

ROMANIA AND THE ENTENTE DURING THE CONFERENCE IN SANKT PETERSBURG (MARCH-MAY 1913)

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Abstract: *Romania and the Entente during the Conference in Sankt Petersburg (March-May 1913)*

The author reconstitutes, by studying the afferent diplomatic documents, the development of the works of the Sankt Petersburg Conference and analyzes the implications that the decisions taken regarding this event had upon Romania's external politics.

The author's scientific approach focuses on the analysis of the relations between Romania and the Great Powers, situated in opposite politico-military groups, the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. If the previous research had as purpose the study of the relations between Romania and the Triple Alliance, the author now thoroughly investigates the Romania's relations with the Triple Entente.

In this context, the study's essential contribution in the research regarding the orientation of Romania's external politics, with respect to the politico-military groups of the Great Powers, during the Balkan Wars, an extremely complex and controversial problem in historiography.

Keywords: *The Romania-Bulgaria litigation, the politico-military groups of the Great Powers, the dissipation of the Balkan Alliance, the Great Powers agreement, external politics orientation, external politics reorientation.*

1. Historiographical considerations

In the historiography dedicated to the study of international relations history, a theory has been formulated, according to which Silistra was received by Romania by the St. Petersburg Protocol, signed on April 2/ May 9, 1913, primarily if not exclusively, thanks to the help of the Great Powers of the Triple Alliance¹. That assessment was consecrated in the Romanian historiography, with irrefutable scientific reputation by the historian Serban Radulescu-Zoner, coauthor of the most documented work on Romania's relations with the Triple Alliance. The Romanian historian has also the merit to have showed that between Austria-Hungary and Germany there have been expressed, on that occasion, important differences of position. During the Conference of Great Power ambassadors in Sankt Petersburg, unlike Germany, which had been supporting without reserves the claim of the Romanian government to obtain Silistra from Bulgaria, Austria-Hungary conditioned the Silistra concession on obtaining a compensation for Bulgaria on account of Greece. The Austria-Hungary claim not only

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¹This conclusion was reached by the historian Ernst Ebel, based on the papers of the Conference in St. Petersburg. View E. Ebel, *Rumänien und die Mittelmächte von der russisch-türkischen krise 1877/1878 bis zum Bukarester Frieden vom 10 august 1913*, (Berlin, 1939), Nachdruck, Vaduz, 1965, p. 185-192.

was rejected by the ambassadors of the other Great Powers, at first but it struck primarily categorical opposition of Berlin, that did not trust the government in Sofia and put great value on a possible alliance with Greece. In the opinion of the German diplomacy, Bulgaria was a country which would always go along with Russia and, as such, Berlin unconditionally supported the Romanian government's demands. According to some relevant records, it was estimated properly that the disagreement between Berlin and Vienna in respect to the Balkan problems has created, immediately after the Sankt Petersburg Conference, the facility of great maneuver freedom of the Romanian diplomacy within the Triple Alliance².

If the relations between Romania and The Triple Alliance during The Sankt Petersburg Conference have been highlighted by historical research, the relations between Romania and the Great Powers of The Triple Entente were less investigated. In these circumstances, as far as we are concerned, we accomplished, for the first time in the Romanian historiography, a synthesis of Romania and The Triple Entente relations, occasion with which we approached the relations that Romania had with The Great Powers that belonged to this political-military groups during The Sankt Petersburg Conference³. In the current study, maintaining our conclusion formulated long ago, with the purpose of a deeper supporting documentation, we will reckon on the Great Powers of The Triple Entente's detailed analysis of diplomatic documents, especially on English and French diplomatic correspondence. Furthermore, the original text was re-organized in order to highlight with more emphasis the personal contribution of the specified theme of research.

From our point of view, the historiographical argumentation regarding the exclusive role of The Triple Alliance in the concession of Silistra to the Romanian state, we believe that although very strict, it should be more nuanced, for highlighting some role of Russian diplomacy, if the evolution of Romania's relations with The Great Powers of the Triple Entente is analysed. As a matter of fact, the final solution adopted by the ambassadors at the Conference in Sankt Petersburg regarding the Romanian-Bulgarian litigation was possible through the acceptance by Russia of the minimum demands of the Romanian Government, fact that led to the granting of concessions from England and also from France. As we shall see, Sazonov, the chief of the Russian diplomacy, assumed the merit in adopting The Sankt Petersburg Conference decisions. What were the factors which determined this spectacular evolution of position of The Great Powers of The Triple Entente in the problem of the Romanian-Bulgarian territorial dispute, from one of supporting Bulgaria in a very hostile form to Romania, to one favorable to the Romanian state? Was this evidence of the beginnings of a reorientation in the foreign policy of Romania to the Triple Entente? How could the unanimous vote of the Great Powers, belonging to both political and military groups oppose to the concession of Silistra to Romania? Could that be a victory of the Romanian diplomacy or a firm decision of The Great Powers? Was the respective order the result of a settlement or of mediation?

² Gh.N. Căzan, Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *Romania and the Triple Alliance (1878-1914)*, Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing, Bucharest.1979, p. 337.

³ See Nicu Pohoăț, *Romania and the Triple Entente*, Cavallioti Publishing, Bucharest, 2003, p. 109-113, 121-140.

These are some essential questions which will be discussed and which will find an answer in the present study.

2. Romania's Relations with the Entente during the Ambassadors' Conference in Sankt Petersburg

Between March 18 and 31, 1913 the works of the Conference of the ambassadors in Sankt Petersburg were opened for the settlement of the Romanian-Bulgarian dispute.

In the first meeting⁴, the Great Powers representatives presented their own position. The ambassadors of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, who had had a preparatory meeting on March 24, 1913, to agree on the matter⁵, supported the Romanian government's demands, firstly taking into account the requirement over Silistra. The ambassador of Austria-Hungary asked that Salonica was offered as indemnification to Bulgaria. The ambassadors of England, France and Russia opposed to the Silistra concession by Bulgaria and, consequently, to the offering of Salonica as indemnification. Sir Buchanan, the England ambassador, absolutely declared himself in favour of Bulgaria, evincing that the acceptance of the Romanian requirements could be a proof that "*force principle prevails over the law*". He argued that "*such a proceeding can be justified only by the law principle of the strongest*". Completely excluding such a solution, Sir G. Buchanan evinced that the Romanian claim of Silistra was supported by "no solid argument", especially if the fortifications were going to be destroyed. To maintain friendly relations between the two states, in his view, "it is *easier for a country to give up an aspiration than the other yield a territory*". Although in principle he agreed to facilitate peace and the future Bulgarian-Romanian relations and consented to give Romania a little strategic advantage, Sir G. Buchanan, to Sazonov's prior request, did not propose what he originally intended. Initially, Sazonov had not agreed with a strategic border rectification and thought that, even if Silistra would be given to Romania, Bulgaria should keep the two triangles asked for by Romania⁶. Delcassé disapproved by all means the proposal of Austria-Hungary ambassador to offer to Bulgaria Salonica as indemnification, because Greece was determined to keep it. From this perspective, to the Romanian-Bulgarian dispute there might be added a Greek-Bulgarian conflict, which would not be in favor of restoring peace in the Balkans. Moreover, the French ambassador added that the conference did not have summons to discuss issues relating to compensations, but only

⁴ To reconstitute the first meeting of the Conference in St. Petersburg, view *British Documents on the Origins of the War (1898-1914)*, (further cited as *B.D.O.W.*), London, 1934, vol. IX, Second Part, doc. nr. 769, p. 627-628. Sir George Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, 1 April 1913; *Documents diplomatiques français (1871-1914)*, (further cited as *D.D.F.*), 3-e Série (1911-1914), Paris, 1933, vol. VI, doc. nr. 145, p. 185-187. Delcassé to Pichon, 1 April 1913.

⁵ *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette. 1871-1914. Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes*, Berlin, 1926, vol. 34, II, doc. nr. 13041.

⁶ Romanian-Bulgarian border in the southern part of Dobrogea has the form of a "ricrac" (/\/\), so that a straight border adjustment requested by the Romanian side, resulted in the following two triangles, that would be incorporated into the Romanian state. During previous negotiations between Romania and Bulgaria, Bulgaria had vehemently denied the request of Romania, which it considered unjustified.

the issue of the Romanian-Bulgarian dispute. In this regard, Delcassé showed that Bulgaria should agree to a frontier rectification, but the size of the sacrifice that it could bear had to be determined. In his conception, this sacrifice which would be required should not produce an injury to the soul of Bulgarians which would be hard to heal in time. So he warned that “*we should be dominated by general care to lay out the future, to not make mischief between Romania and Bulgaria, but, on the contrary, to increase the bonds of trust and mutual friendship between them, and thereby to concur at creating a stable working state in the Balkans, for the benefit of general peace*”.

Sazonov demonstrated that the Romanian requirements couldn't be justified on any principle of international law. He opposed to Silistra being conceded, showing that Bulgaria had inclusive emotional interests, being the first Episcopal residence of the Bulgarian church; he also opposed firmly to the idea that Salonic be conceded by Greece as indemnification to Bulgaria. The only thing that Sazonov could allow was to consider to what extent the claims with strategic character formulated by Romania could be taken into account.

In a long conversation which followed, no progress was made, except for the fact that it was concluded that those concessions made by Bulgaria (nothing was mentioned about Danev's proposal to Sazonov!) could be regarded just as indicating the extent to which the Bulgarian part was ready to accept to solve the problem. Germany and Austria's ambassadors continued to require firmly that the Romanian claims should be accomplished. Sir G. Buchanan showed, in reply, that the Bulgarian proposal had been made with the only purpose to save Silistra. None of the parties wished to submit a final proposal, and Austria's ambassador, after all, asked a hold of works until April 4, 1913, in order to consult his government.

In the second ambassadors' conference, Delcassé proposed an agreement project which included what Danev had announced, taking also the consent of Sazonov and G. Buchanan. According to this project, where it was agreed to inform the respective governments to obtain the approval, Silistra should have been conceded to Bulgaria, on condition that Romania give up all other claims. Bulgaria was not to build any fortification along the Silistra frontier to the Black Sea, and Romania was to pay compensation to those residents of Silistra who wanted to live on the Bulgarian territory. The proposal, made when the signs of the Balkan Alliance collapse were obviously increasing, encountered difficulties from the Triple Alliance ambassadors' part, because they had to take into consideration the frontier line Silistra-Balcik, claimed by Romanian government. No decision was taken, all the ambassadors informing their governments and waiting for new instructions. In his confidential report to Pichon, Declasse added: “*we could have conceded more (author's emphasis), but it is possible that the agreement be made on this basis, which would satisfy the desire which you have expressed, to spare Romania without bringing injuries to Bulgaria (author's emphasis)*”.⁷

At the third meeting, the Austria-Hungary, Italy and Germany ambassadors, accepted that Silistra concession to Romania means for them paramount satisfaction. However they tried to obtain toward the Black Sea another concession, also reiterating the old proposal with regard to according the Salonic as indemnification to Bulgaria.

⁷ *D.D.F.*, vol. VI, doc. nr. 191, p. 232-233. Delcassé to Pichon, 4 April 1913.

The Triple Entente ambassadors did not accept the proposals, arguing that the conference mission is “to bring together, but not to impose all Romanian claims to a nation, which exalted by its victories, is already tempted to accept none.”⁸

Summing up the content of the last two meetings, Sir G. Buchanan informed the Foreign Office: “the intercession of the French ambassador, who suggested that Silistra could be ceded if Romania will renounce at all territorial requirements, changed the course of discussion, which was focused around the issue of the two triangles and the several coastline kilometers south Mangalia, that initially Bulgaria had offered to cede to Romania. Mr. Sazonov, Mr. Delcassé and I also declared that we would not agree to cede anything else than Silistra and that count Thurn’s indemnification proposals (Austria-Hungary ambassador - author’s note.) would only lead to further complications and could may delay the peace conclusion.”⁹

At the April 12, 1913 conference, the Austria-Hungary, Italy and Germany representatives tried to obtain for Romania new territorial concessions aiming the border expansion to the South and the Black Sea costal area. The Austria-Hungary representatives also asked the grant of Samothrace island as indemnification to Bulgaria. The proposals were rejected by The Triple Entente representatives, adding that they will not accept any other concession, because the most important claims of Romania had been answered¹⁰.

On April 15, 1913, a written agreement was bound, on the basis of the concessions that the Great Powers of the Triple Entente agreed upon. The agreement was possible because the discrepancies of the Balkans allies - Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece, were more obvious, the Balkan Alliance collapse being predictable; in the new context, “*the attitude of the Great Powers of The Triple Entente witnessed certain changes in Romania’s favour (author’s emphasis)*”; the Great Powers were careful that, while supporting Bulgaria, to also spare Romania as much as possible in order to attract it in their sphere of influence and thereby take it out from the orbit of Triple Alliance sphere of influence. The agreement provided the Romanian concession of Silistra, the demolition of the fortifications along the border, the compensatory financing of Silistra residents who preferred to go on Bulgarian territory and guaranteeing the kuto-vlahs national rights in Bulgaria, according to the Bulgarian delegation statement made in London and recorded to the Protocol of the 16/29 January 1913¹¹.

On April 16, 1913, Sir G. Buchanan summed up for Sir Edward Grey the content of the fourth meeting of the Ambassadors’ Conference, adding the meeting protocol. Actually, Sir G. Buchanan related that the German ambassador, count Pourtales suggested that Bulgaria could give up a few kilometers of coast in return for commitment from Romania to build a bridge over the Danube at Şiştovo. This could be, according to his declaration, “a very convenient arrangement for Bulgaria”. The English ambassador opposed, saying that he refuses “to participate in any arrangement which would require any new sacrifice for Bulgaria”. However he noted that he would not raise any objection if Sazonov, informing them of the Bulgarian

⁸ *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 228, p. 283. Delcassé to Pichon, 7 April 1913.

⁹ *B.D.O.W.*, vol. IX,4 Part, doc. nr. 828, p. 670-673. Sir G. Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, 10 April 1913.

¹⁰ *D.D.F.*, vol. VI, doc. nr. 278, p. 332-333. Delcassé to Pichon, 12 April 1913.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, vol. VI, doc. nr. 308, p. 363-364. Delcassé to Pichon, 15 April 1913.

government decision on the conceding of Silistra, would inform the Bulgarian government that the Romanian government was prepared to build a bridge over the Danube in exchange for a few kilometers of the Sistovo coastline. *“If such an arrangement had offered all the advantages attributed to it by Count Pourtalès, the Bulgarian government would have had to accept it gladly, without questions, but I cannot agree - said Sir G. Buchanan – to this being part of our decision, because it would seem that we want to impose this arrangement in Bulgaria”*. Sazonov said immediately that he was ready to do as had been suggested, but as Count Pourtalès did not insist, the problem was left aside. Austria’s ambassador insisted on Bulgaria receiving compensation for any territorial concession it should do and suggested that Thassos and Samothrace should be granted to Bulgaria. Sazonov reminded that Bulgaria was already secured with Thassos possession, while Délcassé showed that the ambassadors meeting does not have summons to dispose by Samothrace more than Salonic.

Because meanwhile a series of articles appeared in the press, with unfounded information about the works of the Ambassadors’ Conference, Sazonov wanted to make an official statement showing their purely speculative nature and mentioned that only the final result of negotiations would be communicated. In this context Sazonov stated Russia's position: *“From the beginning Russia considered as being its duty to not support either of the two parts but to try to reconcile them. Thanks to this principle, the Russian government managed to prevent between the two neighboring countries the danger of a crisis. Recognition of this conciliatory and unbiased attitude of Russia caused both sides to choose St. Petersburg as the place for the Conference. Without anticipating the Conference decision, the Minister of Foreign Affairs (of Russia – author’s note.), who is constantly open to the views of both parties, may announce in advance that Russia will agree to sign only a decision acceptable to both sides”*¹².

During the Conference, The Triple Alliance ambassadors continued to insist on the idea that Romania should receive also other territories. Because the Triple Entente ambassadors refused to accept a conceding of any territory along the Black Sea coast, they required some concessions close to the two triangles, arguing that the public opinion in Romania will not be under any circumstances pleased and that the Government’s position would be affected and even the position of King Carol would be compromised.

Asked by Sazonov to express his point of view, Sir G. Buchanan declared that he had instructions to *“not support either of the two parties”* and rather wanted to reach a *“decision based on fairness and the principle of justice”*. The English ambassador added: *“In order to justify Silistra’s conceding „no principles have been stated (author’s emphasis)[...] I have the utmost respect and great admiration for His Majesty (King Carol-author’s note.) and I don't want to create more difficulties. It is however impossible to put on the throne of his Majesty crown jewels taken from Bulgaria (author’s emphasis) and by consenting to Silistra’s conceding we went as far as possible in this direction. Many things have been said about finding compensation elsewhere for Bulgaria, and we fully accepted that it was unfair that only Bulgaria*

¹² *B.D.O.W.*, vol. IX, Second part, doc. nr. 853, p. 693-694. Sir G. Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, 16 April 1913.

among all allies, emphasizing that all have equally benefitted from Romania's neutrality, to be summoned to pay its "petite notes". As yet we have no summons to dispose of any territory which before the war belonged to Turkey, there is no material compensation which we could offer to Bulgaria and, if Silistra conceding, in exchange for solving all claims of Romania, were not accepted, it would be impossible to explain this satisfactorily to the Russian or the Bulgarian public opinion. Therefore, we cannot consent to another border rectification, and if the Conference works stopped, the responsibility would not be of those who have done by far the biggest concession".

Presenting the stance expressed, Sir G. Buchanan added in his report to the British Foreign Minister that *"the French ambassador and Mr. Sazonov talked, also, firmly in the same sense and, after several discussions, the Austrian Ambassador said that he should present once again the problem to his government"*¹³.

The discussions were resumed on April 17, 1913, the ambassadors of Austria, Germany and Italy announcing that *"their governments will not push for conceding other land than Silistra"*¹⁴.

The final text of the agreement was agreed on¹⁵, following that this be approved firstly by the respective governments, then signed and communicated to the Romanian and Bulgarian governments, indicating that until after the Peace Conference in London, this should not be made public.

After two days, Sir H. Bax Ironside, the British ambassador to Sofia, transmitted information about Greece and Serbia's negotiations to Foreign Office, regarding the prospect of negotiations between Greece and the Ottoman Empire, after the Peace Treaty would have been signed, as well as regarding the commencement of negotiations between the Ottoman Empire and Serbia, all of a secret nature, and which were aiming at the achievement of anti-Bulgarian defensive alliances.

The English ambassador indicated in this context: *"I believe that after the Silistra conceding, both Bulgaria and Serbia are trying to reach the agreement with Romania. The former foresees that, in the near future, it will need a special friend, and the latter would like to bring Romania beside it in Russia's enclosure (author's emphasis). I do not dare to predict which of these two policies may succeed, but in any case, you will notice that the tendency is to isolate Bulgaria. So, it seems that there are few chances that the Balkan League could resist (author's emphasis)."*

Referring to Bulgaria, the English ambassador stated: *"To meet goals, it will act as dictated by Austria"*¹⁶ (author's emphasis).

On April 20, 1913, the French ambassador in Bucharest, C. Blondel, informed the French Foreign Affairs Minister, about a media campaign that was claiming that France and England had shown a hostile attitude toward Romania at St. Petersburg Conference, the ambassadors of both countries supporting the interests of Bulgaria and rejecting proposals of the Triple Alliance, backed by Russia, made in favor of Romania. Blondel publicly denied these *"tendentious fantasies"*. In the report by Pichon, the French diplomat expressed his *"conviction that these rumors are spread by*

¹³ *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 854, p. 695-696. Sir G. Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, 16 April 1913.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 858, p. 698-699. Sir G. Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, 17 April 1913.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 856, p. 697. Sir G. Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, 17 April 1913.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 864, p. 703-704. Sir H. Bax-Ironside to Sir A. Nicolson, 19 April 1913.

those who are interested in making us more suspect to Romania, as they fear a movement of opinion in favour of a revival of Romania's foreign policy (author's emphasis)". Expressing regret over the continuation of such a press campaign, because the decisions of the St. Petersburg Conference were announced late, Blondel warned that this situation *"is exploited by our opponents and encourages maneuvers that they do in order to take away from us the friendly attitudes which began to sincerely appear."*¹⁷

Two days later, C. Blondel reported that among the initiators of such media campaigns could be no other than the Minister of Italy in Bucharest, baron Fasciotti, who, according to *"the most reliable sources"*, had intervened in some newspapers editorials in order to facilitate the opinion movement *"in a hostile way towards the Triple Entente"*. In this case, Blondel showed that his efforts, as well as those of his Russian counterpart, were *"to thwart this campaign"* highlighting *"The Triple Entente conciliatory role"* in solving the Romanian and Bulgarian dispute. The French diplomat required instructions from Paris, which would enable *"to weaken the arguments that the Italian Minister keeps going on with, with aggressive perseverance, to multiply them, in order to misappropriate Romania from its whole evolution favorable for The Triple Entente"*¹⁸ (author's emphasis)."

On April 28, 1913, the Bulgarian minister in Petersburg asked from the Ambassadors Conference the removal from the final text of the paragraph in which it was written that the Bulgarian government had willingly accepted Silistra conceding. The application, motivated by domestic political reasons in order that the Gheșov's cabinet should not be accused by his opponents for this conceding, was accepted, even if Delcassé had already signed the original text and the Austrian ambassador objected that in this case, *"nothing remains from the proposal he made in favour to Bulgaria"*¹⁹.

On May 6, 1913, Sir G. Buchanan informed Sir Edward Grey that the final text had not been signed yet, because Austria's ambassador, as a result of the modifications that occurred, was waiting for Vienna's approval. Reiterating his claims about any territorial compensation for Bulgaria, the Austria-Hungary's ambassador encountered Sazonov's categorical opposition who *"declared the situation as being unacceptable"*. Subsequently, Sazonov said to Sir G. Buchanan that *"Austria's obvious attempt to convince Bulgaria that our attitude was unfriendly did not frustrate Austria from all its efforts"*. Sir G. Buchanan informed Grey that Sazonov *"was taking steps to correct this impression. Perhaps his Majesty's minister in Sofia could make known to Bulgaria that we did the best to defend its interests"*²⁰. In fact this concern stood also in the attention of the England diplomacy. In this respect, Sir Edward Grey was giving instructions to the English ambassador in Sofia, Sir H. Bax-Ironside: *You should, in the manner you find it the most appropriate, make known to the Bulgarian government, that the attitude was neutral and that we always had in view the*

¹⁷ *D.D.F.*, 3^e série, tome VI, doc. nr. 343, p. 390. Blondel to Pichon, 20 April 1913.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 360, p. 411-413. Blondel to Pichon, 22 April 1913.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 411, p. 470-471. Doulcet, France's charge d'affaires in St. Petersburg, to Pichon, 28 April 1913.

²⁰ *B.D.O.W.*, vol. IX, Second part, doc. nr. 957, p. 773. Sir G. Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, 6 May 1913.

*Bulgarian interests and we were animated only by the desire to see the problem solved in a manner as fair and peaceful as possible*²¹.

With the approval of all governments of the Great Powers, on May 9, 1913, at Sankt Petersburg Conference the licensed ambassadors signed the agreement.²²

3. Romania and the Entente in the context of applying the decisions of the Ambassadors Conference in St. Petersburg

On May 12, 1913, Blondel sent to the French Foreign Affairs Minister, Pichon, a report that reveals the politicians' opinions about the decision taken at the St. Petersburg Conference. The French minister discussed on this issue with P.P. Carp, I.I.C. Bratianu, Titu Maiorescu and Take Ionescu. If P.P. Carp and I.I.C. Bratianu expressed their discontent with what Romania achieved, intending to protest in Parliament against accepting the proposed solution by the Ambassadors Conference, Titu Maiorescu and Take Ionescu were concerned to get a vote in their favour in the Legislative Forum. King Carol supported the government position, and wouldn't have wanted a negative reaction of the opposition. Otherwise, in a discussion that the Romanian sovereign had had with Take Ionescu, he "*absolutely disapproved*" the P.P. Carp position in foreign policy issues. Blondel felt that the Parliament will express threats against Bulgaria and also, according to Romania and The Triple Entente relations, "*many will continue to make it responsible for what they consider a failure of the Romanian diplomacy*".

Blondel's information is relevant for the concerns of the Great Powers, belonging to both opposing political and military groups, to achieve the widest possible adherence among politicians and public opinion in Romania: "*I did not cease, since the beginning of the negotiations in Petersburg, to let be understood that the French representative, together with that of Russia, took a stand in favour of Romania and sought above all such a solution to harmonize the feelings of the two interested nations without great difficulties, because great efforts had to be made in order to determine Bulgaria to consent to the abandon of a part of its territory and that France and its allies have proved in this regard benevolence and dynamic perseverance, and will have to appreciate their value. If I was able to convince many of my interlocutors, there are others who still listen to the Austrian media assertions with more willpower, whose principal authorities continue to denounce the Triple Entente, as if it was due to the reduction imposed to Romanian claims and, unfortunately, the mediation result provides an argument that we will destroy with difficulty. It is certain that if the mediators had added to Silistra the requisite 5 km south of Mangalia or even the frontier rectification consisting in adding to the Romanian territory the two Bulgarian points which go beyond (beyond an imaginary straight line-author's note), the effect would have been completely different*". Blondel realized that the situation created encouraged the Austrian diplomacy efforts, because it could speculate the discontent of the Romanian politicians, and the situation at the public opinion level. However, he expressed his hope that the Romanian government, "*which has not ignored the secret*

²¹ *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 962, p. 778. Sir Edward Grey to Sir H. Bax-Ironside, 7 May 1913.

²² *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 989, p. 807. Sir G. Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, 11 May 1913; **D.D.F.**, 3^e série, tome VI, doc. nr. 522, p. 590-591.

*negotiations between Vienna and Sofia (author's emphasis), especially the Austrian attempts to spare the Bulgarian susceptibilities, at the expense of Romanian aspirations (author's emphasis), will know to appreciate the support offered by Triple Entente (author's emphasis). I will continue to believe that we could, invoking the little advantage which assured until now the obedience to orders coming from Berlin or Vienna, determine Romania, if not immediately to conclude an alliance with Russia, at least to resume its complete independence, to obey only its own interests (author's emphasis). This action, if Your Majesty will approve, I will follow with the hope to complete*²³.

As it was well noted, the Petersburg's decisions were dissatisfying for both Romania and Bulgaria. Each of the political-military groups tried not to offend either one or the other, looking to get on their side both of them.

After the Conference, both sides sought to implement in Bucharest and in Sofia the belief that, because of the opponents, they had not received what they had hoped for. Blondel took things to such an extent that he hinted to the Romanian government about Austria-Bulgaria secret negotiations against Romania²⁴.

The "Sankt Petersburg Protocol" was debated in Parliament, between May 11-13, 1913, in secret meetings, and in The Chamber meeting on May 18, 1913 a motion was adopted in which "The Assembly of Deputies, taking note of the Protocol signed in St. Petersburg, on 26 April / May 9, 1913 by representatives of the six Great Powers, authorizes the government to put it into practice."²⁵ The debates of the Legislative Authorities, with all critics raised by the opposition, went normally without incidents. The debate of The Protocol was "appealing", revealing different views and trends with regard to Foreign Policy orientation under the terms of "Balkan Crisis" deployment.²⁶

While the full attention of the Romanian external political circles was directed with predilection to the events South of the Danube, a significant stage in the evolution of Romania's Foreign Policy was concluded. Among politicians and the public opinion, the problem of Romanian people across Austria-Hungary was becoming more and more actual, in order for the national ideal to be accomplished. Therefore, the relations between Austria-Hungary and Romania had to be reviewed and the ways of Romanian Foreign Policy reorientation had to be thought of. From this point of view, The Triple Entente represented a viable alternative that was increasingly taken into consideration. Both the Austro-Hungarian Balkan policy and the policy of denationalization of the Transylvanian Romanians greatly contributed to this reorientation of Foreign Policy, systematically practiced by the Hungarian government. But above all, the national feeling was one which would give a new course to Romania's Foreign Policy.

²³ *D.D.F.*, 3^e série, tome VI, doc. nr. 529, p. 598-600. Blondel to Pichon, 12 May 1913.

²⁴ V. Vesa Romania and France in the early XX century . *1900-1916*, Dacia Publishing, Cluj-Napoca, 1975, p. 42.

²⁵ *Debates of Deputies Assembly , 1912-1913*, nr. 67,18 May meeting 1913, p. 1699.

²⁶ A. Iordache, Romania's political crisis and the Balkan wars, *1911-1913*, Paideia Publishing, Bucharest, 1998, p. 230.

The Cultural League, which was perhaps the most faithful exponent of public opinion in Romania²⁷ in those circumstances, felt the need for clarification of both its own objectives and of the major ones that were supposed to stand in the attention of the whole Romanian nation. After the previous period, which supported the idea of Romania's military intervention to the South of the Danube, the whole perspective action was reconsidered, depending on the need for national ideal accomplishment. On May 19, 1913, on the occasion of the League Congress, which took place in Piatra Neamt, just the next day after the "Sankt Petersburg Protocol" enactment in Parliament, Nicolae Iorga declared: "We have nothing to do in the Balkans. We should go to Austria. Our intervention across the Danube is shameful. If the government had something to claim, they could have done it without the humiliating interference of the Powers and without the perfidious interference of Austria. Can we, only for strategic reasons, banish a nation out of its national right? We have to go not on the path of the 3 km of Silistra, but on the highway of our ancestors. I'm not afraid of war... We have proved ridiculous towards Europe with our exaggerated claims. The Protocol turned against us and against Macedonian Romanians"²⁸.

Commenting on the debates that took place in Parliament and the public opinion reaction, on the occasion of the enactment of the "Protocol of St. Petersburg", the Russian Ambassador to Bucharest subsequently recorded: "The passionate debates that took place in the Romanian Parliament on the occasion of the ratification of the document regarding the annexing of Silistra to Romania were filled with great hostility against Austria and against Austria's government policy. Despite the links that it had had with that country, Austria was accused to have helped Bulgaria against Romania. The government had to bear violent attacks [...] because it sacrificed everything to Austria, and because it voluntarily removed itself from the Balkan States, when all its interests actually led it there. The violence of the speeches held on this occasion was symptomatic for the country's state of mind and for the changes occurring in the public opinion during the last months. The government felt compelled to take into account this change, still keeping an attitude of expectation."²⁹

The government sought to take on a realistic and pragmatic policy, carefully watching the development in the Balkans and the position of the Great Powers. The events which were carried out South of Danube and the public opinion from Romania, hostile to Austria-Hungary, created a favorable field of action for the Great Powers of the Entente. All these will also influence in the new context the foreign policy promoted by the Romanian government.

²⁷ About the evolution of Romania's public opinion in the context of "Balkan crisis" during the London Conference and the Conference of Ambassadors in St. Petersburg, see more Gh. Zbucea, *Romania and the Balkan wars. 1912-1913*. South East European History Pages, Albatros Publishing, Bucharest, 1999, p. 113-138.

²⁸ On the works of the Congress League, turned into a real discussion on Romanians issues in Transylvania and on the foreign policy that Romania had to have in future, see V. Netea, C. Gh. Marinescu, Cultural League and the unification of Transylvania with Romania, Junimea Publishing, Iași, 1978, p. 245-246. On N. Iorga's position, see also N. Iorga, *Under the three kings. History of a national and moral ideal struggle*, Pro Publishing, Bucharest, 1999, p. 123-124.

²⁹ N. Schebello, *Souvenirs. Essais historique sur les origines de guerre de 1914*, Paris, 1936, p. 154.

4. Conclusions

In the final analysis of Romania's relations with The Great Powers of the Entente during the Ambassadors Conference in St. Petersburg some necessary conclusions are to be drawn about the categorical following question: can we talk about an incipient reorientation of the Romanian Foreign Policy during this time?

The historian Serban Radulescu Zoner, analyzing the Romanian Foreign Policy in terms of relations with the Triple Alliance, argued that the answer can only be negative. The argumentation used to support this theory is very strong and convincing: *“The decision makers in Bucharest, maintaining the old line, adopted since the beginning of the century, have based their Balkan policy on the Triple Alliance, even if the support received was limited. Ultimately, the minimum compensation obtained by the Romanian government was due also to the Central Powers.[...] Would it have been possible to get a reorientation of Romania's alliances through an active foreign policy, loudly claimed by the parties forming the opposition to the government? Not in the least. An entry of the Romanian army in action would have lead to war with Russia. [...] There was no such problem as the reorientation of the Romanian diplomacy (author's emphasis), relations between Romania and Austria-Hungary, thus, falling within the sphere of friction that had existed before, as an expression of economic and political opposition between the two countries, in the center of which stood the national question. If the alliance with Germany had not been necessary, according to the ideas of the Romanian men of state, this antagonism would have taken since the last century an explosive shape, the decision makers in the Romanian capital city being forced to take into account that the road from Bucharest to Berlin passes necessarily through Vienna. It is true that in the second part of the Balkan crisis, the tension between Romania and Austria-Hungary will increase. This was not due to a change of Romania's diplomacy attitude, but to the policy of Count Berchtold, which will run not only against the Romanian government, but also against the whole Balkan strategy of Wilhelmstrasse leaders, and finally against the opposition of Italy.*³⁰

From the perspective of Romania's relations with the Triple Entente, we believe that our analysis revealed clearly that Romania's Foreign Policy did not register a new course as compared to the previous period. Obviously, developments during the "Balkan crisis," which were particularly complex, imposed nuanced approaches to the Romanian foreign policy towards The Great Powers, belonging to both opposing political and military groups, the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente, but in its essential details, it was obvious that Romania's Foreign Policy was not on a reorientation point. Several factors have contributed to that, both internal and external, some objective, others subjective.

In fact, in this analysis we can distinguish two planes: an „external” one, referring to how the Great Powers of the Triple Entente regarded their relations with Romania, in the broader context of their interests in South-Eastern Europe, and another one “inside”, which takes into account the significance of political and diplomatic efforts of the Romanian state towards The Entente.

³⁰ Gh. Nicolae Căzan, Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, further cited, p. 338-339.

In the first case, it is noteworthy that during the period mentioned, the Great Powers of the Triple Entente considered Romania as a state located in the political orbit of the Central Powers. From this perspective the attitude of these Great Powers toward Romania must be understood, both in terms of the participation of the Romanian delegation at the Peace Conference in London, as well as of the opposition shown to the Romania's demands formulated at the expense of Bulgaria at the Ambassadors Conference in St. Petersburg. Of course there were differences and nuances of Russia, France and England's positions toward Romania, but eventually Russia's interests prevailed. But because of the Romania-Bulgarian dispute, the tension of the Romanian-Russian relations forced the Romanian government to renew the Triple Alliance Treaty. Given that this dispute could escalate into a war that could generalize, where Russia and Austria-Hungary would be found in opposing camps, for these two Great Powers their old ties that they had had with Bulgaria respectively, Romania prevailed, and yet both of them sought to maintain or attract them in the political-military group to which they belonged. The possibility of reconsidering the relations of the Triple Entente with Romania occurred only during the Ambassadors Conference in St. Petersburg when, due to the developments in the Balkan Peninsula, leading to a disintegration of the Balkan Alliance, the Allies accepted the minimal demands of Romania. But this was not likely to cause an immediate reorientation in favor of Romania's Foreign Policy of the Entente; even if Romania was supported by the Triple Alliance in its dispute with Bulgaria, still it could create the conditions to attract it in the future. It is noteworthy in this context, the special ability of the Entente diplomacy to speculate the old Austria-Hungary-Romanian dispute to continue the policy of attracting Romania.

In the second case, we can notice that Romania's diplomatic efforts to obtain support in solving the Bulgarian section of the Entente did not involve making commitments aimed at reorienting its Foreign Policy. It is true that at the level of public opinion and even in the government, attitudes were manifested in favor of the Triple Entente, but policy makers, King Carol and Prime Minister Titu Maiorescu proved consistent with continuing the old policy guidelines of Triple Alliance. Choosing St. Petersburg as the place of the Great Powers mediation of the Romanian-Bulgarian issue was obviously an act of political opportunity, designed to win Russia's favor, and not one with major implications for changing the course of the Romanian Foreign Policy. Even the perspective of changing the system of alliances in South-Eastern Europe, in the situation where the Balkan Alliance collapsed, did not represent to policy makers in Bucharest the reason of an immediate shift in foreign policy. It was obvious that such a change in Romania's orientation of its foreign policy could not be determined only by the desire to achieve national unity. The tensioning of the relations between Romania and the Austro-Hungarian double monarchy because of the Balkan policy, in view of the developments in South East Europe, into a new Balkan war, however emphasized Romania's tendency of detaching itself from its alliance with Austria-Hungary, a situation that would favor the Entente diplomatic actions.