, p. 228-229.

¹⁵ **D.D.F.**, 3^e série, Stacks XI, doc. nr. 446, p. 366-367. Blondel to Viviani, August 31st 1914.

Minister - in accordance with instructions received from Sazonov - that Romania participate in the war alongside Russia, in exchange for its support in the acquisition of Transylvania. On August 2nd, Poklevsky advised Sazonov that he sent to Bratianu the information regarding the promises made to Romania, confirming Blondel's report: "**Bratianu asked if Romania's neutrality will be considered by us as a demonstration of friendship. My answer was yes** (author's underlignment), following the general meaning of the telegram sent to me by Your Excellency"¹⁶.

On July 31st 1914, the British Minister in Bucharest, Sir G. Barclay informed Sir Edward Grey informed about the contents of the talks between the Romanian Prime Minister and the French and Russian ministers: "*My French and Russian colleagues, who until now had hope regarding Romania's attitude in case of a general conflict, are now very anxious. **They did their best this morning to get an assurance of neutrality from the Prime Minister, but he refused make this commitment** (author's underlignment) and said that the issue needs to be discussed in a Council (the Crown - author's note), where leaders of political parties will take part"*¹⁷.

Therefore, the Entente diplomats accredited in Bucharest were not sure of the effectiveness of steps taken by France and Russia in what concerned Romanian Prime Minister I.I.C. Bratianu. Given this situation, English Minister Sir G. Barclay proposed to in a new telegram on August 1st 1914 to Sir Edward Grey, the Chief British Diplomat, that the Foreign Office should support the French and Russian diplomatic efforts in Bucharest. After he indicated that he was "*unsure of Romania's attitude*", Sir G. Barclay added: "*I think that Great Britain's advice carries weight. Romania's objection to remaining neutral is that it might suffer in the case of a general understanding. The fact that Great Britain advised neutrality could reduce this fear*"¹⁸. Edward Grey did not want any British diplomatic involvement in influencing Romania's attitude. The same day, Grey stated through a telegram: "**Regarding Romania's neutrality, we cannot give any advice** (author's underlignment)"¹⁹.

On August 1st and 2nd 1914 there was an exchange of views between Sazonov and Poincaré, through the Russian ambassador in Paris, Izvolsky. Both the Russian foreign minister and the president of France considered that it must promise Transylvania to Romania, in order to obtain its participation in war alongside the Entente. Sazonov informed Poklevsky-Koziell about these discussions and gave him instructions that Transylvania should be promised to Romania, in order to produce the desired effect²⁰.

On August 2nd 1914, Blondel draft a new report for Viviani in which he assessed the prospect of Romania's decision to be in accordance with the interests

¹⁶ *Documents diplomatique secrets russes, 1914-1917*, Paris, Payot, 1928, p. 168-169; *Mejdunarodnaia Otnosenija v epohu Imperializma* (to be cited as *M.O.E.I.*), Stacks V, doc. nr. 469, p. 372.

¹⁷ *B.D.O.W.*, vol. XI, doc. nr. 350. Sir G. Barclay to Sir Edward Grey, July 31st 1914.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 416, p. 248. Sir G. Barclay to Sir Edward Grey, August 1st 1914.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 432, p. 255. Sir Edward Grey to Sir G. Barclay, August 1st 1914.

²⁰ For a detailed analysis, see A. Iordache, *Romania's Political Reorientation and Armed Neutrality. 1914-1916*, Paideia Publishing, Bucharest, 1998, p. 96.

of the Entente. Among others, the French diplomat stated that *"two trends are manifested in the cabinet: one driven by the king, whose personal sentiments continue to be attracted to the Triple Entente, the other more independent, which abhors the cooperation with Austria. The King is trying to persuade the latter of the superiority of the Triple Entente and the benefits Romania would have by siding with the strongest, he added that his commitments to Emperor Franz Joseph would oblige him to go to Austria and that the latter would commit, in case of victory, to the cession of Basarabia to Romania. In the opposing camp, Blondel continued, there are objections that Romania's interest is to never end hope of possessing Transylvania and that – without Russia's help – this national ideal would have to be abandoned. In these circumstances, **the wisest course would be to preserve complete freedom of action and complete neutrality, unless one thinks that it is absolutely necessary to join the Russian side** (author's underlining)". Blondel pointed out that he never ceased to advocate neutrality, trying to influence his Russian counterpart in this regard as well. The French diplomat warned Poklevsky-Koziell that, seeing the opinion and sentiments of the King, *"the best course would be to act with prudence, in other words in stages"*. As such, in the first stage it would be possible to obtain Romania's neutrality. He argued that such a decision *"would be, in fact, more favorable to Russia than to Austria"* and Romania, *"pledging to respect the Treaty of Bucharest, would be determined to rule itself against Austria, should this power try to bring about change"*. **"My colleague - Blondel stated- who has always asked for the cooperation of the Romanian army, was able to convince himself that it was not appropriate to insist on this at that time. I agree with him and I continued the propaganda for neutrality..."**. The French diplomat pointed out that very heated discussions had taken place among Romanian politicians about the attitude that should be adopted by their government. Blondel said that he followed these with the utmost care, encouraging those who were in favor of neutrality and trying to persuade the opponents of the idea. The same report also mentioned that *"after announcing the Germany's declaration of war to Russia, the King decided to convene the Crown Council, where he called the heads of opposition parties and some former ministers, as well as the President of the Chamber of Deputies, in addition to ministers"*²¹.*

It is clear that the Russian and French diplomats have diligently sought to influence Romania's attitude at the time of the World War I outbreak. There is no doubt that both Russia and France would have wanted Romania to join the Entente, but gradually both St. Petersburg and Paris understood that just a declaration of neutrality would have been a real success. Before responsible officials in Bucharest made a decision, the French and Russian diplomats had no certainty that the great diplomatic battle for Romania had been won. While promises to support the union of Transylvania with Romania had been made - but only in exchange for joining the war and not just for neutrality - the

²¹ **D.D.F.**, 3^e série, Stacks XI, doc. nr. 633, p. 484-485. Blondel to Viviani, August 2nd 1914.

Romanian government could not obtain any real guarantees to this effect²². Such guarantees could be given only through an agreement. This could not happen in the circumstances, and the Romanian government avoided making any statements, even verbal ones, that could have meant making a commitment. Both pressures from the Central Powers for the implementation of the Treaty of Alliance, and the position of King Carol I obviously contributed to it. However, the diplomatic contacts with the Entente in which the French diplomacy was involved - that basically had the significance of Romanian-Russian negotiations - formed a real basis for continuing towards an agreement in this respect. In addition, the assurances that Romania's neutrality would be interpreted as a gesture of friendship by the Entente were also deciding factors and of course influenced the decision makers in Bucharest.

As it is known, the decision regarding Romania's position towards the global conflict was adopted in the Crown Council meeting of August 3rd 1914, held in Sinaia. Much has been written in the Romanian historiography about this Crown Council meeting, and the facts are too well known to insist on them²³. We will limit ourselves to presenting some brief considerations about the significance of armed expectative decision that was decided at the meeting - and what role it played in Romania's relations with the Great Powers that were in a political-military opposition, particularly with those of the Entente.

Entente's diplomacy appreciated the decision taken by the Crown Council in Sinaia. It was in fact the culmination of a long period of diplomatic efforts to remove Romania from the political orbit of the Central Powers. Even if it failed to attract Romania on the side of the Entente, Romania's attitude was basically favorable to its military actions. In addition, there was hope ahead of Romania's joining the conflict on its part, given its major interests in the national reunification. The reorientation of Romanian foreign policy in the period before the outbreak of war constitutes an important prerequisite for political togetherness. Rightly, the neutrality decided during the Crown Council in Sinaia was appreciated as an important victory of the Entente in the great diplomatic battle for Romania.

Blondel believed that the solution ultimately adopted was "*quite satisfactory*" and in line with his forecasts. In his view, Romania was "*sufficiently detached from Austria to remain neutral in the Austrian-Russian conflict*"²⁴. As seen in the previous pages, Blondel had been a strong advocate for neutrality. His long stay in Romania and the experience as a diplomat enabled him to consider

²² The note made by historian Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner according to which the Crown Council's interpretation of the treaty with the Triple Alliance took place "*after the government had received guarantees from the Entente*" seems exaggerated. See Gh. N. Căzan, Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *op. cit.*, p. 416.

²³ Especially see G. Fotino, *Une séance historique au Conseil de la Couronne*, "Revue des deux mondes", August 1st 1930, p. 306-311; A. Iordache, *op. cit.*, p. 98-118; Ion Mamina, *Crown Councils*, Enciclopedic Publishing, Bucharest, 1997, p. 27-52. I.G. Duca left us a significant account of the context in which this decision of historic importance for Romania's future was made. See M. Mușat, I. Ardeleanu, *From the Getae-Dacian State to the Romanian Unified State*, Scientific and Enciclopedic Publishing, Bucharest, 1983, p. 442-444.

²⁴ *D.D.F.*, 3^e série, Stacks XI, doc. nr. 633, p. 484-486.

the future trends of the Romanian foreign policy in a realistic way. He viewed the request for Romania to join the war on the side of the Entente, as the Russian diplomacy envisioned, as unrealistic. In his opinion, attracting Romania on the side of the Entente had to be done in stages, and the neutrality declared at the outbreak of the war marked the completion of an initial period of diplomatic efforts, paving the way for the second phase, that would bring Romania closer to the Entente. Given the national interests for state unification, Blondel believed that, through force of circumstances, Romania would eventually be forced to act against Austria-Hungary²⁵.

Unlike Blondel, Paléologue, the French ambassador in St. Petersburg, shared Sazonov's point of view²⁶. The Russian Foreign Minister had put his hopes in attracting Romania in war on the side of the Entente war and to this effect he had written instructions to Poklevsky-Koziell, the Russian Minister in Bucharest. The promise of supporting the unification of Transylvania with Romania had been the stakes of his policy of attracting Romania. Therefore, from the Russian point of view, the neutrality decided during the Crown Council in Sinaia had been a partial success. That is why the efforts to attract Romania into war on the side of the Entente continued.

Romanian-Russian relations during the outbreak of the war offered a good basis for the Russian diplomacy. In fact, diplomatic negotiations had taken place between Russia and Romania, and their continuation was facilitated by the shift in Romania's foreign policy. In our opinion, it is without a doubt that there was continuity in the development of Romanian-Russian negotiations. The decision made by the Crown Council on August 3rd 1914 not only did not stop them, but it also accelerated them. At the same time, we can state that the decision offered other grounds, because the decision of neutrality adopted on that occasion was a proof that Romania was not yet ready to follow the Central Powers in war. If attracting Romania in war on Russia's side would not be ultimately possible, at least maintaining its neutrality was advantageous from a military perspective. Romania represented a true defense shield for its South-Eastern flank through its geographical position.

It is thus understandable why Sazonov acted strongly and quickly to conclude an agreement between Romania and Russia. Thus, only two days after the Crown Council meeting in Sinaia, on August 5th 1914, C. Diamandy sent the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania news about Sazonov's delivery of a draft text on the conclusion of a Romanian-Russian agreement²⁷. Submitted in a relatively short period, the project was certainly the result of lengthy negotiations between Bucharest and St. Petersburg, prior to the declaration of neutrality, thus proving the continuity of Romania's foreign policy shift. The draft convention stipulated Romania's full engagement in a military cooperation with Russia against Austria-Hungary, from the date when the agreement was signed, in exchange for Russia's commitment *"to not stop the war against Austria-*

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ V. Vesa, *Romania and France at the Beginning of the 20th Century (1900-1916). Pages of Diplomatic History*, Dacia Publishing, Cluj-Napoca, 1975, p. 63.

²⁷ *A.M.A.E.*, Stacks 71-1914, E2, Part II, vol. 32, Political Reports from Petersburg, f. 28.

*Hungary before the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy territories inhabited by Romanian population were reunited to the Crown of Romania*²⁸". The boundaries of those territories were established in a chart attached to the agreement.

It may be noted that the draft convention specified, as the Russian diplomacy had demanded before the war, Romania's military cooperation and not its neutrality. Gradually, following negotiations, the position of the Russian diplomacy evolved from the claim to Romania's military cooperation to simply requesting a benevolent neutrality in exchange for guaranteeing the union of the Romanian provinces in Austria-Hungary. The Romanian-Russian Agreement was finally signed on September 27th 1914 / October 10th on these new fundamentals, and reflects the importance that Russia attached to Romania in the context of the war²⁹.

In what concerns Britain, the third partner of the Triple Entente, one can note the deliberate policy of the Foreign Office not to directly involve itself in influencing Romania's decision regarding the attitude it was going to take. After Britain entered the war, the London cabinet operated jointly with its allies. Significant in this situation is that, even when Sazonov proposed to the Romanian government the above-mentioned Romanian-Russian draft convention, Romania was also given assurances that it would receive French-British guarantees for the effective enforcement of its provisions, in addition to the guarantees provided by Russia.

Given the passive role that Britain played in the reorientation of the Romanian foreign policy, we can say with certainty that the victory in the great diplomatic battle for Romania belonged in fact to the French-Russian diplomacy. Without a doubt, the Romania's neutrality was favorable to the Entente and that is why the French-Russian diplomacy did everything possible to achieve the result. However, an important clarification is necessary. As noted, the Crown Council's decision was not a fortuitous act, determined by the success or failure of one diplomacy or another. Whatever the qualities of the Entente diplomats, if Romania's interests did not require such a position to be adopted, they would have had no success³⁰. In this context, we consider that the Entente diplomacy, played no determining role, although it influenced the reorientation of Romanian foreign policy. What played a fundamental role in deciding a new course of foreign policy was the "*national factor*", the strong pressure of the public opinion to achieve national and state unity. This true "*deep force*" made Romania's disengagement from the Triple Alliance and reorientation towards the Entente a necessary decision, whose support was essential to reaching this national ideal. So, Romania's great interests prevailed.

As it is well known, the armed expectative option (and not neutrality) adopted by the Crown Council, covered not only border defense in circumstances of war, but also the possibility of obtaining guarantees from Russia and France

²⁸ *M.O.E.I.*, Stacks VI, Part I, Doc. No. 22, p. 20-21.

²⁹ On the Romanian-Russian Treaty of September 27/ October 10 1914, see in details Ion M. Oprea, *op. cit.*, p. 71-73; A. Iordache, *op. cit.*, p. 120-129.

³⁰ See V. Vesa, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

towards attaining national unity. At the same time, by adopting armed expectative, Romania could keep up a safety valve towards the Central Powers until the right time. The Romanian government's decision has been presented to them as a friendly act³¹.

In conclusion, although Romania's diplomatic negotiations with the Entente influenced, to some extent, the decision made by the Romanian state, they had no determining role. The decision taken by the Crown Council on August 3rd 1914 in Sinaia was based solely on analyzing the opportunity of implementing the treaty of alliance with Austria-Hungary. It did not take into consideration the possibility of a political agreement with the Entente, much less an entry in war on its side. Romania's relations with the Entente were not discussed in the circumstances in which the option of King Carol I was to enter war alongside the Central Powers. The armed expectative option, supported by Prime Minister I.I.C. Bratianu and adopted by the Romanian government, was a solution in accordance with Romania's real interests and a prerequisite for a policy in accordance with the ideal of achieving national and state unity, even partially. Thus, Romania's foreign policy shift towards the Entente, which had begun in the earlier period, continued on a new basis, conferred by the decision to disengage from the alliance with the Central Powers. It was a position that allowed the Romanian government to conclude the military agreements with the Entente in August 1916, after two years of long and complicated diplomatic negotiations political and military agreements, through which it joined the Entente in the war for reunification of the nation³².

³¹ Gh.N. Căzan, Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *op. cit.*, p. 418.

³² On Romania's relations with the Entente between 1914 and 1916, especially see A. Iordache, *op. cit.*, p. 119-238.